

Renunciation of Material Possessions in Pachomian Cenobitism

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Renunciation of material possessions is one of the most essential aspects of monastic life in all traditions, eastern and western, primitive and recent.

In this paper we *shall* study it in one of the most ancient forms of community life in Christianity, the Pachomian cenobitism of the fourth century.

I - Importance of Renunciation

Renunciation (*apotage apotaxis*) is so essential to monastic life that for someone to enter the monastery is for him "to make renunciation (*apotassesthai*).

On his deathbed Pachomius tells his disciples:

I have walked with all humility and renunciation in your midst. (SBo 118) and we find similar expressions in other Pachomian texts, v.g.:

...having renounced all they had for this vocation. (Theod. Inst. 3, 20) ...having made the monastic *renunciation* (*ton monachon apotassomenos*) (G' 39).

In the Coptic documents, the monk is often called an *apotaktikos*, that is, someone who has made his renunciation. For example, when Artemios is looking for Athanasius and searches the monastery of Phbow, Psahref tells him:

We are men who have renounced [the world]. (apotaktikos) (SBo 185)

During the time Pachomius lived with his brother John, after he had settled in Tabennesi, they practised a life of great renunciation:

They lived in great renunciation, for they gave away everything they earned through their manual work, except what they absolutely needed... They both lived in a great renunciation. They kept nothing save two loaves of bread daily and a bit of salt. (SBo 19)

and when he received his first group of disciples,

He talked with them to know whether they would be able to renounce their parents and follow the Saviour. (SBo 23)

This attitude towards novices was for him a rule of conduct, since it became part of his Rule:

When someone comes to the door of the monastery, wishing to renounce world and be added to the number of the brothers... - Carefully should he make himself known. Can he renounce his parents and spurn his own possessions? (Pr 49)

We see by this last text that renunciation of material possessions is only one aspect of a more complete detachment. Detachment from his family was equally important. (See the example of Theodore refusing to see his own mother, in SBo 63). And the monk should also be detached from honors and titles. For this reason Pachomius does not want his monks to desire priesthood. He would say to them:

It is better not to seek after such a thing in our Koinonia, lest this should be an occasion for strife, envy, jealousy and even schisms to arise in a large number of monks, contrary to God's will. In the same way as a spark cast into the threshing floor, unless it is quickly quenched, will destroy a whole year's labor, so it is with a thought of grandeur at its outset. (SBo 28)

The *Instruction Concerning a Spiteful Monk*, attributed to Pachomius, asks the monk to "shun the comfort of this time" (§ 23) and "to scorn vainglory" (§ 24). The monk is also warned against the love of money:

The love of money is that about which we are fought against. If you wish to acquire riches --they are the bait on the fisher's hook --by greed, by trafficking, by violence, by ruse, or by excessive manual work that deprives you of leisure for the service of God - in a word by any other means - if you have desired to pile up gold or silver, remember what the Gospel says, Fool! They will snatch away your soul

during the night! Who will get your hoard? (Lk 12:20) Again, He piles up money without knowing to whom it will go. (Ps 39.38):6. (Pach. Instr.: 1,52)

Theodore, in one of his first instructions as father of the Koinonia – that is, of the whole congregation of all the monasteries founded by Pachomius after Pachomius' death and Horsiesios resignation, exhorts the brothers to detachment in these words

I see some of you wanting to receive titles or something else. In the past, in the time of our father, except in obedience nobody wanted to be called great, fearing to be found least in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:19). (G1 126)

and in order to inculcate that detachment in the superiors, he moved them frequently from one monastery to another:

He used to do this twice a year for their own good and their salvation, changing many from one job to another and from one community to another...

On one occasion they had assembled and he had made assignments again in this manner. Some of them had built new houses and synaxes to meet the brothers' needs. After he had made the assignments, he said to them, "You see, I have assigned you, as you believe, by God's will, because this is for the salvation of our souls and of the brothers who are with us. If then we have named someone from a difficult community to an easy one and he rejoices within himself on hearing it, I assure you that the Spirit of God is not in such a man. Or, on the other hand, if someone in an easy community whom we have assigned to a difficult one is saddened over this, I tell you this man has neither the Spirit of the Lord nor humility in him". (SBo 144-145)

II – How the pachomian monks practised poverty

The first group men who gathered around Pachomius at Tabennesi retained form of private ownership:

When he saw the brothers gathering around him, he established for them the following rule: Each should be self-supporting and manage his own affairs, but they would provide their share for all their material needs, either for food, or to provide hospitality to the strangers who came to them, for they all ate together. (S1 11)

But the biographer explains that if Pachomius consented that mitigated form of community life, it because

he could see that they were not yet ready to bind themselves together in a perfect Koinonia like that which Acts describes of the believers: They one heart and one soul and everything they owned was held in common; not one of said that anything he possessed was his own. (Act. 4:32) (S¹ 11)

In a community brothers who have really renounced the world, there is no place for private ownership of any sort. The essential things that a brother may have in his possession are described detail in the Rule:

In his house and cell, no one shall have anything besides what is prescribed for all together by the law of the monastery: no woollen tunic, no mantle, no soft sheepskin with unshorn wool, not even a few coins, no pillow for his head or various other conveniences. They shall have only what is distributed by the father of the monastery through the housemasters. This is their equipment: two linen tunics plus the one already worn, a long scarf for the neck and shoulders, a goat skin hanging from the shoulders, shoes, two hoods, a belt and a staff. If you find anything more than this, you shall take it away without contradiction. (Pr 81; see also Jer. Pref. 4)

In his Testament, Hosiesios calls the attention of his disciples to that regulation:

I beseech you not to forget the resolution you once took. And let us think of the traditions of our father as a ladder which leads to the kingdom of heaven.. Do not long for the things you once trampled underfoot. It is enough for us to have what is sufficient for any man: two tunics and another one which is worn out, a linen mantle, two hoods, a linen belt, shoes, a [goat]-skin and a staff. (Hors. Test. 22)

And if someone some time happens to have more than he actually needs, he cannot keep the surplus:

If someone has more than what is prescribed, he shall bring them to the storeroom keeper without being warned by the superior, and he may not enter or ask for them. They shall be at the disposal of the housemaster and the second. (Leg 15)

The Bohairic Life (= SBo) tells us about a brother called Elias, who had hidden five figs to eat them after the fast, which was explicitly forbidden by the Rule:

Let no one put away in his cell anything to eat, except what he has received from the steward. (Pr 78; see also Pr 73-77)

Not only such a small thing not permitted, but the Rule forbade the monks to eat even windfalls in the garden:

If they find fallen fruits under the trees, they shall not dare eat them, but they shall put them together at the foot of the trees as they pass by. (Pr 7)

Moreover no was allowed to receive any gift from his family without special permission:

If someone presents himself at the door of the monastery and says he would like to see his brother or his relative... If [he] brought him some of the foods which are allowed to be eaten in the monastery, he may not receive them himself, but he shall call the porter who shall receive the gifts... (Pr 53)

If anyone living under a housemaster in a house of the monastery, and lacking none of the things he is allowed to have in the monastery, has a father and brother and a close friend, he is not to receive anything at all from them, neither tunic, nor mantle, nor anything else. But if it is proved that he has less than what is prescribed, the entire fault and punishment shall fall on the housemaster. (Hors. Test. 20)

No can dispose of anything as his own, for example giving it in trust to a brother, or accepting it from him (Pr 113).The man who does this, says Horsiesios,

is not among the number of the brothers, but is a hireling and stranger. He is not to eat the Passover with the holy ones, because he has become a stumbling-stone in the monastery... For if we do' not have the right to keep our tunics with us until evening when wash them and they are still wet... how much more so then, if entrust to another or wish to have at your own disposal the things which you seem to have as your own, do you sin against the discipline of the monastery. (Hors. Test. 26)

It would therefore be all the more foolish for a monk to think that he can retain ownership of his material possessions till death, and abandon them at that time only:

Let no one, deceived by a foolish idea or, rather, netted in the snares of the devil, say in his heart, "when I die, I will give what I have to my brothers".Most foolish of men, where have you found. this written? Did not all the saints and those who served God put down the whole load of the world at once?... (Hors. Test. 27)

If the individual monk gave up any form of private ownership, the

community, on the other hand, had the obligation to provide him with every- thing he really needed. And that obligation rested on the superiors first all. Horsiesios warns them that they must care for the bodily needs of the brothers as well as for their spiritual needs:

Do not refresh them in their bodily needs without giving their ` ' spiritual nourishment. Or again, do not teach them spiritual things while oppressing them in their bodily needs, namely, food and clothing. Put give them food for soul and body alike; and give them no opportunity for negligence. Or what is this justice of ours, bat we oppress the brothers with work while we enjoy leisure? Or that we impose on them a yoke which we are unable to bear? (Ac 15:10) (Hors. Test. 7)

Therefore, you who are the fathers of the monasteries, if you see that any [brothers] lack something and are hard pressed, do not neglect them, knowing that you shall render an account for all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has placed you, to watch over and to shepherd the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood: (Ac 20:28) (Hors. Test. 40)

An authentic community life requires a real unity and even some form of 'uniformity. We have already seen how all the brothers received the amount of small things, especially clothes and food that they had the mission to keep in their possession (see Hors. Reg. 48). This was, according to Horsiesios, a concrete means of expressing the mutual love of brothers who have one same Father:

Therefore, brothers, let us be equal, from the least to the greatest, whether rich or poor, perfect in harmony and humility, that it can be said of us as well, The man who [gathered] much, had nothing over; the man who [gathered]. little did not go short. (Cf. 2 Co 8:15 = Ex 16:18) Let no one look after his own pleasure when he sees a brother living in poverty and hardship; let this saying of the prophet be told him, Did one God not create [all of]you? Have you not all one father? Why has each of you abandoned his brother, thus profaning the covenant of your fathers? Judah has been forsaken, and abomination has been committed in Israel. (MI 2:10-11) (Hors. Test. 23)

As for the superior, he must have an equal care for all:

I will say it again and again and will repeat it: Take care not to love some and hate others, to sustain this one and to neglect that one, lest your toil be found wasted and all your sweat be lost. (Hors. Test. 16)

And the superior himself must receive the same treatment as any

other brother. Pachomius always gave the example, observing the common rule like anybody else:

Just as the brothers were established in separate houses and had in each house someone responsible for them as a father, [Pachomius] also belonged to a house. He was not any different from the brothers. He did not have the authority to go on his own to take a garment from the leader of the community. It was the housemaster of the house to which he belonged who would take it for him, according to the regulations of the brothers he had established from God. (St 5)

Even Abba Pachomius himself submitted to the housemaster, being more humble than all others, as it is written, A land mountainous and lowly. (Dt. 11:11) At the hour of the instruction, he stood with the brothers of the house listening. His tunics were in a cell under the authority of housemaster. And he had simply no authority to take for himself anything for the body from the steward. For more than the eternal tortures, he feared becoming estranged from the humility and the sweetness of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. (G¹ 110)

He always refused special treatment during his illnesses, even on his deathbed. Here are a few examples:

Once our father Pachomius was on an island with the brothers to reap rushes. And Theodore was preparing for the brothers what they would need. One evening, our father Pachomius came back with his body all bent double and he lay down. Theodore fetched a nice hair blanket and threw it over him. Then our father said to him: "Take that blanket off me and cast over me a mat like all the brothers till the Lord brings me relief". [Theodore] did as he was told; then he took a handful of dates and offered them to him saying, "Perhaps you will be able to eat some of these, my father, for as of now you have not yet eaten". He refused them saying to him in great sadness. "Because we have to administer the labor and the needs of the' brothers, do we have the right to give ourselves ease? Where is the fear of God? Have you just now visited the huts of the brothers to see whether there was anyone in them who was sick?" (SBo 47)

One day our father Pachomius became ill. He did not inform any of the brothers that he was ill nor, as usual, did he believe in his illness... While he was reaping, he collapsed on his face in their midst. The startled brothers ran him and lifted him from ground... Someone sat fanning him with his hood. Many had succumbed to the sickness in those days, for the sickness which had struck them was severe and pestilential. One of those who came to' inquire about him said to the brother who was fanning him with his hood, "Could you not find a fan with which to cool him?" When [Pachomius] heard this, he

was unable to answer because of the severe illness which had worn him down, but, with a movement of his finger, he said to him, "is this whole crowd not sick? Are you going to find a fan for each one so that one can be found for well?" (SBo 117)

Theodore waited on our father Pachomius while he remained ill. He had been lying for forty days in the infirmary where all the sick brothers were. He received the same care as all the other brothers in every respect. There was no difference at all between him and them, in accordance with the instruction which he had given them earlier. Although his body had become very weak because of the prolonged illness, nevertheless his heart and his eyes were like flaming light. He said to Theodore, "Please bring a mantle which has been worn thin and spread it over me, because this one is heavy. I will not be able to bear it, since I have been sick for forty' days now. Yet I give thanks to the Lord". Theodore went at once and got a good light mantle from the steward. He brought it and spread it over him. When our father Pachomius saw the difference' in the mantle, he became angry at Theodore and said to him, "What a great injustice you have done, Theodore! Do you wish me to scandal to the brothers? Then later on when they say, 'Apa Pachomius had an easier life than the rest of the brothers', I shall become liable to judgement before the Lord. Now, take it off of me; I will manage somehow until I go to the Lord". Theodore then took it off him. He brought another one, more worn and worse than those of all the other sick brothers and spread it over him. (SBo 120)

Horsiesios remembered the example received from Pachomius, and exhorted the superiors not to turn a ministry into a personal advantage:

If a person to whom a ministry or the administration of the monastery is entrusted makes a profit out of it - that is, lays hold of something and turns to his personal comfort -- this must be considered a crime and a sacrilege. For by doing this he despises those who do not have but are rich in blessed poverty. Not only is he lost, but he causes the rest to be lost...

...woe to those who lived in the Koinonia and turned something from common use to their own. When they leave this body, they shall hear, Remember that you received good things during your life (Lk 16:25), while your brothers were toiling in fasts, and in abstinence, and sweating from unceasing effort. Then, look at those who, happy and cheerful, have forsaken the present life to obtain the life to come, while you are put in filth and torments and misery because you did not want to hear the word of the Gospel... (Hors. Test. 22)

The equality that exists among brothers is not such however that individual needs are not taken into account. On the contrary, any special need of a brother is cared for, and we find throughout the Rule and the Life a deep and tender concern for the sick brothers. Jerome mentions it in his Preface to the *Pachomiana latina*.

The sick are sustained with wonderful care and a great abundance of food. (Jer. Pref. 5; see Pr 40-47; 92; 105; 129)

In one of his letters, Pachomius describes the attention to be given to the sick brothers during the assembly of the Passover:

When you come to us, take care to make the bed of the sick and not to be short of bread, and also, if possible, to find a pillow or a cushion for the head, so that those who are weak may rest... (Pack. Letter: 5, 2)

Regulations of Horsiesios have a long section concerning the careful preparation of the brothers' food (Hors. Reg. 22-23-24); and, in another section concerning the hard work of the bakers in the kneading room, Horsiesios stresses the obligation to pay attention to the brothers' various needs:

Therefore, this is what we must do with someone who is in need, little or great, being appointed for any task in our assembly, according to our calling. If anyone is overly distressed by the heat, let those in charge look into the matter; if he is really unable to eat his bread at the brothers' table, let him notify them. When he is certain in his heart before God that he is not a contemptor and that he does not wish to be different from his brothers by reason of any tradition or habit, and is not desiring enjoyment - as when we seek wine or special food -- but that is a matter of necessity and need in this case, let us say so with filial confidence, and let all that we need be brought to us, according to what is available and what God has given us at that time. Even if all the brothers need a bit of beer or any; , other food that accords with the law of the .Koinonia, the superior of the community will grant this to them generously and gladly. (Hors. Reg. 49)

One of the stories of the Paralipomena is about a young brother who complained to Pachomius because for two months no cooked dishes had been prepared in his monastery. The cooks were severely reprimanded by Pachomius (Paral. 15).

But the most beautiful anecdote of this kind is certainly the one narrated' in the Bohairic Life about a monk who was extremely sick and who had asked the brothers to give him a little meat. As this

unaccustomed food was refused him, he asked to be brought to Pachomius who was moved with compassion as soon as he saw him and exclaimed:

O, you who are respecters of persons, where now is the fear of: Govt? You shall love your neighbor as yourself! (Lv 19:18; Mt 19:19)'' Do you not see that this brother is like a corpse? Why do you' not give him what he asks for? The Lord knows that if you do not him what he has mentioned, I will not eat or drink either. there no difference between a sick person and another? Are not allthings pure to the pure? Tt 1:15) And saying this, he wept. He went and said to them, the Lord lives, if had been in the monastery` when he asked for what he wanted, would not have left him in this great affliction while he was so sick". When they heard these things' from the mouth of our father Pachomius, the brothers hastened send out at once and to buy a little kid goat.They skilfully prepared it and offered it to the brother, who ate, Then they brought ,father Pachomius his few cooked vegetables: and he too ate like any of the brothers of his monastery, giving thanks. (SBo 48)

III - The spiritual motivations of poverty

Monasticism as a way of life is not specifically Christian.We find it in most of the great religions, and it has existed also in philosophical circles in Greece. But, if the practices of these various forms of monasticism are similar, the motivations vary very much.

For Christian monks, renunciation (apotage) can be understood only one of the two poles o€ a global reality, the other pole of which is the dience to God and the submission to his will (hupotage). The great example of submissiveness is evidently Christ making himself obedient unto death, and death upon a cross.All the ascetic efforts of the monk are not, therefore, a form o€ athletic contest, and still less some kind of masochism. They are an imitation of the suffering Christ:

As for Pachomius, he gave himself up ever more and more to important exercises, to a great and intensive ascesis, and to lengthy recitations of the books of Holy Scripture. He had his heart set on reciting them in their order and with great ease. He would mainly practise his mortifications in those deserts, in the acacia forest that surrounded them, and in the far desert. If thorns happened to pierce his feet he endured them without removing them, remembering the nails that pierced our Lord on the cross. (SBo 15)

As for that special form of ascesis, poverty, its first aim is to live in a spirit of liberty and to manifest total confidence and trust

in God. To the brothers who were very upset one day because a boat loaded with flax for their clothes had sunk, Theodore said:

Some of you are upset because they have heard that the boat loaded with flax sank. Did we not, for the sake of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, joyfully abandon the property of our parents which belonged to us when we were still in ignorance? Are we then going to be upset over those things which have been withdrawn from us now that we have received the knowledge of the Lord's truth? (SBo 183)

He then went on and recalled the example of job.

In one of his instructions, Pachomius advised his monks not to let themselves be discouraged if they were poor, and to throw all their cares on the Lord:

If you are poor, let nothing discourage you... Do not become discouraged, be steadfast; surely God has already done something in secret... (Pach. Instr.: 1, 13)

Entrust your heart to no one for the gratification of your soul, but throw all your cares to the Lord, and he will feed you. (Ps 55(54):22; Ibidem, 34)

In one of his letters he quoted the text of Lk 12:33 about making for ourselves purses that do not wear out (Pach. Letter: 3, 4).

We have quoted above from the Bohairic Life a text of Theodore stating that all the possessions of the *Koinonia* belong to God. This conviction explains why the Rule constantly reminds the monks what care they must use in handling all the tools and in doing the work of the community. For example:

And when he begins to walk into the synaxis room, going to his place of sitting and standing, he should not tread upon the rushes which have been dipped in water in preparation for the plaiting of ropes, lest even a small loss should come to the monastery through someone's negligence. (Pr 4)

The monks should not leave their tunics drying in the heat of the sun too long (Pr 70), and they should be careful not to lose anything. If they do, they shall be punished (Pr 131). They shall also be careful not to let anything spoil (Inst. 5-6-7 and 11; Hors. Reg. 30).

Finally, one of the most important aspects of poverty is the solidarity of the monks with their poor, suffering brothers in the world.

The first encounter of Pachomius with Christianity was his encounter with the active charity of the Christians of Thebes who comforted him and his fellow-conscriptis in the jail (SBo 7). And so, as soon as he was released, he settled down in the village of Seneset, where he put himself at the service of the poor:

... he settled down there, growing some vegetables and some palm trees '' in order to feed himself or some poor man of the village or again some stranger who should happen to pass by in a boat or on the road. It was his custom to converse with lots of people, and they would give up their homes to come and live in that village because of his way of encouraging them. It was really because of his attitude that many men made their dwelling in that place. (SBo

Before leaving the place to become a monk under the guidance of the elder Palamon, he

gave his place to another old monk who should look after the few vegetables and the palm tree for the needs of the poor. (SBo 10)

His spiritual father Palamon describing to him the type of work he did as part of his politeia way of life explained:

We do this work for our bodily subsistence also; and whatever is above and beyond our needs we give to the poor, following the words of the Apostle, only let us remember the poor. (Ga 2:10) (SBo 10)

When Pachomius' first disciples gathered around him, he made himself their servant in all things (SBo 23), and later on he built with them a church for the people of the place:

When he saw that a lot of people had come to live in that village, he took the brothers and went to build for them a church where could assemble. Besides, there were a lot of people all around that; place. He took care of their offering because they were in a state of great poverty. (SBo 25)

This duty of practising charity is so important that it should be preferred to extra fasting. Theodore asked Pachomius once about fasting during the six days of the Passover, while the ordinary rule of the Church was a continual fast during the last two days only. He answered:

The Church's rule is that we should only join together those two days, so that we might still have the strength to accomplish without fainting the things we are commanded to do, namely, unceasing prayer, vigils, reciting of God's law, and our manual labor about which we

have orders in the holy Scripture and which ought to permit us to hold out our hands to the poor. Those who do things such as these, as well as those who withdraw in solitude, are free from human burdens which would harass them, but we often see them served by others worse off than themselves, and see that they are proud, or fainthearted, or vain in search of human vainglory. (SBo 35)

Theodore remembered the lesson, and many years later, in one of his letters, he quoted this text of Dt 15:7:

Do not keep your hand from giving to your poor brother or to the needy. (Theod. Letter: 2, 4)

One of the Sahidic Lives of Pachomius says that during a time when the barbarians were invading Egypt, an angel of the Lord appeared to Pachomius and asked:

"What will you vow to give in charity, if the Lord ceases his wrath by holding back the barbarians?" He said, "I will send to the Church of the city which the barbarians have laid waste one hundred measures of corn, with books and other things which they need". S10 6)

This solidarity with the poor and the suffering is so deep that he wanted to experience it in his own flesh:

Another day it happened that the brothers went out for a service. They informed our father Pachomius that a great famine and a contagious disease were raging in the world to a point where the earth was threatened with destruction. When he was informed of this, it was the second day he had gone without eating and he went on not eating until the next day saying, "Neither shall I eat while my fellow members go hungry and find no bread to eat". All the while the famine lasted outside he mourned and mortified himself the more by fastings and abundant prayers, fulfilling the words of the Apostle, If one member suffers, all the members must suffer with it. (1 Co 12:26; SBo 100)

IV -- Material organisation o the Koinonia

The early beginnings of the pachomian Koinonia were extremely humble and poor. We have already mentioned the austere and poor life of Pachomius, first in Seneset, then with Palamon and later on at Tabennesi with his brother and his first disciples. When the community grew larger, there were certainly times of great difficulties for such a large group of monks in a very poor part of the country. The Bohairic Life speaks of one of these instances:

happened once that they were going to run short of wheat that was

needed for their food; and the brothers grew as sad as death over their poverty. (SBo 39)

It is probably the same incident that is mentioned by Theodore in one of his instructions:

Let us consider the long training by which [God] formed the saints... He caused serious vexation to arise among the brothers in [Pachomius] time to such a degree that so great a man as he was had recourse to seculars for bread. That good man saw with his own eyes his sons working little mills and licking the meal with their tongues in consequence of their great hunger. And he was vilified by the great ones among them who said, "You are murdering the children of men by hunger"...For want of bread, not once in all those days was the signal given for the meal. (Theod. Instr.:

When the number of the brothers had increased and they were "cramped for want of room" (SBo 49) Pachomius founded his second monastery, Phbow. It was the beginning of an astonishing development. Some superiors of groups of ascetics asked him to introduce the way of life of the *Koinonia* in their communities. At other places it was the bishop who asked Pachomius to make the foundation of a monastery in his diocese. Soon Pachomius had become the father of a congregation of nine monasteries of monks and two of nuns. Such a crowd could not be fed and clothed without a solid and efficient material organization. It was part of Pachomius' genius to be able to set up such an organisation.

In each monastery, the monks were divided between several houses having each about forty monks. The various houses had the responsibility of various services in the monastery, and monks of the same craft were gathered in the same house.

He appointed some from among the capable brothers as his assistants to take care of their soul's salvation. He appointed one of them at the head of the first house, that of the lesser stewards, with a second to help him in preparing the tables and in cooking for the brothers. He appointed another brother also, with his second, men who were faithful on every score, to look after the food and the care of the sick brothers... And at the doorway he appointed other brothers whose speech was seasoned with salt to receive the visitors according to each one's rank... Similarly, he appointed other faithful brothers noted for their piety, to transact sales and make purchases... He appointed still others with a housemaster and a second to work at the shops and at mat-making, and to be ready for every obedience. (SBo 26)

At the end of the week, those who were finishing their weekly service had to bring the tools to one place and to entrust them to the weekly servers of the next week (Pr 66).

There was a good bookkeeping system in each monastery (Hors. Reg. 29); ' and shortly after the foundation of Phbow Pachomius appointed Theodore's brother Paphnouti as Great Steward entrusted with the material administration of the whole Koinonia. Once a year, in the month of Mesore (corresponding roughly to our month of August), all the brothers of all the ' monasteries would gather at Phbow as they did for the Passover, and the 'steward of- each monastery would bring his accounts to the Great Steward of the Koinonia (SBo 71; about that meeting of the month of Mesore, see also Jer. Pref. 8; Pr 27; SBo 122; 144; 193).

From time to time the brothers would go together to an island on the Nile to cut rushes and bring them back to the monastery. The work of the brothers consisted mostly of mat-weaving and basket-making with these rushes. But at the time when the so-called Regulations of Horsiesios were written, the work on the farm had taken a great importance.

Once or twice a year the boat of the Koinonia would go to Alexandria to sell the products of their manual labor and bring back what was needed (SBo 96 and 107). Pachomius insisted that the monks should avoid excessive profits in selling their goods (Paral. 21-22-23) and also that they should pay a reasonable price for what they bought (Hors. Reg.

Contrary to the often heard thesis that pachomian monasteries were excessively burdened with work, the Rule stipulates that the brothers should not be overburdened:.

The brothers shall not be forced to work excessively, but a moderate labor shall incite everyone to work. Let there be peace and concord among them... (Leg.

...Hence, even if we are laboring at perishable things in order to .sustain the body - which is necessary -- let us be watchful not to render our soul, which is worth more than our nourishment, a stranger to eternal life, under the pretext of a necessity which will disappear. (Hors. Reg. 37)

The rapid growth of the Koinonia and the need to feed that large number of brothers led to a great material development. After the foundation of Tse, a man of some importance gave the Koinonia a boat loaded with wheat (SBo 53). Shortly after, the bishop of Smin, who had

asked Pachomius to make a foundation in his diocese, gave him a boat also (SBo 54). And when the monastery founded by Petronios in Thbew was brought into the Koinonia, Petronios' father donated to the Koinonia

all he had: sheep, goats, cattle, camels, donkeys, carts and all he possessed, including boats.. (SBo 56)

Theodore did not agree with this development, and the Life tells us of an instance towards the end of his life when he walked back to Phbow from the monasteries of Nouoi and Kahior as a sign of protest against the multiplication of boats

Apa Theodore himself went on foot until he arrived in the south. did not want to go in one of the boats which the monasteries had acquired because he did not want them to produce things of this sort in the monasteries. (SBo 204)

In fact that wealth was the cause of an important schism in the Koinonia after Pachomius' death which led to Horsiesios' resignation as father of the whole Koinonia:

When our father Apa Horsiesios saw that certain monasteries had begun to separate from the Koinonia, that they were continually causing him sorrow, and that they disobeyed the guidance he gave in - accord with the strength given him by God, he became very grieved indeed. He was afraid that the result would be the dispersion of the souls the Lord had gathered together by means of his servant.

There was a certain Apollonios, leader of Thmousons, who had provoked numerous disturbances with the result that all the other monasteries were following his words. They were saying, "We will have nothing to do with Horsiesios nor will we have anything to do with the rules which he lays down"... (SBo 139)

the tribulation which had occurred earlier because of Apollonios, the head of Thmousons, when the latter had sent to Alexandria to buy supplies for those who were sick. Apa Horsiesios had not consented that he should keep them in a place under his own authority because he knew that our father Pachomius did not wish it so. (SBo 204)

Theodore took Horsiesios' place at the head of the Koinonia and he succeeded in re-establishing peace and unity; but many years later, shortly before his death, he had to deplore the same situation:

Our father Theodore was always in distress before the Lord out of fear that one of the souls entrusted to him by the Lord might perish. He

taught them to abandon their evil deeds and to do what is good in the Lord's eyes. When he observed that, owing to the excuse of needing food and of other bodily needs, the monasteries had acquired numerous fields, animals, and boats - in a word, numerous possessions - he was deeply distressed. He felt certain that the feet of many had slipped from the right path because of material concerns and the empty cares of this world. He longed to go to Seneset to our father Horsiesios to consult him about this problem...

Conclusion

Horsiesios' Testament in its entirety seems to respond to a situation similar to the one created by Apollonios' revolt, and is a long call to repentance. That revolt of Apollonios was certainly not an isolated incident but a symptom of a broader crisis. History of various religious foundations throughout the centuries tends to show the same thing: that poverty is the best "barometer" for indicating the religious quality of a group. The initial ardour is usually accompanied by great poverty and any decadence begins with an accumulation of wealth. The critical moment is always that at which the group becomes so large as to require an elaborate material organization in order to survive physically. Then periodic reforms become necessary.

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