

Edward Gibbon

The
Decline
and Fall
of the
Roman
Empire

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4 Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

IN SIX VOLUMES • VOLUME FOUR

INTRODUCTION BY
CHRISTOPHER DAWSON



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THE HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

CHAPTER XXXVII

Origin, Progress, and Effects of the Monastic Life—Conversion of the
Barbarians to Christianity and Arianism—Persecution of the Vandals
in Africa—Extinction of Arianism among the Barbarians

THE indissoluble connection of civil and ecclesiastical affairs has compelled and encouraged me to relate the progress, the persecutions, the establishment, the divisions, the final triumph, and the gradual corruption of Christianity. I have purposely delayed the consideration of two religious events interesting in the study of human nature, and important in the decline and fall of the Roman empire. I. The institution of the monastic life;¹ and II. The conversion of the northern barbarians.

I. Prosperity and peace introduced the distinction of the *vulgar* and the *Ascetic Christians*.² The loose and imperfect practice of religion satisfied the conscience of the multitude. The prince or magistrate, the soldier or merchant, reconciled their fervent zeal and implicit faith with the exercise of their profession, the pursuit of their interest, and the indulgence of their passions: but the Ascetics, who obeyed and abused the rigid precepts of the Gospel, were inspired by the savage enthusiasm which represents man as a criminal, and God as a

¹ The origin of the monastic institution has been laboriously discussed by Thomassin (*Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. i. p. 1419-1426) and Helyot (*Hist. des Ordres Monastiques*, tom. i. p. 1-66). These authors are very learned and tolerably honest, and their difference of opinion shows the subject in its full extent. Yet the cautious Protestant, who distrusts *any* Popish guides, may consult the seventh book of Bingham's *Christian Antiquities*.

² See Euseb. *Demonstrat. Evangel.* (l. i. p. 20, 21, edit. Græc. Rob. Stephani, Paris, 1545). In his *Ecclesiastical History*, published twelve years after the Demonstration, Eusebius (l. ii. c. 17) asserts the Christianity of the *Therapeutæ*; but he appears ignorant that a similar institution was actually revived in Egypt.

tyrant. They seriously renounced the business and the pleasures of the age; abjured the use of wine, of flesh, and of marriage; chastised their body, mortified their affections, and embraced a life of misery, as the price of eternal happiness. In the reign of Constantine the Ascetics fled from a profane and degenerate world to perpetual solitude or religious society. Like the first Christians of Jerusalem,¹ they resigned the use or the property of their temporal possessions; established regular communities of the same sex and a similar disposition; and assumed the names of *Hermits*, *Monks*, and *Anachorets*, expressive of their lonely retreat in a natural or artificial desert. They soon acquired the respect of the world, which they despised; and the loudest applause was bestowed on this DIVINE PHILOSOPHY,² which surpassed, without the aid of science or reason, the laborious virtues of the Grecian schools. The monks might indeed contend with the Stoics in the contempt of fortune, of pain, and of death: the Pythagorean silence and submission were revived in their servile discipline; and they disdained as firmly as the Cynics themselves all the forms and decencies of civil society. But the votaries of this Divine Philosophy aspired to imitate a purer and more perfect model. They trod in the footsteps of the prophets, who had retired to the desert;³ and they restored the devout and contemplative life, which had been instituted by the Essenians in Palestine and Egypt. The philosophic eye of Pliny had surveyed with astonishment a solitary people, who dwelt among the palm-trees near the Dead Sea; who subsisted without money; who were propagated without women; and who derived from the disgust and repentance of mankind a perpetual supply of voluntary associates.⁴

¹ Cassian (Collat. xviii. 5 [Max. Bibl. Patr. t. vii. p. 208]) claims this origin for the institution of the *Cænobites*, which gradually decayed till it was restored by Antony and his disciples.

² Ὁ φελιμώτατον γάρ τι χρῆμα εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἐλθοῦσα παρὰ Θεοῦ ἡ τοιαύτη φιλοσοφία. These are the expressive words of Sozomen, who copiously and agreeably describes (l. i. c. 12, 13, 14) the origin and progress of this monkish philosophy (see Suicer. Thesaur. Eccles. tom. ii. p. 1441). Some modern writers, Lipsius (tom. iv. p. 448; Manuduct. ad Philosoph. Stoic. iii. 13) and La Mothe de Vayer (tom. ix. de la Vertu des Payens, p. 228-262), have compared the Carmelites to the Pythagoreans, and the Cynics to the Capucins.

³ The Carmelites derive their pedigree in regular succession from the prophet Elijah (see the Theses of Beziers, A.D. 1682, in Bayle's *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres, Œuvres*, tom. i. p. 82, etc.; and the prolix irony of the *Ordres Monastiques*, an anonymous work, tom. i. p. 1-433; Berlin, 1751). Rome and the inquisition of Spain silenced the profane criticism of the Jesuits of Flanders (Helyot, *Hist. des Ordres Monastiques*, tom. i. p. 282-300), and the statue of Elijah the Carmelite has been erected in the church of St. Peter (Voyages du P. Labat, tom. iii. p. 87).

⁴ Plin. *Hist. Natur.* v. 15. Gens sola, et in toto orbe præter ceteras

Egypt, the fruitful parent of superstition, afforded the first example of the monastic life. Antony,¹ an illiterate² youth of the lower parts of Thebais, distributed his patrimony,³ deserted his family and native home, and executed his *monastic* penance with original and intrepid fanaticism. After a long and painful novitiate among the tombs and in a ruined tower, he boldly advanced into the desert three days' journey to the eastward of the Nile; discovered a lonely spot, which possessed the advantages of shade and water; and fixed his last residence on Mount Colzim, near the Red Sea, where an ancient monastery still preserves the name and memory of the saint.⁴ The curious

mira, sine ullâ feminâ, omni venere abdicatâ, sine pecuniâ, socia palmarum. Ita per seculorum millia (incredibile dictu) gens aeterna est in quâ nemo nascitur. Tam fecunda illis aliorum vitæ poenitentia est. He places them just beyond the noxious influence of the lake, and names Engaddi and Masada as the nearest towns. The Laura and monastery of St. Sabas could not be far distant from this place. See Reland, *Palestin.* tom. i. p. 295; tom. ii. p. 763, 874, 880, 890.

¹ See Athanas. *Op.* tom. ii. p. 450-505 [tom. i. p. 793-866, ed. Bened. 1698], and the *Vit. Patrum*, p. 26-74, with Rosweyde's Annotations. The former is the Greek original; the latter, a very ancient Latin version by Evagrius, the friend of St. Jerom.

² *Γράμματα μὲν μάθειν οὐκ ἠνέσχετο.* Athanas. tom. ii. in *Vit. St. Anton.* p. 452 [p. 795, ed. Bened. 1698; cf. c. 72, p. 849], and the assertion of his total ignorance has been received by many of the ancients and moderns. But Tillermont (*Mém. Ecclés.* tom. vii. p. 666) shows, by some probable arguments, that Antony could read and write in the Coptic, his native tongue; and that he was only a stranger to the *Greek letters*. The philosopher Synesius (p. 51 [ed. Par. 1612]) acknowledges that the natural genius of Antony did not require the aid of learning.

[Athanasius, in his *Life of Antony* (chap. 47), boasts of the fact of the saint's holy horror of clean water, by which his feet at least had never been contaminated since his adoption of the holy rule, unless under the dire necessity of crossing a river or the like.—O. S.]

³ *Arura* autem erant ei trecentæ uberes, et valde optimæ (*Vit. Patr.* l. v. [l. i.] p. 36). If the *Arura* be a square measure of an hundred Egyptian cubits (Rosweyde, *Onomasticon ad Vit. Patrum*, p. 1014, 1015 [p. 1009]), and the Egyptian cubit of all ages be equal to twenty-two English inches (Greaves, vol. i. p. 233), the *arura* will consist of about three-quarters of an English acre.

⁴ The description of the monastery is given by Jerom (tom. i. p. 248, 249, in *Vit. Hilarion* [tom. ii. p. 31, ed. Vallars.]), and the P. Sicard (*Missions du Levant*, tom. v. p. 122-200). Their accounts cannot always be reconciled: the father painted from his fancy, and the Jesuit from his experience.

[For those desirous of studying the origin of monasticism, the earliest and perhaps, all things considered, the best authorities are Palladius, Rufinus, and Sozomen. The monastic system began with the isolated individuals who, like Antony, went out into the desert to live the life of meditation and prayer. Then came the "organised community," evolved by Pachomius, who had become convinced that life in a society of recluses was more accordant to the mind of the Founder of Christianity than the solitary existence of an anchorite. He developed a rigid system or rule for the brethren thus living together. At first the church was opposed to the idea, and both the bishops and the clergy persecuted the monks. The church, however, soon discovered that, if it desired to retain its influence

devotion of the Christians pursued him to the desert; and when he was obliged to appear at Alexandria, in the face of mankind, he supported his fame with discretion and dignity. He enjoyed the friendship of Athanasius, whose doctrine he approved; and the Egyptian peasant respectfully declined a respectful invitation from the emperor Constantine. The venerable patriarch (for Antony attained the age of one hundred and five years) beheld the numerous progeny which had been formed by his example and his lessons. The prolific colonies of monks multiplied with rapid increase on the sands of Libya, upon the rocks of Thebais, and in the cities of the Nile. To the south of Alexandria, the mountain, and adjacent desert, of Nitria was peopled by five thousand anachorets; and the traveller may still investigate the ruins of fifty monasteries, which were planted in that barren soil by the disciples of Antony.¹ In the Upper Thebais, the vacant island of Tabenne² was occupied by Pachomius and fourteen hundred of his brethren. That holy abbot successively founded nine monasteries of men, and one of women; and the festival of Easter sometimes collected fifty thousand religious persons, who followed his *angelic* rule of discipline.³ The stately and populous city of Oxyrinchus, the seat of Christian orthodoxy, had devoted the temples, the public edifices, and even the ramparts, to pious and charitable uses; and the bishop, who might preach in twelve churches, computed

with the people, it must not only refrain from hindering, but must reconcile itself to and patronise a movement which was striking its roots deep into the spiritual imagination of the community at large. For a long time the church merely stood aloof, refraining from persecuting. Then by a tactful move on the part of the Patriarch Athanasius, the reconciliation between the church and monachism was accomplished. Grutzmacher has aptly said that Athanasius's Life of St. Anthony is the seal which the church sets on its recognition of the new movement. Cf. Bury, vol. iv. Appendix 3, for a most valuable list of the authorities on monachism to which I am indebted; also, in German, Weingarten, Harnack, Mayer, and in French, Amelineau.—O. S.]

¹ Jerom, tom. i. p. 146, ad Eustochium [Ep. 22, p. 119, ed. Vall.]; Hist. Lausiac. c. 7, in Vit. Patrum, p. 712 [p. 982]. The P. Sicard (Missions du Levant, tom. ii. p. 29-79) visited and has described this desert, which now contains four monasteries, and twenty or thirty monks. See D'Anville, Description de l'Egypte, p. 74.

² Tabenne is a small island in the Nile, in the diocese of Tentyra or Dendera, between the modern town of Girge and the ruins of ancient Thebes (D'Anville, p. 194). M. de Tillemont doubts whether it was an isle; but I may conclude, from his own facts, that the primitive name was afterwards transferred to the great monastery of Bau or Pabau (Mém. Ecclés. tom. vii. p. 678, 688).

³ See in the Codex Regularum (published by Lucas Holstenius, Rome, 1661) a preface of St. Jerom to his Latin version of the Rule of Pachomius, tom. i. p. 61 [tom. i. p. 25, ed. Augsb. 1759].

ten thousand females, and twenty thousand males, of the monastic profession.¹ The Egyptians, who gloried in this marvellous revolution, were disposed to hope, and to believe, that the number of the monks was equal to the remainder of the people;² and posterity might repeat the saying which had formerly been applied to the sacred animals of the same country, that in Egypt it was less difficult to find a god than a man.

Athanasius introduced into Rome the knowledge and practice of the monastic life; and a school of this new philosophy was opened by the disciples of Antony, who accompanied their primate to the holy threshold of the Vatican. The strange and savage appearance of these Egyptians excited, at first, horror and contempt, and, at length, applause and zealous imitation. The senators, and more especially the matrons, transformed their palaces and villas into religious houses; and the narrow institution of *six* Vestals was eclipsed by the frequent monasteries, which were seated on the ruins of ancient temples and in the midst of the Roman forum.³ Inflamed by the example of Antony, a Syrian youth, whose name was Hilarion,⁴ fixed his dreary abode on a sandy beach between the sea and a morass, about seven miles from Gaza. The austere penance, in which he persisted forty-eight years, diffused a similar enthusiasm; and the holy man was followed by a train of two or three thousand anachorets, whenever he visited the innumerable monasteries of Palestine. The fame of Basil⁵ is immortal in the monastic history of the East. With a mind that had tasted the learning and eloquence of Athens; with an ambition scarcely to be satisfied by the archbishopric of Cæsarea, Basil retired to a

¹ Rufin. c. 5, in Vit. Patrum, p. 459. He calls it *civitas ampla valde et populosa*, and reckons twelve churches. Strabo (l. xvii. p. 1166 [p. 812, ed. Casaub.]) and Ammianus (xxii. 16) have made honourable mention of Oxyrinchus, whose inhabitants adored a small fish in a magnificent temple.

² *Quanti populi habentur in urbibus, tantæ pene habentur in desertis multitudines monachorum.* Rufin. c. 7, in Vit. Patrum, p. 461. He congratulates the fortunate change.

³ The introduction of the monastic life into Rome and Italy is occasionally mentioned by Jerom, tom. i. p. 119, 120, 199.

⁴ See the Life of Hilarion, by St. Jerom (tom. i. p. 241, 252 [tom. ii. p. 15, 24, ed. Vall.]). The stories of Paul, Hilarion, and Malchus, by the same author, are admirably told; and the only defect of these pleasing compositions is the want of truth and common sense.

⁵ His original retreat was in a small village on the banks of the Iris, not far from Neo-Cæsarea. The ten or twelve years of his monastic life were disturbed by long and frequent avocations. Some critics have disputed the authenticity of his ascetic rules; but the external evidence is weighty, and they can only prove that it is the work of a real or affected enthusiast. See Tillemont, *Mém. Ecclés.* tom. ix. p. 636-644; Helyot, *Hist. des Ordres Monastiques*, tom. i. p. 175-181.

savage solitude in Pontus; and deigned, for a while, to give laws to the spiritual colonies which he profusely scattered along the coast of the Black Sea. In the West, Martin of Tours,¹ a soldier, a hermit, a bishop, and a saint, established the monasteries of Gaul; two thousand of his disciples followed him to the grave; and his eloquent historian challenges the deserts of Thebais to produce, in a more favourable climate, a champion of equal virtue. The progress of the monks was not less rapid or universal than that of Christianity itself. Every province, and, at last, every city, of the empire was filled with their increasing multitudes; and the bleak and barren isles, from Lerins to Lipari, that arise out of the Tuscan Sea, were chosen by the anachorets for the place of their voluntary exile. An easy and perpetual intercourse by sea and land connected the provinces of the Roman world; and the life of Hilarion displays the facility with which an indigent hermit of Palestine might traverse Egypt, embark for Sicily, escape to Epirus, and finally settle in the island of Cyprus.² The Latin Christians embraced the religious institutions of Rome. The pilgrims who visited Jerusalem eagerly copied, in the most distant climates of the earth, the faithful model of the monastic life. The disciples of Antony spread themselves beyond the tropic, over the Christian empire of Æthiopia.³ The monastery of Banchor,⁴ in Flintshire, which contained above two thousand brethren, dispersed a numerous colony among the barbarians of Ireland;⁵ and Iona, one of the Hebrides, which was planted by the Irish monks, diffused over the northern regions a doubtful ray of science and superstition.⁶

¹ See his Life, and the three Dialogues by Sulpicius Severus, who asserts (Dialog. i. 16) that the booksellers of Rome were delighted with the quick and ready sale of his popular work.

² When Hilarion sailed from Parætonium to Cape Pachynus, he offered to pay his passage with a book of the Gospels. Posthumian, a Gallic monk, who had visited Egypt, found a merchant-ship bound from Alexandria to Marseilles, and performed the voyage in thirty days (Sulp. Sever. Dialog. i. 1). Athanasius, who addressed his Life of St. Antony to the foreign monks, was obliged to hasten the composition, that it might be ready for the sailing of the fleets (tom. ii. p. 451 [tom. i. p. 794, ed. Bened. 1698]).

³ See Jerom (tom. i. p. 126), Assemani, *Bibliot. Orient.* tom. iv. p. 92, p. 857-919, and Geddes, *Church History of Æthiopia*, p. 29, 30, 31. The Abyssinian monks adhere very strictly to the primitive institution.

⁴ Camden's *Britannia*, vol. i. p. 666, 667.

⁵ All that learning can extract from the rubbish of the dark ages is copiously stated by Archbishop Usher in his *Britannicarum Ecclesiarum Antiquitates*, cap. xvi. p. 425-503.

⁶ This small though not barren spot, Iona, Hy, or Columbkil, only two miles in length and one mile in breadth, has been distinguished—1. By the monastery of St. Columba, founded A.D. 566, whose abbot exercised an extraordinary jurisdiction over the bishops of Caledonia; 2. By a classic

These unhappy exiles from social life were impelled by the dark and implacable genius of superstition. Their mutual resolution was supported by the example of millions, of either sex, of every age, and of every rank; and each proselyte who entered the gates of a monastery was persuaded that he trod the steep and thorny path of eternal happiness.¹ But the operation of these religious motives was variously determined by the temper and situation of mankind. Reason might subdue, or passion might suspend, their influence; but they acted most forcibly on the infirm minds of children and females; they were strengthened by secret remorse or accidental misfortune; and they might derive some aid from the temporal considerations of vanity or interest. It was naturally supposed that the pious and humble monks, who had renounced the world to accomplish the work of their salvation, were the best qualified for the spiritual government of the Christians. The reluctant hermit was torn from his cell, and seated, amidst the acclamations of the people, on the episcopal throne: the monasteries of Egypt, of Gaul, and of the East, supplied a regular succession of saints and bishops; and ambition soon discovered the secret road which led to the possession of wealth and honours.² The popular monks, whose reputation was connected with the fame and success of the order, assiduously laboured to multiply the number of their fellow-captives. They insinuated themselves into noble and opulent families; and the specious arts of flattery and seduction were employed to secure those proselytes who might bestow wealth or dignity on the monastic profession. The indignant father bewailed the loss, perhaps, of an only son;³ the credulous maid was betrayed by vanity to violate the laws of nature; and

library, which afforded some hopes of an entire Livy; and, 3. By the tombs of sixty kings, Scots, Irish, and Norwegians, who reposed in holy ground. See Usher (p. 311, 360-370) and Buchanan (Rer. Scot. l. ii. p. 15, edit. Ruddiman).

¹ Chrysostom (in the first tome of the Benedictine edition) has consecrated three books to the praise and defence of the monastic life. He is encouraged, by the example of the ark, to presume that none but the elect (the monks) can possibly be saved (l. i. p. 55, 56). Elsewhere, indeed, he becomes more merciful (l. iii. p. 83, 84), and allows different degrees of glory, like the sun, moon, and stars. In his lively comparison of a king and a monk (l. iii. p. 116-121), he supposes (what is hardly fair) that the king will be more sparingly rewarded, and more rigorously punished.

² Thomassin (*Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. i. p. 1426-1469) and Mabillon (*Œuvres Posthumes*, tom. ii. p. 115-158). The monks were gradually adopted as a part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

³ Dr. Middleton (vol. i. p. 110) liberally censures the conduct and writings of Chrysostom, one of the most eloquent and successful advocates for the monastic life.

the matron aspired to imaginary perfection by renouncing the virtues of domestic life. Paula yielded to the persuasive eloquence of Jerom;¹ and the profane title of mother-in-law of God² tempted that illustrious widow to consecrate the virginity of her daughter Eustochium. By the advice, and in the company, of her spiritual guide, Paula abandoned Rome and her infant son; retired to the holy village of Bethlem; founded an hospital and four monasteries; and acquired, by her alms and penance, an eminent and conspicuous station in the catholic church. Such rare and illustrious penitents were celebrated as the glory and example of their age; but the monasteries were filled by a crowd of obscure and abject plebeians,³ who gained in the cloister much more than they had sacrificed in the world. Peasants, slaves, and mechanics might escape from poverty and contempt to a safe and honourable profession, whose apparent hardships were mitigated by custom, by popular applause, and by the secret relaxation of discipline.⁴ The subjects of Rome, whose persons and fortunes were made responsible for unequal and exorbitant tributes, retired from the oppression of the Imperial government; and the pusillanimous youth preferred the penance of a monastic, to the dangers of a military, life. The affrighted provincials of every rank, who fled before the barbarians, found shelter and subsistence; whole legions were buried in these religious sanctuaries; and the same cause which relieved the distress of individuals impaired the strength and fortitude of the empire.⁵

¹ Jerom's devout ladies form a very considerable portion of his works: the particular treatise, which he styles the Epitaph of Paula (tom. i. p. 169-192 [Ep. 108, tom. i. p. 684, ed. Vallars.]), is an elaborate and extravagant panegyric. The exordium is ridiculously turgid:—"If all the members of my body were changed into tongues, and if all my limbs resounded with a human voice, yet should I be incapable," etc.

² *Socrus Dei esse cœpisti* (Jerom. tom. i. p. 140, ad Eustochium). Rufinus (in Hieronym. Op. tom. iv. p. 223), who was justly scandalised, asks his adversary, From what Pagan poet he had stolen an expression so impious and absurd?

³ *Nunc autem veniunt plerumque ad hanc professionem servitutis Dei, et ex conditione servili, vel etiam liberati, vel propter hoc a Dominis liberati sive liberandi; et ex vitâ rusticânâ, et ex opificum exercitatione, et plebeio labore.* Augustin. de Oper. Monach. c. 22, ap. Thomassin, Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. iii. p. 1094. The Egyptian, who blamed Arsenius, owned that he led a more comfortable life as a monk than as a shepherd. See Tillemont, Mém. Ecclés. tom. xiv. p. 679.

⁴ A Dominican friar (Voyages du P. Labat, tom. i. p. 10), who lodged at Cadiz in a convent of his brethren, soon understood that their repose was never interrupted by nocturnal devotion; "quoiqu'on ne laisse pas de sonner pour l'édification du peuple."

⁵ See a very sensible preface of Lucas Holstenius to the Codex Regularum. The emperors attempted to support the obligation of public and private

The monastic profession of the ancients¹ was an act of voluntary devotion. The inconstant fanatic was threatened with the eternal vengeance of the God whom he deserted; but the doors of the monastery were still open for repentance. Those monks whose conscience was fortified by reason or passion were at liberty to resume the character of men and citizens; and even the spouses of Christ might accept the legal embraces of an earthly lover.² The examples of scandal, and the progress of superstition, suggested the propriety of more forcible restraints. After a sufficient trial, the fidelity of the novice was secured by a solemn and perpetual vow; and his irrevocable engagement was ratified by the laws of the church and state. A guilty fugitive was pursued, arrested, and restored to his perpetual prison; and the interposition of the magistrate oppressed the freedom and merit which had alleviated, in some degree, the abject slavery of the monastic discipline.³ The actions of a monk, his words, and even his thoughts, were determined by an inflexible rule⁴ or a capricious superior: the slightest offences were corrected by disgrace or confinement, extraordinary fasts, or bloody flagellation; and disobedience, murmur, or delay were ranked in the catalogue of the most heinous sins.⁵ A blind

duties; but the feeble dykes were swept away by the torrent of superstition; and Justinian surpassed the most sanguine wishes of the monks (Thomassin, tom. i. p. 1782-1799, and Bingham, l. vii. c. 3, p. 253).

¹ The monastic institutions, particularly those of Egypt, about the year 400, are described by four curious and devout travellers—Rufinus (Vit. Patrum, l. ii. iii. p. 424-536), Posthumian (Sulp. Sever. Dialog. i.), Palladius (Hist. Lausiaca in Vit. Patrum, p. 709-863 [783]), and Cassian (see in tom. vii. Bibliothec. Max. Patrum, his four first books of Institutes, and the twenty-four Collations or Conferences).

² The example of Malchus (Jerom. tom. i. p. 256 [tom. ii. p. 44, ed. Vallars.]), and the design of Cassian and his friend (Collation xxiv. 1), are incontestable proofs of their freedom, which is elegantly described by Erasmus in his Life of St. Jerom. See Chardon, Hist. des Sacremens, tom. vi. p. 279-300.

³ See the Laws of Justinian (Novell. cxxiii. No. 42 [Auth. Coll. ix. tit. vii.]), and of Lewis the Pious (in the Historians of France, tom. vi. p. 427), and the actual jurisprudence of France, in Denissart (Decisions, etc., tom. iv. p. 855, etc.).

⁴ The ancient Codex Regularum, collected by Benedict Anianinus, the reformer of the monks in the beginning of the ninth century, and published in the seventeenth by Lucas Holstenius, contains thirty different rules for men and women. Of these, seven were composed in Egypt, one in the East, one in Cappadocia, one in Italy, one in Africa, four in Spain, eight in Gaul or France, and one in England.

⁵ The rule of Columbanus, so prevalent in the West, inflicts one hundred lashes for very slight offences (Cod. Reg. part ii. p. 174 [tom. i. p. 178, ed. 1759]). Before the time of Charlemagne the abbots indulged themselves in mutilating their monks, or putting out their eyes—a punishment much less cruel than the tremendous *vade in pace* (the subterranean dungeon, or sepulchre), which was afterwards invented. See an admirable discourse

submission to the commands of the abbot, however absurd, or even criminal, they might seem, was the ruling principle, the first virtue of the Egyptian monks; and their patience was frequently exercised by the most extravagant trials. They were directed to remove an enormous rock; assiduously to water a barren staff that was planted in the ground, till, at the end of three years, it should vegetate and blossom like a tree; to walk into a fiery furnace; or to cast their infant into a deep pond: and several saints, or madmen, have been immortalised in monastic story by their thoughtless and fearless obedience.¹ The freedom of the mind, the source of every generous and rational sentiment, was destroyed by the habits of credulity and submission; and the monk, contracting the vices of a slave, devoutly followed the faith and passions of his ecclesiastical tyrant. The peace of the Eastern church was invaded by a swarm of fanatics, incapable of fear, or reason, or humanity; and the Imperial troops acknowledged, without shame, that they were much less apprehensive of an encounter with the fiercest barbarians.²

Superstition has often framed and consecrated the fantastic garments of the monks:³ but their apparent singularity sometimes proceeds from their uniform attachment to a simple and primitive model, which the revolutions of fashion have made ridiculous in the eyes of mankind. The father of the Benedictines expressly disclaims all idea of choice or merit; and soberly exhorts his disciples to adopt the coarse and convenient dress of the countries which they may inhabit.⁴ The monastic habits of the ancients varied with the climate and their mode of life; and they assumed, with the same indifference, the sheep-skin of the Egyptian peasants or the cloak of the Grecian

of the learned Mabillon (*Œuvres Posthumes*, tom. ii. p. 321-336), who, on this occasion, seems to be inspired by the genius of humanity. For such an effort, I can forgive his defence of the holy tear of Vendome (p. 361-399).

¹ Sulp. Sever. *Dialog.* i. 12, 13, p. 532, etc. [ed. Lugd. B. 1647]; Cassian. *Institut.* l. iv. c. 26, 27. "*Præcipua ibi virtus et prima est obedientia.*" Among the *Verba seniorum* (in *Vit. Patrum*, l. v. p. 617), the fourteenth libel or discourse is on the subject of obedience; and the Jesuit Rosweyde, who published that huge volume for the use of convents, has collected all the scattered passages in his two copious indexes.

² Dr. Jortin (*Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. iv. p. 161) has observed the scandalous valour of the Cappadocian monks, which was exemplified in the banishment of Chrysostom.

³ Cassian has simply, though copiously, described the monastic habit of Egypt (*Institut.* l. i.), to which Sozomen (l. iii. c. 14) attributes such allegorical meaning and virtue.

⁴ *Regul. Benedict.* cap. 55, in *Cod. Regul.* part ii. p. 51 [tom. i. p. 130, ed. Augsb. 1759].

philosophers. They allowed themselves the use of linen in Egypt, where it was a cheap and domestic manufacture; but in the West they rejected such an expensive article of foreign luxury.¹ It was the practice of the monks either to cut or shave their hair; they wrapped their heads in a cowl, to escape the sight of profane objects; their legs and feet were naked, except in the extreme cold of winter; and their slow and feeble steps were supported by a long staff. The aspect of a genuine anachoret was horrid and disgusting: every sensation that is offensive to man was thought acceptable to God; and the angelic rule of Tabenne condemned the salutary custom of bathing the limbs in water and of anointing them with oil.² The austere monks slept on the ground, on a hard mat or a rough blanket; and the same bundle of palm-leaves served them as a seat in the day and a pillow in the night. Their original cells were low narrow huts, built of the slightest materials; which formed, by the regular distribution of the streets, a large and populous village, enclosing, within the common wall, a church, a hospital, perhaps a library, some necessary offices, a garden, and a fountain or reservoir of fresh water. Thirty or forty brethren composed a family of separate discipline and diet; and the great monasteries of Egypt consisted of thirty or forty families.

Pleasure and guilt are synonymous terms in the language of the monks, and they had discovered, by experience, that rigid fasts and abstemious diet are the most effectual preservatives against the impure desires of the flesh.³ The rules of abstinence which they imposed, or practised, were not uniform or perpetual: the cheerful festival of the Pentecost was balanced by the extraordinary mortification of Lent; the fervour of new monasteries was insensibly relaxed; and the voracious appetite of the Gauls could not imitate the patient and temperate virtue of the

¹ See the Rule of Ferreolus, bishop of Usez (cap. 31, in Cod. Regul. part ii. p. 136 [tom. i. p. 162]), and of Isidore, bishop of Seville (cap. 13, in Cod. Regul. part ii. p. 214 [tom. i. p. 193]).

² Some partial indulgences were granted for the hands and feet. "Totum autem corpus nemo unguet nisi causâ infirmitatis, nec lavabitur aquâ nudo corpore, nisi languor perspicuus sit." (Regul. Pachom. xcii. part. i. p. 78 [tom. i. p. 31].)

³ St. Jerom, in strong but indiscreet language, expresses the most important use of fasting and abstinence: "Non quod Deus universitatis Creator et Dominus, intestinorum nostrorum rugitû, et inanitate ventris, pulmonisque ardore delectetur, sed quod aliter pudicitia tuta esse non possit." (Op. tom. i. p. 137, ad Eustochium [Ep. 22, tom. i. p. 94, ed. Vallars.]) See the twelfth and twenty-second Collations of Cassian, *de Castitate* and *de Illusionibus Nocturnis*.

Egyptians.¹ The disciples of Antony and Pachomius were satisfied with their daily pittance² of twelve ounces of bread, or rather biscuit,³ which they divided into two frugal repasts, of the afternoon and of the evening. It was esteemed a merit, and almost a duty, to abstain from the boiled vegetables which were provided for the refectory; but the extraordinary bounty of the abbot sometimes indulged them with the luxury of cheese, fruit, salad, and the small dried fish of the Nile.⁴ A more ample latitude of sea and river fish was gradually allowed or assumed, but the use of flesh was long confined to the sick or travellers: and when it gradually prevailed in the less rigid monasteries of Europe, a singular distinction was introduced; as if birds, whether wild or domestic, had been less profane than the grosser animals of the field. Water was the pure and innocent beverage of the primitive monks; and the founder of the Benedictines regrets the daily portion of half a pint of wine which had been extorted from him by the intemperance of the age.⁵ Such an allowance might be easily supplied by the vineyards of Italy; and his victorious disciples, who passed the Alps, the Rhine, and the Baltic, required, in the place of wine, an adequate compensation of strong beer or cider.

The candidate who aspired to the virtue of evangelical poverty, abjured, at his first entrance into a regular community, the idea, and even the name, of all separate or exclusive possession.⁶

¹ *Edacitas in Græcis gula est, in Gallis natura* (Dialog. i. c. 4, p. 521). Cassian fairly owns that the perfect model of abstinence cannot be imitated in Gaul, on account of the ærum temperies, and the *qualitas nostræ fragilitatis* (Institut. iv. 11). Among the Western rules, that of Columbanus is the most austere: he had been educated amidst the poverty of Ireland, as rigid, perhaps, and inflexible as the abstemious virtue of Egypt. The rule of Isidore of Seville is the mildest: on holidays he allows the use of flesh.

² "Those who drink only water, and have no nutritious liquor, ought at least to have a pound and a half (*twenty-four ounces*) of bread every day." State of Prisons, p. 40, by Mr. Howard.

³ See Cassian. Collat. ii. 19, 20, 21. The small loaves or biscuit of six ounces each had obtained the name of *Paximacia* (Rosweyde, Onomasticon, p. 1045 [1033]). Pachomius, however, allowed his monks some latitude in the quantity of their food; but he made them work in proportion as they ate (Pallad. in Hist. Lausiac. c. 38, 39, in Vit. Patrum, l. viii. p. 736, 737).

⁴ See the banquet to which Cassian (Collation viii. 1) was invited by Serenus, an Egyptian abbot.

⁵ See the Rule of St. Benedict, cap. 39, 40 (in Cod. Reg. part ii. p. 41, 42 [tom. i. p. 129, ed. 1759]). *Licet legamus vinum omnino monachorum non esse, sed quia nostris temporibus id monachis persuaderi non potest; he allows them a Roman hemina, a measure which may be ascertained from Arbutnot's Tables.*

⁶ Such expressions as *my book, my cloak, my shoes* (Cassian. Institut. l. iv. c. 13) were not less severely prohibited among the Western monks (Cod.