

# The rise of monasticism within christianity assignment

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VI'. Vesuvius... 11 VIII. Effects monasticism had upon the church..... 13 ' X. Conclusion... -?? -?? 15 X.

Bibliography -?? 17 THESIS The aim and goal of this research paper will show how Monasticism has come into the sphere of Christianity and how it has influenced people down through church history. INTRODUCTION Currently there is much to be said about Monasticism as it pertains to the Christian worldview. Monasticism begins very early on in the life of the church. In one's modern world it seems we have dismissed it as a lifestyle that is irrelevant to the Ruth of the Bible.

It is very evident that Scripture does not mandate the practice of Monasticism but unclear as to whether or not some are called to that kind of lifestyle. At best it seems that on some level all believers are called to embrace some ideas within Monasticism but a complete embrace of such rigid things would bring one into disobedience to the things that are mandated within the Holy Scriptures; such as the Great Commission ascribed to the followers of Jesus Christ. There is also the idea that Jesus expects life to be done together within a faith community so that others can see His love lived out by the objects of His affection.

Throughout the history of the church monasticism has risen and fallen but it had its greatest expansion as one will see in the third through the fifth centuries. Monasticism has many proponents, such as Anthony the Great, Pistachios, Saint Mascaras, and later it could be argued that Thomas A' Kempis embraced and taught a mild form of Monasticism. Either way the results and impacts are far reaching and the aim of this paper is to trace the

roots of Monasticism within Christianity and show its impact on the church as a whole.

In order to make this possible one must first define and articulate the terms, trace the origins of history and how monasticism was started and by whom and what basics. One must also look at the situation that gave rise to Christian monasticism and the people who played a key role in promoting this rigid lifestyle. At first glance one may find this life attractive upon the surface. Monasticism Defined A quick survey of the word monasticism helps one understand the attractiveness of the lifestyle somewhat. Richard Campbell notes, " The word monasticism comes from the Greek word nachos, which we translate as " solitary.

Men went to live by themselves to pray, to renounce the wickedness of the present life, and to dedicate themselves to Christ. " This gives a positive face to monasticism and at best it appears to be a worthy endeavor. The first monks were men given to an ascetic lifestyle of self-denial. Some scholars have said, " It is the oldest form of Christian religious life which exists today. " At best this statement seems to be at fought when the Bible in its entirety is surveyed. There is no doubt that the Bible encourages some ascetic practices but they are limited to certain activities and seasons of each individual life.

An example would be Jesus praying in the wilderness for forty days and then departing to carry out another aspect of His mission. One can also see several examples of believers in the book of Acts practicing short periods of time devoted to prayer. The Beginning of Christian Monasticism The

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beginnings of early monasticism were seen outside of the city of Alexandria. The Egyptian monks had humbly embraced a quiet life, living in the desert. Alexandria had become a very pagan place and monasticism was an escape from all the worldliness and hype of the day.

Perhaps it was the violence that is noted by William Harmless that drove people into an ascetic lifestyle, " Alexandria could be a violent place, and its history is checkered with accounts of riots and lynch mobs, as well as bloody street battles between rival political and religious factions. " Many early monks would take Jesus wilderness experience as a call to live a life completely within the atmosphere of the forty days Jesus lived in the wilderness. They would have been driven by contempt of the world in which they lived completely dissatisfied with its culture and practice.

In beginning to trace the origins of monasticism it can be seen in stages as noted by Chaff, " The first stage is an ascetic life as yet not organized nor separated from the church. " The first monks were very much alone, they lived as hermits. They would isolate themselves for the soul purpose of prayer and pity. The only interaction they would have with the outside would be when people came to look at them and admire them. Their lifestyle would be modeled after Allies and John the Baptist, living off the land with a total dependence upon God to meet all of their needs. Another stage in the development of monasticism; contention monasticism.

Harmless states," Pistachios is often singled out as the " founder of contention monasticism"-?? that is, of monks living in organized communities. " The work of Pistachios would give rise to communities of

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monks known as monasteries. Pistachios recognized the social aspect of humanity and the need for some form of social interaction but a very limited form. Within this school of thought there was no sexual interaction and very little social interaction among the monks in the community. These two schools of thought, that of hermits and that of contention are the main origins in the rise of Christian monasticism.

There were times when the differences became at odds with one another but not often. Chaff notes, " the hermits, though their numbers diminished, never became extinct. Many a monk was a hermit first, and then a contrite; and many a contrite turned to a hermit. " Also noting that Augustine would follow an altered form of the contrite monasticism that would lead to a congregational style of monasticism, " Luther belonged to the order of SST. Augustine, and the monastic discipline of Revert was to him a preparation for evangelical freedom, as the Mosaic Law was to Paul a schoolmaster to lead to Christ.

And for this very reason Protestantism is the end of the monastic life. " One will see that monasticism brought about the positive result, resulting in the protestant reformation. The progress of monasticism gave men due time to study the Word of God, live without distractions in a solitary environment and progressively rise up and bring a revival of the truth. The question must arise as to who these early desert fathers are and the impact they have had must be explored. SST. ANTHONY The first monk to have a profound impact in shaping Christian monasticism was SST. Anthony.

Anthony is held in most cases as being the Father of Christian monasticism. Although he was a hermit, his impact is nothing short of being profound. Harmless records a letter written from Serration saying, " that the death of Anthony tore everything apart, for Anthony was a man of much prayer to the point of praying for the whole world. " For a man to been as a singular prayer warrior living in a life of asceticism and known in this way is profound as to how the church saw Him as a man. It was as if some people respected Him as divine although there is no evidence of this.

Anthony was an Egyptian in a wealthy Christian family, he was not a troubled son and upon the death of his mother and father Elementals records, " Pondering over these things he entered the church, and it happened the Gospel was being read, and he heard the Lord saying to the rich man, ' If thou wouldst be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor; and come follow Me and thou shall have treasure in heaven. ' Antonym, as though God had put him in mind of the Saints, and the passage had been read on his account, went out immediately from the church, and gave the possessions of his forefathers to the villagers.

Soon Anthony would hear God speak again, " be not anxious about tomorrow' He would than make his way into the desert to live a life set apart by isolation, during this time he would fight many battles against the flesh and his life would be pursued as he pursued the life of Christ. A survey of his life finds him to be a person loved by all and a man with a kind heart. Reading about his battle with the flesh and the devil is an epic tell of

adventure. Anthony brings a great contribution to the Christian life with his writing's, which are all letters compiled during his life.

There are only fragments of his letters left today. Harmless says, " The first letter is a brief treatise on the ascetic life. The other six are brief exhortations and closely resemble one another, repeating over and over the same themes, each with its own interesting variations. In these letters Anthony devotes a great deal of time to observing Christ as the " physician" and heralds Him as the one who could and would heal the human race from the destructive blow of sin. Also in His letters the theme of demonology is explored and elevated.

It's proof that a life of isolation does not remove a man from the temptation of demonic evil force. There must always be a putting to death of sin, to paraphrase the great pastor theologian John Owen, sin must constantly be put to death as it will take its cords and overcome the life within a person. Anthony saw Jesus as the great Physician who could heal the lack of means to put to death sin in humanity. PISTACHIOS If monks were hermits living alone one cannot help but give attention to the question of the rise of monastery.

Pistachios is the one history exposes as the culprit of the Christian monastery. Pistachios saw the value of living a monastic life but saw it as a life to be lived with others. He valued the social aspect of humanity.

Harmless points out that Pistachios was, " an organizational Genius. " Then, in 313, he visited the aged hermit Palermo, to learn from him the way to perfection. Palermo would teach and influence Pistachios in light of a deeper

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life into asceticism. In 325 Pistachios felt led to begin a monastery on Tenant Island.

In this monastery life would be social; the monks would be classified by rank. Chaff notes, " Rigid vows were not yet enjoined. With spiritual exercises manual labor was united, agriculture, boat building, basket making, mat and coverlet weaving, by which the monks not only earned their own living, but also supported the poor and the sick. " It is also seen in observing the contributions of Pistachios that he did not have an issue with women or men, He would go on and start a cloister of nuns.

Although Pistachios did not take issue with women practicing a more ascetic lifestyle he did not believe a monk should spend time equating to companionship with women and further believed that the office of bishop should be shunned if one is to engage in a monastic life. It's noted, " A monk should especially shun women and bishops, for neither will let him have peace. It seems best to say that this reflects Pistachios aspirations to live without any unnecessary distractions and since the office of Bishop is called upon to carry out many task that could distract from prayer and meditation it would be better for a man to do one or the other.

The same goes for marriage, since marriage is not wrong and is right in many regards it's important to note that marriage takes work; work that can take away from mission. Even Paul acknowledges this when he says, " To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is



better to marry than to burn with passion. " This is the idea that Pistachios would embrace in relation to marriage, keeping himself from distractions.

Glister turns attention to the fact that Pistachios " required his followers to be diligent in the study of the Scripture. " Anything outside the world of asceticism has a tendency to take one away and distract from studying the Scriptures. This is true and in the time of Pistachios with so much going on in the world, at best it seemed more necessary than not to withdraw from all distractions. Among other things Pistachios stressed, " The stickiest of complete obedience to superiors, under whom all the work was organized, and also complete community ownership of goods.

One can see that Pistachios was a great organizer by this quality, at best though he embraced a Christianity that was very social in demanding the sharing of goods. The idea was to have a community with rank in accountability, something very much present in strong communities of believers even still today. Pistachios like Anthony was a letter writer mostly including instructions to his monks and letters of those who would take up his task upon his death, Horsier and Theodore. Several monasteries existed due to his work and dedication and of two they were for women.

VESUVIUS PONTIFIC Vesuvius Pontific began as a lecture in Basil and ultimately found his way to a few different monasteries for extended stays. Vesuvius was a monk and a writer and thinker. Beardsley observes, " Vesuvius provided the most thorough theological and practical interpretation of the asceticism which lies behind the sayings of the desert fathers. And even goes further to promote what Buyer has said, " His works on prayer and

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ascetic discipline have been truly foundational in the development of OTOH Eastern and Western Christian spirituality. Vesuvius promoted a total distance from the world and all things to practice the purpose of prayer, scholars have come together to investigate this and seen this at play in his writing, Vesuvius taught, “ a person praying must dispel all thoughts from his mind, since God cannot be identified with anything that is thought. ” It is believed that this is only made possible through a completely ascetic lifestyle lived out in a monastery. In the area of spiritual hunger Vesuvius taught, our soul desires different foods, then confine it to bread and water.

It can be seen that monasticism is very rigid in its teaching citing that even food can become a distraction to ones purist of truth. Harmless speaks of the danger that confronted Vesuvius, “ For Vesuvius, Acadia is a sort of restless boredom, a listlessness, and beneath that, discouragement. ” This indicates a boredom that can come upon a man and take him by surprise in the practice of an ascetic life. It’s something that arises out of seeking in vain repetition. Perhaps in Vesuvius mind it was because of the demons that come to attack the person living with in an ascetic community.

Vesuvius was known for writing that had total exposures to demonology. Harmless notes, “ Vesuvius believed demons are all specialists, each specializing in a given vice. In this case, pride, sadness, or fornication picks up where vainglory leaves off. ” Harmless even cites Vesuvius own words from his work on, “ The Eight Spirits of Evil”, flash of lightning comes before the rumble of thunder; the presence of vainglory announces the arrival of pride. ” The work on evil thoughts Vesuvius wrote were eight topics dealing

with gluttony, fornication, love of money, sadness, anger, listlessness, vainglory, and pride.

In observing this list it's easy for one to equate these things to the seven deadly sins of Scripture but furthermore one could see how some of these sins could be more prevalent for the man living in the world while others of these sins could be more tempting for the man giving his life to monastic living. Harmless again makes reference to this list, " It would become, with slight modification, the seven deadly sins and enjoy a venerable place in the spirituality of the Middle Ages. EFFECTS MONASTICISM HAD ON THE CHURCH Monasticism left many marks upon the church, one must consider that it was Augustine that wrote such extensively in the matter of theology but one must not forget that He was a monk to. Gamble notes, " As monasticism developed, it presented various problems for the established church, especially later with men like SST. Francis of Cassis, who died in 1226. " He was influenced by such a literal understanding of Scripture that He would go to great lengths to live as a poor man and spend his life upon others.

Gamble makes clear that, " This radical attitude was strongly opposed by wealthy and powerful bishops and the pope. " The first reaction to such radical living as negative but eventually the church would embrace and sponsor such monastic institutions. It can be observed that as the first Christians gave themselves to this life few noticed but with time it would creep within the church, for it was in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries that the church began to have some serious discussions about God and Sin and humanity.

The early monks contributed through letters to these discussions. One may think of the monastic life as repulsive but in a great time of civil dispute and as the culture was being shaped and reshaped in the early story of the church, solitude lead to these quiet and peaceful men living in a very influential way. For a time of such great propensity it would have been repulsive for men to neglect the spiritual duties of pursuing holiness, these early church fathers may have seemed strange but in reality it was God's way of bringing Himself to the forefront.

A good case could be made today that it was what begin in early monastic life that gave birth to the great Protestant reformation. Chaff notes, " The influence of monasticism upon the world, from Anthony and Benedict to Luther and Loyola, is belly marked in all branches of the history of the church. Here, too, we must distinguish light and shade. " Some have said it is impossible to survey the entirety of influence monasticism has had upon the Christian church, like all things there is the good and the bad.

It would do one justice to read some of the work on the eight sins that Audacious wrote about, one could probably see those sins as prevalent as men came and went from the monasteries. Chaff says it best, " It was Christianity in monasticism which has done all the good, and used this abnormal mode of life as a means for carrying forward its mission of love and peace. In proportion as monasticism was animated and controlled by the spirit of Christianity, it proved a blessing; while separated from it, it degenerated and became at fruitful source of evil. Early monasticism would be a portrait of hospitality as they would welcome in the traveling.

CONCLUSION One could take just a short glance at monasticism as it relates to Christianity and at first find it to be repulsive but if one was to dive into a complete study of the roots it laid down early on in Christian life, one would see that it is a world waiting to be discovered. As the writer of this paper has found that season of monastic practice can help one renew their spirit as the world is quieted and the Lord speaks.

There are voices in the world that one should always pray that they would be shut, such as the voice of the world itself, the voice of the flesh that is within, the voice of the devil, and the voice of the demons, then a man may plead to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit clearly! It is obvious that the first monks sought just that and through their faithful sacrifice they found the greatest blessing; communion with the Father. It should not be advocated today for people to follow rigidly the path of the monks, but such of their practice for season would do the world a favor as it sets aside time to search out the favor of God.

In times of big church and massive missionary models developing, men are seeking conferences and all such matter when perhaps a simple quiet place of solitude would do the trick. One cannot help but see the shaping of the great reformation through the time men spent in the quiet solitude of self-denial and cross bearing. R. C. Sprout has allowed R. C. Gambol to write extensively in his periodical, Table Talk on the subject and it would do one well to spend some time with it. Also worthy of the reader's attention is David Chaffs history of the Christian church. Both of the resources are recorded in the bibliography that follows.

In closing a word of caution to the reader, if one is to engage in a rigorous study of the early fathers, one will be attractive perhaps to pursue such a life but take note there are many dangers and one must seek discernment from the Lord before making such a large commitment. Also a survey of some people who have sought to live embracing a monastic life within the present world today would benefit one to see how the early church fathers writing have influenced them. One will see it can be badly mistaken how one translates the history of the early church to live out in the present.

On the web one can observe a number of communities that have erred in this writer's opinion through a drastic misunderstanding of the early church fathers. The two communities are The simple way founded by Shank Collarbone, and Kimono Farms founded by Clarence Jordan. Bibliography Breeder, Adrian Hendrix. Bernard of Calvarias: Between Cult and History. 1st English deed. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Readmes, 1996. The Ante-Nice Fathers, Volume VI: Fathers of the Third Century: Gregory Thaumaturgy, Dionysus the Great, Julius Africans, Anatolian and Minor Writers, Methodism, Rancorous.