

knew the *Curia* and he knew the people of the City. However, we may say that he gives wings to his words by his emphatic estimate of the unique dignity of the office which Eugenius occupies. He is 'in authority Moses, in judgement Samuel, in power Peter, in unction Christ' (S. Bern., *De Consider.* II, viii, 15).

We find then set forth explicitly in this treatise the fundamental principles of St. Bernard's Political Philosophy as it applied to the Church. But it is quite clear that these principles were so fundamental that they applied equally to all lesser cities than the City of God. What else was the Church intended to be if not the Divine norm of citizenship? There might be, and there were, other cities in which men were called to play in their degree the part of Moses, of Samuel, of Peter, above all of Christ. Let them see to it, at their peril and at the peril of their cities, that they responded to their vocation.

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MONASTIC ECONOMICS

It would be too much to claim that legislators would find in the monastic codes and histories of the early centuries adequate guidance for their post-war planning. Yet no student of early monachism can fail to admire the practical economic value of much of the history and teaching which make his sources.

The Egyptian monks, both hermits and cenobites, though often supported by alms, probably came as near as the monks of any time or place to adequately self-supporting manual labour. When Palladius visited Nitria, he found that no one was allowed to be idle (not even a guest, as perhaps he learnt from personal experience), and no one was in need. Yet the monks' liturgical duties were held in high esteem, and those who were qualified had opportunity for intellectual culture. Self-support was not direct, for Nitria thrived upon the weaving industry.

The same author describes in much greater detail an inspection which he made of the working departments in one of the Pachomian monasteries. After enumerating smiths, carpenters, camel-drivers and fullers, he says that every craft was practised, so that the monks

supported both themselves and the convents of nuns. They kept pigs—but the portions of pork granted to sick and aged monks scandalized later generations and the passage disappeared from many MSS. of the history. In a final list of monastic crafts, agriculture and husbandry hold the first place.¹

Early lives of St. Pachomius record several incidents of an economic significance. The story of Pachomius in the wheat-famine is in some points obscure. The essentials are these. A procurator, sent out by the saint to buy wheat, found a friendly food-control officer who sold him wheat well below the standard price and over measure on condition that payment was made by a specified time. The Abbot was not so pleased as might have been expected to see the monastery boat bringing more than twice the amount of wheat required. He would take none into the monastery, but had all sold at cost price in the neighbourhood. The debt to the well-meaning food-controller was cleared off, and then wheat bought at market price to the value of the sum originally assigned. This done, the saint changed his procurator. It is not clear that Christian altruism was the sole motive; St. Pachomius confessed that he feared the consequences of default at the time of payment falling due. He had that prudence which makes any good administrator shy of a hire-purchase arrangement. And, in time of prevailing distress, any rumour of profiteering or food-hoarding would have been dangerous to the monastery.

The same enterprising procurator got back somehow into the temporalities and caused further trouble. He snatched eagerly at a fancy price offered by a benefactor for some footwear made in the monastery. When the brother craftsman heard of the price he was horrified. St. Pachomius did not regard this horror as a scruple, and from then on definitely restricted his former procurator to the common manual work. Especially striking is the straightforward way in which the just price was estimated. No account was taken of a standard market price. The shoemaker reckoned up the 'price of the leather and of the labour of his hands, and the value of the work of the days wherein he made the various kinds of leather objects' and found that the total was only one third of the money

¹ Writing in *Pax*, Winter, 1941, I used this chapter of the *Lausiac History*, and having no opportunity of consulting the Greek original edited by Dom Cuthbert Butler, I used Anan-Isho's Syriac recension as rendered by Dr. Wallis Budge. Having since seen the Greek, I find it necessary to make two corrections: (1) The monastery visited was not Tabenna, but Panopolis or Akhmim; (2) Whereas I said that Palladius did not mention agriculture, he does, in fact, mention it first and with emphasis.

which he had actually received. Two hundred per cent. net profit would suit neither his own conscience nor his abbot's.

St. Pachomius appeared as still more estranged from the ways of the world when he undertook a building project. He once built an oratory in his monastery so designed, finished and fitted out as to be sure to take any visitor's eye. Then he thought with complacency, 'through the agency of Satan,' of his future reputation as a church-builder. Suddenly he rose up, roped every pillar securely, and commanded his brethren to pull until the whole edifice fell down. Not much tribute here to the solidity of the workmanship, but much to the patient obedience of the brethren. Among those heaving at the ropes were some who had spent weeks and months at the fine decorative work. 'Take heed,' their abbot said, 'lest ye strive to ornament the work of your hands overmuch, and take ye the greatest possible care that the grace of God and his gift may be in the work of each one of you.'²

Subsistence farming, craftsmanship with exchange on terms of strictest justice, were articles of the Pachomian economic creed. St. Basil must have visited these monasteries at their most flourishing period, and learnt from them some of the wisdom which was to grace his own monastic rules. He teaches that the crafts by which the monks live must necessarily vary according to the nature of the place and the market available. In general those are preferred which require the least elaboration of material or marketing and offer the least hindrance to monastic observance and tranquillity. Work should serve the simple necessities of life rather than the foolish and harmful desires of men. The legislator mentions weaving, tailoring, building, carpentry and metal-work, but prefers to all agriculture, which by its very nature satisfies our needs and saves us much journeying. The chapter in which he tells us to sell near home, even though by journeying afar we could make more gain, is less applicable in these days of organized and even State-controlled distribution, but the principle is unchanging: the monks should not seek high profits at the cost of dissipating their religious lives. More is said of particular crafts than of any work shared by the monks in

² These three stories are taken from a life written in Greek in the fifth century, adding to the original Greek life certain elements drawn from Coptic sources. It has been published by the Bollandists under the title *Paralipomena de S. Pachomio*, and a version of it under the title *Asceticon* is found in Syriac MSS. at the British Museum. It is acknowledged that it contains a legendary element. The stories told above are not particularly suspect. But even if their historical value be questioned, they were contained in oral tradition, and certainly express the ideals of the generation which succeeded the founder.

common. Perhaps this is only because St. Basil, like St. Benedict after him, found the specialized crafts a more likely source of trouble.

St. Basil lived in a generation which succeeded to the peace (so called) of Constantine. The Arian storm did not prevent the shrines of the martyrs from becoming centres of pilgrimage. St. Basil saw the arrival of the commercial element here too. These sanctuaries, he said, used to be places of prayer. Now they have been transformed into markets. The only persons against whom our Lord used violence were those who in such a way defiled the temple. God forbid that we should imitate these in our monasteries!

The most striking contribution to ideal monastic economics came from the West. About 400 A.D. St. Augustine, already Bishop of Hippo, was asked by Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, to write something to settle a dispute which had arisen between monks who favoured manual labour, relying upon certain well-known texts of St. Paul, and others who rejected it, applying to themselves our Lord's commendation of the birds and lilies. So St. Augustine came to write *De Opere Monachorum*. The dispute was complicated by the long hair worn by some of the opponents of manual labour. The bishop's aversion to long hair seems to have done much to win him to the cause of the workers. He lamented the case of some long-haired monks, whom in other regards he esteemed, conjuring them in words which might have been directed against the promoters of a schism in the Church: *Rogamus et obsecramus per divinitatem et humanitatem Christi, et per caritatem Spiritus Sancti*. In deciding the work question he was unhesitating, and wrote some chapters, a marvel of satire, against those who, appealing to the Lord's words, declined to sow or reap, but made no scruple at all about gathering into barns.

By occasion of this controversy St. Augustine shows what little novelty there is in our economic disorders. On the nobility of fundamental work he says: 'He (St. Paul) with innocence and uprightness did work suited to the use of man. Such is the work of the carpenter, the mason, the tailor, the field-labourer, and other works like these. Goodness itself finds no fault with that which offends the pride of such as would rather be called good than be so. The Apostle, then, did not disdain to undertake a farm-labourer's job and endure an artisan's toil.' The patriarchs were cattle-farmers. The Greek philosophers honoured such a calling as a tailor's. St. Joseph was a craftsman. 'Whatever then of these works men do with innocence and without fraud is good.' A little later the author extols craftsmanship over commercial exploitation.

'It is one thing to labour with the body, having the mind and heart free, as does the artisan, provided that he be not set upon fraud, avarice and the swelling of his private estate. It is quite another thing to occupy the mind and heart in money-making without bodily labour. So do commercial magnates, brokers and contractors.'

These are some elements of the monastic tradition in which St. Benedict was versed when he wrote his Holy Rule. He himself acknowledged his debt to St. Basil. Certainly he knew the above-quoted work of St. Augustine. For proof it suffices to quote the following words from the last page of *De Opere Monachorum*. For they were taken over almost *verbatim* by St. Benedict, and made into a principle which was to play no small part in shaping mediaeval society. 'Day by day, at certain hours, as has been ordered in well governed monasteries, the monks should do some manual work, and they should have other hours free to read, pray or do some study of the Sacred Scriptures.'

Nothing could be further from the mind of the present writer than to make a case against those great orders and congregations, now approved in the Church, which have not made manual labour an essential of their observance. If such were his intention he would find but little support in antiquity. In the monastic community contemplated by the author of the *De Opere Monachorum*, as at St. Benedict's Monte Cassino, clerics are exceptional. St. Augustine expressly acknowledges that if monks are also preachers, ministers of the altar or dispensers of the Sacraments, this excuses them from the duty of manual labour and entitles them to live by the support of the faithful. He knows what is *essential* to the religious life, and in this he is the teacher of every religious in the Church to-day. 'More swiftly,' he says, 'is heard one prayer of an obedient man than ten thousand of a scorner.'

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