

PACHOMIUS: ‘FATHER OF THE COMMUNITY’¹

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Antony the Great said concerning Pachomius’ *skoinonia*, “I tell you, it was a great ministry he received this gathering of so many brothers; and he walks the way of the apostles...in the beginning when I became a monk there was no community to nurture others souls... And then your father did that beautiful thing from the Lord.”²

Pachomius himself speaks of his community as being one of ‘fellowship’, for it is a term that described the early Christians who had all things in common.³ The implication, therefore, is that Pachomius was not just a pioneer of communal monasticism, but a pioneer in Christian living who was divinely instructed to resurrect the life of the early Christian community.⁴

This paper seeks to consider how Pachomius’ conversion to Christianity and training as an ascetic established the groundwork for his vision of a community of brothers equal and united in prayer and work. In establishing a common rule, I will seek to identify the challenges Pachomius faced, and how equality in all things, including work, was necessary for fostering harmony amongst the brothers. Based on the *Life and Rules of Pachomius*, Palladius’ *Lausiac History*, Sozomen’s *Ecclesiastical History*, the *History of the Monks of Egypt*, and John Cassian’s *Institutes*, I will provide evidence on how the Pachomian monks simplified their spiritual

¹ GOEHRING 1999:91-92. Goehring states that whilst the *Life of Antony* defined Egyptian monasticism as a desert movement, because Pachomian monasticism is Egyptian, then it should be considered part of the desert movement.

² *GI* 120.

³ ACTS 4:32-35.

⁴ HARMLESS 2004: 116, 122.

life to work and prayer,⁵ and how the leaders utilised work for other purposes, such as penance.

The Sources

Acknowledged as the founder of communal monasticism⁶ and legislator of the first known instruction for communal monastic living,⁷ Pachomius' *Rules* became the basis for Basil of Caesarea's monastic regulations in the East⁸, and were learnt and promoted by John Cassian in the West.⁹

The primary sources on Pachomius are the various (anonymous) *Lives* recorded in the *Bohairic* and *Sahidic* dialects and in *Greek*¹⁰ and *Arabic*,¹¹ as well as the *Rules of Saint Pachomius* of which Jerome's Latin translation is the earliest extant version.¹² A second and shorter version is recorded by Palladius in his *Lausiac History*,¹³ and the fifth century historian Sozomen also gives a compendium of the *Rules* in his *Ecclesiastical History*¹⁴. Both Palladius and Sozomen's accounts emphasize how the life of the

⁵ PETER BROWN, 1978:99

⁶ Bell 1948: 111. Whilst there is some evidence that some form of communal living existed before Pachomius, such as in the case of Antony putting his sister in a house of "well-known virgins", (VA 3.1) and Athanasius himself mentioning that prior to Antony's monastic vocation, there were "not many monasteries" (VA 3.2) it does not appear that these communities were governed by any common law and therefore appears that it was simply a means of accommodating like-minded people who practiced their own spirituality individually, therefore Antony said that before he became a monk, there were no such communities as Pachomius' "to nurture souls" (GI 120).

⁷ Goehring 1999:93.

⁸ *Basil to Gregory of Nazianzus* Letter 2; GRIGGS 1988:149.

⁹ INSTITUTES 4.3

¹⁰ *The Greek Life* like the Latin version of the *Life of Antony*, became the means by which the knowledge of Pachomius spread outside of Egypt. Chitty dates the *Greek Life* around 390 C.E.

¹¹ Marilyn Dunn states that each version of the *Life* represents a different viewpoint, analysis or stage in the history of Pachomian monasticism (Dunn 2003:25).

¹² Jerome translated the *Rules* into Latin around 404 C.E.

¹³ PALLADIUS, *Lausiac History* 38.

¹⁴ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.14.

Pachomian monks was regulated by a combination of ascetic practices and handiwork.¹⁵ The *Rules*, in Jerome's Latin translation, is composed of four separate books: the *Precepts*¹⁶, the *Precepts and Institutions*¹⁷, the *Precepts and Decisions*¹⁸, and the *Precepts and the Laws*¹⁹. Together these four books of precepts are known as the *Rules of Pachomius* and together with the other book known as the *Regulation of Horsiesios*, "witness to the state of [monastic] legislation at the end of the fourth century."²⁰

Jerome claims that Pachomius, Theodore and Horsiesios "were the first in the Thebaid and Egypt to lay the foundations of coenobitic life according to the precept of God and of the angel who was sent by God for this very purpose."²¹ His statement implies that the rules were not a set text but evolved during the lifetime of Pachomius and those of his successors.²²

Other sources include a series of anecdotes concerning Pachomius known as the *Paralipomena*, a *Letter of Bishop Ammon* who records some of his memories as a Pachomian monk at Phbow, two short Pachomian anecdotes known as *Draguet First Fragment* and *Draguet Second Fragment*, the *History of the Monks of Egypt*, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, and John Cassian's *Institutes*.

His Beginnings

Pachomius, as the *Greek Life* informs, was born in the Thebaid of pagan parents,²³ and as a conscript at the age of twenty, had his first encounter with Christians. Impressed by their kindness,

¹⁵ BROWN 1978:99.

¹⁶ A list of precepts for the monastery's superior that specifies everything concerning the morning assembly of the brothers.

¹⁷ A list of precepts containing instructions to housemasters regarding the weekly service and general assembly.

¹⁸ A list of precepts concerning the synaxis.

¹⁹ A list of precepts that measure out the penances for various types of offences.

²⁰ VEILLEUX 1981:13.

²¹ *Precepts* Preface.

²² VEILLEUX 1981:7.

²³ *GI* 2, 4-6.

Pachomius made a covenant with the God of the Christians that, “If You deliver me I will serve mankind all the days of my life.”²⁴ Pachomius’ initial experience of Christians and their faith, expressed in mercy and service to others, deeply influenced his entire outlook and came to characterise the expression of his own spirituality²⁵ of offering a more social dimension to Antony’s anchoritic monasticism; a view expressed by Derwas Chitty.²⁶

In his early years Pachomius apprenticed himself to a village ascetic named Palamon²⁷ who taught a rigorous ascetic regime of unceasing prayer, vigil and manual work.²⁸ Pachomius was so diligent that Sozomen states, “He had succeeded well in pursuing philosophy by himself.”²⁹ The *Life* also affirms that “[Pachomius] studied the injunctions of many of the fathers, endeavouring always to rise to the very heights of virtue.”³⁰ The similarities with Antony’s *Vita* are clear: during Antony’s early years as an ascetic apprentice he also practiced “ascetic discipline...he worked with his hands [and] prayed all the time,”³¹ and because he “closely observed the excellence of each person’s zeal and ascetic disciplines,”³² Athanasius declares, “he zealously endeavoured to manifest all [ascetic practices] in himself. To be sure... he would not take second place to any in doing what was best.”³³ Whilst Antony and Pachomius had never met, their mutual confidence was vital for the success of Egyptian monasticism, and by the author(s) of the *Life of Pachomius* fashioning his subject comparable with Antony, he is enhancing his subject’s authority. Wilfred Griggs observes, “Like Athanasius, the author of the *First Greek Life* had

²⁴ BL7-8.

²⁵ William Harmless states “the New Testament vision was central [for Pachomius]” (HARMLESS 2004:132).

²⁶ CHITTY 1966:10-11.

²⁷ CHITTY 1966:9. Chitty states that Pachomius was to hand down to his disciples the ascetic tradition which Palamon had inherited and passed on to Pachomius.

²⁸ HARMLESS 2004:118; BL 10

²⁹ SOZOMEN, *HE* 3.14

³⁰ *GI* 14

³¹ *VA* 3.5-6

³² *VA* 4.1

³³ *VA* 4.2-3

mimetic concerns.”³⁴ Hence Pachomius is a figure worthy of imitation³⁵ in the same way that Athanasius claims Antony is worthy of emulating.³⁶ Their mutual confidence is declared in the *Life of Macarius*; when prior to Macarius’ passing, “...two saints suddenly appeared to him,” and knowing Antony, Macarius recognised him but as he had not met Pachomius in life, Antony informed him, “This is my brother Pachomius. We have been sent to summon you... and you will dwell with us.”³⁷ The meeting of these three monastic fathers is significant in that they represent three distinct monastic experiences whilst retaining the same monastic theology. Their meeting represents their mutual confidence and acceptance. As Palladius affirms, “We are not concerned with the place where they settled, but rather it is their way of life that we seek.”³⁸

One of the most important lessons Palamon instilled in Pachomius was the need to work with one’s hands, “as the Apostle instructed, not only to earn their own living but so that they might have something to give to those in need.”³⁹ So not only did Pachomius actively weave ropes and baskets,⁴⁰ but he “cultivat[ed] a garden on the produce of which he lived and gave alms.”⁴¹ Pachomius recognized that the means to fulfill his promise of being charitable and serving mankind was for him to work with his hands, and so even after Palamon died and John (Pachomius’ brother) came to live with him, Pachomius continued to work with his hands, “and whatever was left over from what they produced by their manual work they gave to the poor.”⁴²

³⁴ HARMLESS, 2004:148

³⁵ *GI* 99

³⁶ *VA* Preface 2

³⁷ *Life of St Macarius* 34.

³⁸ PALLADIUS, *HL*, 16.

³⁹ *GI* 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.* Once again, things that Antony himself had practiced: work with his hands to provide for himself and to give alms (*VA* 44.2) and that he had cultivated a garden to provide provisions for visitors (*VA* 50.5-7).

⁴² *GI* 14.

In addition, the *Life* clearly illustrates that for Pachomius work and prayer were inseparable.⁴³ Accordingly we learn that, “Pachomius often went to gather firewood... and would frequently spend long hours by himself in prayer.”⁴⁴

As with Antony,⁴⁵ God provided Pachomius with divine revelations during the times in which he was absorbed in work and prayer; indicating how the two virtues combined are pleasing to God. Hence we learn, “One day as he went out to gather wood near the abandoned village of Tabennesi, and lingered in prayer, he heard a voice telling him, ‘Pachomius, struggle, dwell in this place and build a monastery for many will come to you and you will profit their souls.’”⁴⁶ At another time, “When he was... cutting rushes for mats and was himself keeping vigil... an angel of the Lord appeared to him saying, ‘Pachomius, the Lord’s will is for you to minister to the race of men and to unite them to Himself.’”⁴⁷

By God choosing the times in which Pachomius was absorbed in work and prayer to reveal His divine will for building a community of monks, is a sign that the Pachomian community must be one based on work and prayer. It was not only a means by which Pachomius could fulfil his promise of Christian charity and service,⁴⁸ but more importantly it was a means by which the monks could ensure the revelation of God’s presence in their lives.

The Divine Precepts

According to the *Life*, the angel had appeared to Pachomius on three separate occasions,⁴⁹ instructing him each time with more information concerning the rule he was to legislate for his

⁴³ For example: *GI* 7, 11, 12.

⁴⁴ *GI* 11.

⁴⁵ *VA* 82.4.

⁴⁶ *BL* 17.

⁴⁷ *BL* 22. Philip Rousseau observes that the fact Pachomius received the vision of the angel while he was cutting rushes, may explain why the mention of expeditions for the collection of rushes in the *Rules* is particularly frequent. Rousseau 1985: 83.

⁴⁸ HARMLESS 2004:132.

⁴⁹ First time: *GI* 12 and PALLADIUS, *HL* 32.1; second time: *GI* 15; third time: *GI* 21.

Koinonia. In chapter 12 of the *First GreekLife*, we learn that the angel of the Lord “appeared to him with tablets in his hand in which were laid down all the details of the sort of life which he was to teach to those who came to submit themselves to his. However, details of what the tablets contained are not provided. The evidence becomes clear in chapter 14 of the *First Greek Life* when after Palamon dies, Pachomius’ brother comes to live with him and together they “follow the same rule... in obedience to the precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵¹ This “rule” consisted of prayer, manual work, giving alms and modesty in clothing. After “[Pachomius] lived for fifteen years like this, in laborious toil and sweat, in vigils and abstinence”⁵² the angel appeared a second time to give “more divine guidance about the *Rule* which was to be observed by those who because of him would put their trust in the Lord.”⁵³ From this moment Pachomius began constructing with his own hands buildings “in order to accommodate all those who would undoubtedly be renouncing the world and coming to serve Christ. He constructed enough accommodation for a great number of people.”⁵⁴

The stage was now set for Pachomius to experience his third divine revelation in which he was instructed by the angel to now commence his mission, “keeping all the rules in the book which has been shown to you”.⁵⁵ It is at this point that the precepts regarding liturgy, working, eating, sleeping, clothing, and rules for novices, are stipulated.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ *GI* 12 and PALLADIUS, *HL* 32.1.

⁵¹ *GI* 14.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *GI* 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *GI* 21.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* When comparing the rules practiced earlier by Pachomius and his brother to the final set of rules mentioned in *GI* 21, one sees that the final precepts contained the addition of liturgical rules, rules for novices, and rules regarding eating and sleeping, which indicate the more communal nature of the monastery, and were only revealed after Pachomius had completed constructing buildings large enough to accommodate a great number.

Pachomius' First Community

The *Life* provides an interesting picture of the difficulties Pachomius faced with his first disciples at the start of his mission.⁵⁷ Zealous to fulfil all the precepts commanded by the angel of God,

“He not only committed himself to a stricter rule but took upon himself the control and care of the whole monastery, aiming to be a servant of all even if it were beyond his strength. He punctually prepared the common meal for the brothers and performed the usual offices. He gathered the vegetables from the garden which he had watered with his own hands. When anyone knocked at the monastery door he would be the one who went to open it and give a ready response. He nursed the sick day and night. In all these things he gave a most excellent example to his disciples.”⁵⁸

When the brothers questioned Pachomius why he was doing all the work, he replied that he wanted them to focus all their time on their spiritual life, and in return he would provide for their needs.⁵⁹

By taking all the responsibility upon himself to provide for the brothers, Pachomius was in fact deviating from the divine precept which instructed that each one work according to their strength,⁶⁰ and as a result, the brothers, not being able to focus all their time on contemplation without distraction, became idle and disobedient.⁶¹ After having been instructed by God to drive them out of the monastery,

“[The brothers] went to complain to bishop Serapion and accused Pachomius saying: ‘He drove us from the monastery!’ The bishop looked at their strong arms, and said... ‘It was God who drove you out. What evil have you done?’”⁶²

⁵⁷ Veilleux 1981:6.

⁵⁸ *GI* 22.

⁵⁹ *GI* 24-25.

⁶⁰ *GI* 22.

⁶¹ *SI* 10.

⁶² *SI* 18.

After “many other monks came to take the place of those evil monks,”⁶³ Pachomius then regulated his *Koinonia* according to the divine precepts⁶⁴ that encouraged a balance⁶⁵ of work and prayer⁶⁶ and having all things in common.⁶⁷

The Spirituality of Pachomius' Rules

To understand the system of Pachomius' communal monasticism is to understand Pachomius' spirituality. In the first place Pachomian spirituality was one of community.⁶⁸ His conversion had been brought about by the charity of the Christians,⁶⁹ after which he became inspired by the image of service.⁷⁰ This inspiration came to typify the expression of Pachomius' own spirituality⁷¹ and presented a more social dimension to Antony's monasticism. In addition, the *Sahidic Life* claims that Pachomius was divinely instructed to “serve mankind”⁷² hence giving his vocation a charitable orientation.⁷³ So where Antony is the father of monks, Pachomius becomes the father of a community of monks. Hence charity becomes the basis of Pachomian legislation;⁷⁴ the provision of which was expressed through the work of one's hands.

In fulfilling the scriptural command,⁷⁵ charity serves two purposes: it facilitates union with God⁷⁶ as well as union with

⁶³ *GI* 19.

⁶⁴ Harmless 2004:120.

⁶⁵ For example: *Precepts and Laws* 3.

⁶⁶ *Precepts* 5, 60, 142.

⁶⁷ *Precepts* 35, 39, 69, 77, 81.

⁶⁸ Chitty 1966:21.

⁶⁹ *GI* 4.

⁷⁰ *GI* 4-5; Harmless 2004:132.

⁷¹ Chitty 1966:10.

⁷² *SI* fragment III, 6 and 7.

⁷³ Harmless 2004:132.

⁷⁴ *Precepts and Judgements* introduction.

⁷⁵ John 13:12-17; *Paralipomena* 17.40; *Precepts* 51; *Precepts and Institutes* 10.

⁷⁶ For example: Matthew 5:42, Matthew 6:1-4, Mark 10:43-45, Luke 4:18.

others,⁷⁷ and therefore Pachomian spirituality developed along two lines: union with God and union with the brethren.⁷⁸

1) Union with God: The *Life* clearly indicates that Pachomius was a man of prayer⁷⁹ and so to encourage prayer and spiritual life amongst his brothers, the *Rules* insist above all on the Scriptures⁸⁰ and the common liturgies.⁸¹ However, realising the danger of restlessness that can be experienced during prayer and spiritual contemplation,⁸² Pachomius instigated a rule combining work and prayer.⁸³

Accordingly, Pachomian *Rules* were characterised by the unity between prayer and work;⁸⁴ when the brothers took part in a communal service, they were to work in silence at weaving mats or baskets whilst listening to a passage of scripture.⁸⁵ Thus, as Marilyn Dunn observes, liturgical practice was recognisably meditative.⁸⁶ Likewise, as the brothers went about their daily work, they were to recite verses from the scriptures.⁸⁷ This meditative tradition was recognised as the foundation of the spiritual life of all the monks of Egypt,⁸⁸ and the means by which they achieved monastic *ascesis*.

2) Union with the brethren: being charitable to others through service is the core of Pachomius' vision. The *Life* abounds with stories of Pachomius' charitable works: he took particular joy in providing for the needs of the helpless, the elderly, the sick and

⁷⁷ For example: Matthew 14:16, Luke 6:27-35, Luke 10:25-37, Luke 11:8.

⁷⁸ Harmless 2004:132.

⁷⁹ *Paralipomena* 4.7, 9.18, 11.27; *Draguet* Fragment I 5; *HL* 18.16.

⁸⁰ *Precepts* 3, 6, 13, 15, 28, 139, 140; *Precepts and Institutes* introduction.

⁸¹ *Precepts* 3, 9, 15, 141, 142; *Precepts and Institutes* 1, 14, *Precepts and Laws* 2.

⁸² *Precepts* 5.

⁸³ *Precepts* 5, 6, 7, 60; *Precepts and Laws* 3.

⁸⁴ Dunn 2003:29.

⁸⁵ *Precepts* 5.

⁸⁶ Dunn 2003:31.

⁸⁷ *Precepts* 60.

⁸⁸ Vivian 2004:21.

children,⁸⁹ he provided for the needs of the surrounding villages,⁹⁰ and he gladly worked with his own hands to provide for the needs of his community of monks.⁹¹ From the beginning Pachomius anticipated a large community of monks, for the angel of God foretold that he was to "gather together a great number of monks,"⁹² and that, "many will come to you."⁹³ For this reason Pachomius "constructed enough accommodation for a great number of people."⁹⁴ To understand the magnitude of the Pachomian community, Cassian estimated there were five thousand monks,⁹⁵ Palladius recorded seven thousand by the end of the fourth century,⁹⁶ and Jerome stated a staggering number of fifty thousand monks!⁹⁷

Regardless of which account is correct, the sources succeed in giving the impression that there were a lot of monks, and so the need for manual labour was central to ensure the monasteries were self-sufficient in providing the basic needs for the thousands of monks,⁹⁸ as well as provide for the needs of the villagers,⁹⁹ and hence fulfil the first Pachomian law of charity which states, "Love is the fulfilment of the law."¹⁰⁰ So prominent was manual labour that Jerome explains the Pachomian monks were organised into houses by virtue of their trades¹⁰¹. According to Palladius' description, "One works on the land as a labourer, another in the garden, another at the forge, another in the bakery, another in the carpenter's shop, another in the fuller's shop, another in the tannery, another in the

⁸⁹ *GI* 28.

⁹⁰ *GI* 24.

⁹¹ *GI* 22.

⁹² *GI* 22.

⁹³ *GI* 12.

⁹⁴ *GI* 15.

⁹⁵ *Institutes* 4.1.

⁹⁶ *HL* 32.8.

⁹⁷ *Precepts* Preface 7.

⁹⁸ *Precepts* Preface, 6, 23, 24, 26, 68, 72, 76, 77, 80, 108, 116-118.

⁹⁹ Russell et al. 1981: 13-14.

¹⁰⁰ *Precepts and Judgments* Introduction.

¹⁰¹ *GI* 28, 84, 95, 121; *Letter of Bishop Ammon* 7; *Precepts* 15. See Rousseau 1985:79.

shoemaker's shop, another in the scriptorium, another weaving the young reeds."¹⁰² In addition to a hospital which Pachomius incorporated into the general plan of his monasteries to provide care for the monks as well as the villagers,¹⁰³ the type of work undertaken by the monks convey the charitable orientation of the Pachomian communities.¹⁰⁴

The Koinonia and Manual Labour

Pachomius appreciated the value of manual work, both to fulfil his mission of serving and offering charity to others,¹⁰⁵ and to ensure his growing community remains self-sufficient. He also experienced the manifestation of God's will for him during the times in which he was both working and praying, and in addition the angel instructed a law that included mutual work and prayer.

We shall now explore the various reasons and usages for manual work in Pachomian spirituality.

1. It is a Biblical commandment:

The *Life* informs us that shortly after his conversion Pachomius had vowed to "entirely devote [himself] to the disciplines and precepts of God,"¹⁰⁶ and accordingly everything in his community was regulated with direct reference to the Scriptures.¹⁰⁷ Hence, fulfilling the biblical instructions to work with one's hands,¹⁰⁸ to give alms¹⁰⁹ and be charitable to others,¹¹⁰ Pachomius regulated a regime of "moderate labour [to] incite everyone to work."¹¹¹

¹⁰² *HL* 32.

¹⁰³ *GI* 18, 84; *Paralipomena* 8, 16; *Precepts* 40, 42, 43, 45, 53, 54.

¹⁰⁴ Russell et al. 1981:13-14; *GI* 28, 86, 145; *Precepts* 12-13, 15, 27, 64, 66, 111, 124, 129

¹⁰⁵ Russell et al. 1981:13-14; Derwas Chitty remarks (1966:10-11) that "his [Pachomius'] aim is the Antonian aim."

¹⁰⁶ *GI* 5.

¹⁰⁷ Veilleux 1981: 6-7; *Precepts and Institutes* introduction, 15, 18.

¹⁰⁸ 1 Thessalonians 4:11, 2 Thessalonians 3:8,10.

¹⁰⁹ Acts 20:34.

¹¹⁰ Matthew 5:7, Matthew 6.3.

¹¹¹ *Precepts and Laws* 3.

Asserting Pachomius' system, John Cassian said, "The whole human race relies on the charitable compassion of others, with the sole exception of the race of monks which, in accordance with the apostle's precept, lives by the daily toil of his hands."¹¹²

2. It achieves the scriptural ideal of unceasing prayer:¹¹³

Work was the means by which monks could achieve the scriptural ideal of praying unceasingly,¹¹⁴ and so Pachomius decreed that during communal prayers,¹¹⁵ "You shall not sit idle in the *synaxis* but with a quick hand you shall prepare ropes for the warps of mats."¹¹⁶ Then after the *synaxis* as monks waited for instruction about their daily work assignment, they were to recite the scriptures, and then as they carried out their work, they were instructed to recite scripture and meditate upon holy things.¹¹⁷ In this way, monks could achieve two apostolic commands at the same time: to work with one's hands,¹¹⁸ and to pray without ceasing.¹¹⁹ Hence John Cassian, in comparing how Pachomian monks achieve the ideal of unceasing prayer, with the Western monks who only pray at set times, claims,

"They [the Pachomian monks] spend the whole day in those offices which we celebrate at fixed times... for manual labour is incessantly practiced by them in such a way that meditation on the psalms and the rest of the scriptures is never entirely omitted."¹²⁰

In addition, the combination of work and prayer served the purpose of facilitating spiritual contemplation¹²¹ without boredom

¹¹² *Conference* 24.12.

¹¹³ 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

¹¹⁴ Dunn 2003:14.

¹¹⁵ *Synaxis*.

¹¹⁶ *Precepts* 5.

¹¹⁷ *Precepts* 60.

¹¹⁸ 1 Thessalonians 4:11, 2 Thessalonians 3:8,10.

¹¹⁹ 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

¹²⁰ *Conference* 2.5.1-4 and 2.7.1-2.

¹²¹ Gascou (5) 1991:1640.

or restlessness.¹²² As John Cassian affirms, “They practice their incessant manual labour for the sake of spiritual meditation.”¹²³

Accordingly, we learn that when one wanted to enter a Pachomian monastery, they were tested by means of the monastic round of prayer and work,¹²⁴ and it was only after mastering the monastic routine that he would formally be accepted as a monk.¹²⁵

In the *Paralipomena*, we read about a gardener who had lived for eighty-five years in a Pachomian monastery practicing monastic *ascesis*. His life illustrates to what extent the monks considered prayer and work inseparable:

“During the day he worked out in the garden and... towards sunset he entered his cell and sat on a stool in the middle of the cell plaiting ropes until the night *synaxis*. And so if it happened that the deeds of nature compelled him to snatch a little sleep, he would sleep sitting and holding in his hands the ropes he was plaiting. He [would] plait the ropes... sitting in darkness, while reciting the scriptures by heart... He gave up his soul while sitting on his stool and plaiting the ropes according to his custom.”¹²⁶

Whilst work was emphasised as being a tool essential to monastic discipline, leaders alerted to the danger of how work unaccompanied by prayer could result in pride.¹²⁷ To illustrate this

¹²² *Precepts* 5, 8, 21.

¹²³ *Institutes* 2.14. D. A. Jones states that the Pachomian communities were “a regimented system of labour camps and relentless agricultural and craft production,” (Jones 1964: 929). However, one must bear in mind that the ancient sources emphasise that Pachomius, like Antony (*AP* [G], Antony 13) encouraged balance and moderation in life and hence stipulated a rule decreeing, “The brothers shall not be forced to work excessively, but a moderate labour shall incite everyone to work.” (*Precepts and Laws* 3). In addition, I believe that the mindsets of a modern and ancient historian are quite different; the ancient writer, living in a time in which Christianity had recently become the religion of the Empire, searched for a spiritual relevance in Pachomius’ regime, whereas a modern historian would be more inclined to view the regime simply as a matter of lifestyle.

¹²⁴ *Precepts* 49; Harmless 2004:126.

¹²⁵ *Precepts* 49.

¹²⁶ *Paralipomena* 12:30.

¹²⁷ Rich 2007:56.

point, the *Paralipomena* mentions the story of a monk who becoming overzealous about his handiwork, completed two mats in one day.¹²⁸ Expecting to be praised by Pachomius, he proudly displayed the mats in front of his cell:

“Pachomius seeing that he had done this for display, and recognising the thought that had moved him to do it, groaned heavily and said to the brothers who were sitting with him, ‘See this brother; from morning till now he has given all his toil to the devil and has left nothing whatever of his work for the comfort of his own soul, because he has preferred the praise of men to the praise of God. And although he has worn out his body through labour he has made his soul empty of the fruition of the works.’”¹²⁹

In the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, we learn how Macarius the Alexandrian went to stay in a Pachomian monastery and exceeded the brothers in monastic *ascesis*. On a certain day as the brothers were at their handiwork, they noticed how Macarius had completed three mats whilst they had only completed one, and being void of spirituality,

“The brothers rose up against their leader wanting Macarius to be thrown out. In order to teach them a lesson in humility and spirituality, the leader took one of Macarius’ mats and threw it into the oven. After some time when the fire was put out, he saw that the mat had not burned at all, and so said to the brothers, ‘Manual work without ascetic practice is nothing.’”¹³⁰

3. It is a divine instruction:

In the same way that an angel of God instructed Antony to work, the divine nature of Pachomius’ *Rules* specifying the need

¹²⁸ The rule was for all monks to complete one mat a day (*Paralipomena* 15.43).

¹²⁹ *Paralipomena* 15.34.

¹³⁰ *Life of Macarius of Alexandria* 7. Whilst this account attributes this event to Macarius the Egyptian, according to Palladius’ *HL* the story is attributed to Macarius the Alexandrian (*HL* 18.12). It seems more probable that it was Macarius the Alexandrian.

for work is well attested by the account of his receiving them directly from the angel of God on a heavenly tablet.¹³¹

4. It ensures the community's self-sufficiency

The importance of self-sufficiency to foster economic stability and social harmony¹³² is apparent when one bears in mind the size of the federation of the Pachomian monasteries.¹³³ In speaking about Egyptian monasticism, Peter Brown asserts: "To survive at all in the hostile environment...the Egyptian had to transplant into it the tenacious and all absorbing routines of the villages of the *oikoumene*...The monastery of Pachomius was called quite simply The Village."¹³⁴

The monastic leaders understood that in order for the monks not to be negligent, their material needs must be provided for, and so before establishing their communities the leaders settled close to areas where provisions can be acquired.¹³⁵ Therefore we read how the Spirit led Pachomius to a location on the shore of the Nile¹³⁶ where the land would be fertile for cultivating¹³⁷ and the material required for the monastic work of basket and mat weaving were close by.¹³⁸

Accordingly, Pachomius worked hard with his hands to provide for the needs of his monks,¹³⁹ and established work instructions based on available agricultural resources.¹⁴⁰ In like manner, Antony

¹³¹ HL 33.

¹³² BAGNALL 1993:300.

¹³³ Opinions differ, however, the overall impression is that his federation of monasteries housed thousands of monks. Jerome claims there were 50,000 Pachomian monks (*Precepts* Preface 7), John Cassian estimates 5,000 (*Institutes* 4.1), and Palladius records there were 3,000 in Pachomius' day and 7,000 by the end of the century (HL 32.8 and 7.6).

¹³⁴ Brown 1971: 83.

¹³⁵ GASCOU (5) 1991:1640.

¹³⁶ Tabennesi.

¹³⁷ BL 23; BAGNALL 1993:295.

¹³⁸ BL 22, *Paralipomena* 9, *Letters of Bishop Ammon* 19; GASCOU (5) 1991:1642.

¹³⁹ BL23, *GI* 35.

¹⁴⁰ *Regulations of Horsiesios* 34-35, 39-40, 43, 55-56, 57, 58-62.

before him settled in a place in the inner mountain where there was a spring of water and date palms¹⁴¹ and worked with his hands to plant a small vegetable garden.¹⁴²

The need for self-sufficiency served another purpose, and that was to keep the monks from wandering outside of the monastery for their provisions. The author of the *History of the Monks of Egypt* provides an example of how Abba Or worked with his hands to provide and ensure self-sufficiency for his community of one thousand monks so that they would have no need of seeking provisions elsewhere:

“Abba Or... organised hermitages in the nearer desert and planted a marsh-ground with his own hands... so that there would be a plentiful supply of timber in the desert... so that the brothers who gathered around him would not be forced to move around on account of any need. Instead he made every provision for them... so that they should not lack any necessity and would have no excuse for negligence.”¹⁴³

However, beyond the need of providing for the community of brothers, the monks were also required to provide hospitality¹⁴⁴ for the “multitude of brothers rushing in” on visits,¹⁴⁵ and as John Cassian states, this responsibility may help to explain the Egyptian tradition’s distinctive emphasis on supporting oneself through manual labour.¹⁴⁶ But no matter how important self-sufficiency was, the leaders were keen to ensure the brothers never lost the sight of the focus which was spiritual life:

“Therefore, even if we are labouring 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

¹⁴¹ VA 49.7, 50.4, 50.6.

¹⁴² VA 50.7.

¹⁴³ HM 2.2-3.

¹⁴⁴ RUSSELL et al. 1981: 14.

¹⁴⁵ Conference 19.5-6; RUSSELL et al. 1981:13.

¹⁴⁶ Conference 19.6 and Isaiah, *Asceticon* 11.

stranger to eternal life under the pretext of a necessity which will disappear.”¹⁴⁷

5. It facilitates giving alms and providing charity¹⁴⁸

Manual work was the means by which the *Koinonia* could fulfil its more social dimension of providing for the needs of others.¹⁴⁹ We read that, “[Pachomius] performed the works of mercy with his own hands for the old and for the sick, and even for the very young.”¹⁵⁰ Cassian records that, “Out of their own toil they supplied such brethren as came by, or were from foreign parts, and did send huge stores of victuals and provisions throughout Libya, a barren and hungry land, and to those that pined in the squalor of the prisons in the towns.”¹⁵¹

The *History of the Monks of Egypt* narrates the story of Sarapion of Arsinoe who had more than ten thousand monks under his care. It shows how work came to characterise monastic communities:

“...and all of them earned their bread by the work of their hands, and the great part of what they earned, especially at harvest time, they brought to this father for the use of the poor... so that not only were the hungry folk of that countryside fed, but ships were sent to Alexandria, laden with corn, to be divvied among such as were prisoners in gaols, or as were foreigners and in need.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ *Regulations of Horsiesius* 37.

¹⁴⁸ Shenoute’s White Monastery made and sold baskets, linen cloth and books in exchange for money and/or items necessary for the community (Leipoldt, *Schenute von Atri* 136, as mentioned in Goehring 1999: 49). According to Goehring, Leipoldt has argued that Shenoute developed the White Monastery in part as a great work co-operative that served as a source of relief to the poor peasants by offering them necessities such as cloth, mats and baskets. (Goehring 1999: 49). Marilyn Dunn (2003:33) also attests that Shenoute was not only patron but provider for the villagers in the area.

¹⁴⁹ *Paralipomena* 16.35; Clark 2005:41.

¹⁵⁰ *GI* 25.

¹⁵¹ Cassian, *Of Mortification*, in Waddell 1957: 165.

¹⁵² *HM* xvii.

6. Negligence in work was considered a sin

Pachomius took work very seriously and considered that monks who do not work are committing sin that required forgiveness.¹⁵³ Accordingly, he placed responsibility on the housemasters to “observe what work had been omitted or neglected... [and to] keep the record until the time of the annual gathering when an account shall be given and sins forgiven everyone.”¹⁵⁴

Although Pachomius provided exceptions to work only “for the infirmity of the body to which leave must be given for rest,”¹⁵⁵ there are accounts of monks,¹⁵⁶ such as the leper whose hands bled every time he wove ropes, who refused to stop working. So when a brother questioned him, “Why do you toil and work like this when you have such a disease?... especially when nobody compels you to work”... He answered, “It is impossible for me not to work.”¹⁵⁷

Similarly at Scetis, it was only if a monk was “sick and displayed compunction with tears would he not be compelled by his peers to get out of his cell and work.”¹⁵⁸ There is also the following comparable story about Isidore of Scetis who every night plaited a bundle of palms. So the brethren pleaded with him saying, “Rest a little, for you are getting old.” But he said to them, “Even if Isidore were burned, and his ashes thrown to the winds, I would not allow myself any relaxation because the Son of God came here for our sake.”¹⁵⁹ Therefore monks continued to work in spite of any illness, for they considered they were sharing in the suffering of the Lord.

¹⁵³ William Harmless states that the “Day of Remission” assembly held twice a year served two purposes; the first was financial where the superiors would provide a detailed report of things such as how many ropes were made during the synaxis, and the second purpose was spiritual – it was an opportunity for mutual forgiveness: *GI* 83, *BL* 71, *Precepts* Preface, *Precepts* 27, *PachomiusLetters* 7, *TheodoreLetters* 2.3.

¹⁵⁴ *Precepts* 27.

¹⁵⁵ *Precepts* 5.

¹⁵⁶ For example: *Paralipomena* 16.35.

¹⁵⁷ *Paralipomena* 16.35.

¹⁵⁸ *AP* [G] John Colobus 19 (PG 65.212C). See Evelyn-White 1932:173-76, 182-88 for monastic economies at Scetis and Kellia.

¹⁵⁹ *AP* [G] Isidore the Priest 5.

According to John Chrysostom, only if one does not have the strength to support themselves by the work of their hands, can they receive charity from others.¹⁶⁰

On the other hand, Horsiesios¹⁶¹ provides an interesting description of how an able monk if he is lazy, will appear as a beggar in the afterlife:

“If he does not work with all his might to earn, through his own efforts, his food, clothing and all that is needful for his body... if he continues to eat from the labour of his brothers and to be clothed with what they have provided in their courage and filial generosity, even if he is a sinless child but willingly slothful, [this shall happen to him]: he shall be in the age to come like the son of a great and noble prince of the world whose father and brothers all enjoy the glory and the pleasures of wealth and of the honours that are proper to their rank... whereas he lies in the abjection of beggary, with the opprobrium upon his shoulders of a beggar’s clothes and shame, which penetrate and wrap him round... This is how the saints and the angels will look upon the slothful in the age [to come].”¹⁶²

7. It facilitated repentance

In the Pachomian monasteries, the monks were expected to weave one mat each day.¹⁶³ The *Paralipomena* provides two examples in which Pachomius imposed extra manual work as penance for disobedient monks. In the first story we read about a monk who in weakness denied God and offered libations to idols. So Pachomius instructed that he make “two mats everyday and to keep vigil as much as possible” for the rest of his life.¹⁶⁴ In the second story Pachomius punishes a monk for boasting about his handiwork, and so the monk was “confined to his cell for a period of five months, to make two mats every day, eating only bread with salt...”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Chrysostom, *homily on 2 Thessalonians* 3 5.2.

¹⁶¹ Pachomius’ successor.

¹⁶² *Regulations of Horsiesius* 18.

¹⁶³ The rule was for all monks to complete one mat a day (*Paralipomena* 15.43).

¹⁶⁴ *Paralipomena* 5.11.

¹⁶⁵ *Paralipomena* 15.34.

Interestingly, we learn that a similar means of penance was observed by the monks in Scetis. One day a brother came to John the Dwarf confessing his sin of fornication, so the elder said to him, "Go and work for three years... and I will forgive you." After three years the young man came to him again, and this time he said, "You still have not done penance; go and work for three more years, and give away all you earn."¹⁶⁶

And in a rare example concerning a community of female ascetics, we read about a certain woman who after committing sin requested from the abbess, "Do me the kindness of putting me in a cell... and giving me a little bread and some work."¹⁶⁷

6. It created a community of equals

The heart of Pachomius' legislation was the desire to create a community of equals.¹⁶⁸ Sozomen states how, "They all observed one and the same rule of life, and possessed everything in common,"¹⁶⁹ and that Pachomius himself was subject to a housemaster's authority¹⁷⁰ and that "he cheerfully played a great part in the work which the brothers undertook."¹⁷¹ Accordingly the leaders themselves were also subject to the *Rules*: "The housemaster and the second must plait twenty-five fathoms of palm leaves so that the others may work after their example,"¹⁷² and Horsiesios¹⁷³ affirms, "Brothers, let us be equal from the least to the greatest, whether rich or poor, perfect in harmony and humility..."¹⁷⁴

Perhaps one of the most effective stories characteristic of this Pachomian spirituality tells of when Pachomius in his humility was

¹⁶⁶ AP [G] John Colobos 41.

¹⁶⁷ AP [G] Serapion 1.

¹⁶⁸ Harmless 2004:132; *Precepts* 35, 39, 41; *Precepts and Laws* 3, 15; *Regulations of Horsiesios* 23

¹⁶⁹ SOZOMEN, *HE* 3.14.

¹⁷⁰ *GI* 110.

¹⁷¹ *GI* 35.

¹⁷² *Precepts and Laws* 1.

¹⁷³ A successor of Pachomius.

¹⁷⁴ *Regulations of Horsiesios* 23; Clarke 2005:31.

able to learn from a young monk a better way to weave rushes without considering the boy's instruction a threat to his authority:

"When the boy saw him weaving, he told him, 'Not so father! Do not turn the thread this way. Father Theodore showed us another style of weaving.' Pachomius rose and said to the boy, 'Yes, teach me this style.' After the young brother had taught him, Pachomius sat down to work again with joy because he had vanquished the sin of pride."¹⁷⁵

The need to create a community of equals¹⁷⁶ is clear when one learns that, "The monks who live there come from many different places, and differ greatly in stature and culture,"¹⁷⁷ such as the "Roman [brother] coming from a great family, who also knows the Greek language well."¹⁷⁸ Palladius also noted a number like himself who were foreigners in Egypt.¹⁷⁹

Accordingly, the author of Pachomius' *Life* asserts, "it follows then that they all need a rule."¹⁸⁰ In addition the need for a common rule becomes explicit when Pachomius' community "became very renown that in the process of time they increased so vastly that they reached to the number of seven thousand men."¹⁸¹

In monastic settlements of the fourth and fifth centuries that brought together a large number of people of diverse economic backgrounds¹⁸², the notion that all members should be equal¹⁸³ and

¹⁷⁵ *BL* 72.

¹⁷⁶ Harmless, 2004:132.

¹⁷⁷ *GI* 12; *Paralipomena* 11.27; *Letter of Bishop Ammon* 7.

¹⁷⁸ *Paralipomena* 11.27.

¹⁷⁹ Foreigners include Stephen a Libyan (*HL* 24); Valens a Palestinian (*HL* 25); Evagrius from Pontus (*HL* 38); and Moses the Ethiopian (*HL* 19). Palladius also recounts stories of foreigners he had not met, such as the Spaniards Paesius and Isaias (*HL* 14).

¹⁸⁰ *GI* 12.

¹⁸¹ SOZOMEN, *HE* 3.14.

¹⁸² *GI* 94-5, 147; *Letter of Bishop Ammon* 7; *HM* states that Serapion had more than 10,000 monks in his community who consisted of diverse congregations (*HM* xvii). In *Scetis* we read, "...it was not only Egyptians who lived in that desert but people congregated around him from other countries: Romania and Spain, Libya and the Pentapolis, Cappadocia and Byzantium, Italy

perform mutual manual labour provided a means of levelling out social differences¹⁸⁴ and fostering social harmony.¹⁸⁵ Hence, we read that foreigners as well as Egyptian monks were instructed to work.¹⁸⁶

As an example of how the absence of equality could result in resentment and instability, the *Rule* (as mentioned previously) dictated that each monk must weave one mat a day.¹⁸⁷ However, the following incident between an Egyptian monk and a foreign monk who did not complete this quota illustrates how things could go wrong: "When the brothers saw this, they said to the abbot, 'Unless this foreign brother hands in one mat every day, we will not allow him to live with us!'"¹⁸⁸

In the words of Isaiah of Scetis,¹⁸⁹ "To participate in a community's manual labours was to accept one's human condition and display a proper sense of humility."¹⁹⁰ Similarly, Poemen of Scetis said that "[life in] the coenobium needs three exercises: humility, obedience and being motivated... for the work of the coenobium."¹⁹¹ In accordance with the monastic discipline of balancing the spiritual work of prayer with the physical work of manual labour¹⁹², Poemen's apophthegm is significant, for it highlights how the virtues of humility and obedience, which are inner virtues, must be united with the discipline of work which is an outer virtue and practiced by all members within a coenobium, in order to create and maintain social harmony.

and Macedonia, Asia and Syria and Palestine and Galatia." (*Life of Macarius the Egyptian* 30).

¹⁸³ CLARK 2005:39.

¹⁸⁴ CLARK 2005:31.

¹⁸⁵ CANER 2002:45.

¹⁸⁶ *Life of Macarius of Alexandrian* 7.

¹⁸⁷ The rule was for all monks to complete one mat a day (*Paralipomena* 15.43).

¹⁸⁸ *Sayings of St Macarius* 26.

¹⁸⁹ Isaiah of Scetis was an elder to a community of monks in Scetis in the late 4th century before moving to Gaza in the early 5th century and leading a community of monks there until he died.

¹⁹⁰ For example: Isaiah, *Asceticon* 5.12; 6.5; 8.4; 11.51.

¹⁹¹ *AP [G] Poemen* 103.

¹⁹² *Conferences* 14.1.3.

The leaders also believed that equality in all things was a source of blessing and therefore Horsiesios urges, “Let us all perform [our duties] with the prudence of piety, as one man, as it is written; ‘All who believed formed but one heart and one soul’; so that God may bless our bread... [and] bless every work we will undertake to do.”¹⁹³

Pachomius’ legacy

Pachomius’ monastic experiment took on a more social dimension to the anchoritic style, in that he formalised Antony’s *ascesis* into a structured practice that regulated the daily lives of the monks according to prayer, work and contemplation.¹⁹⁴ Not only did this combination encourage the monks to grow spiritually,¹⁹⁵ but it served the purpose of ensuring the monastic communities remain self-sufficient and provide service and charity to others.¹⁹⁶ In fact this charitable aspect of Pachomian spirituality became such a mainstay of monastic communities in Egypt¹⁹⁷ that the author of the *History of the Monks of Egypt* states, “Thanks to the labours of the community... it is rare for anyone in need to be found living near the monasteries.”¹⁹⁸

Norman Russell also affirms that beyond the need of feeding themselves, monastic etiquette obliged monks to be charitable; “so, for example, when there was a famine in the Thebaid, the people assumed that the community of monks would have food which they would share with the surrounding villages.”¹⁹⁹

However, working to offer charity was not only an attribute of the communal monasteries,²⁰⁰ but of the semi-anchoritic settlements of which the author of the *History of the Monks of Egypt* informs they each developed a hospice for the reception of

¹⁹³ *Regulations of Horsiesios* 51.

¹⁹⁴ Dunn 2003:29, 31.

¹⁹⁵ *Institutes* 2.14.

¹⁹⁶ CLARK 2005:41.

¹⁹⁷ Both communal and semi-anchoritic, e.g. see *HM* 18.1-2.

¹⁹⁸ *HM* 18.1-2 On Sarapion.

¹⁹⁹ Russell et al. 1981: 14.

²⁰⁰ Such as Pachomius’ communities and Sarapion’s community of 10,000 monks (*HM* 18.1-2).

visitors and the care of the sick and that like their brothers from communal monasteries, these "desert monks provided food relief for the village poor and for the poor of Alexandria," by the labour of their own hands.²⁰¹ In fact, the same author narrated his encounter with the anchorite John of Lycopolis who taught, "An ascetic is good if he... shows brotherly love and practices hospitality and charity, if he gives alms and is generous to visitors, if he helps the sick..." John continues to explain that such an ascetic is good because, "he is a man who puts the commandments into practice and does them."²⁰²

The following tribute²⁰³ by Antony concerning Pachomius, testifies to another greatness of Pachomius' legacy. It begins with some of Pachomius' disciples visiting Antony after their leader had died. So when Antony enquired,

"How is Abba Pachomius?" they broke down in tears and told him he had died. He replied consoling them "Do not weep. All of you have become Abba Pachomius."²⁰⁴ I tell you, it was a great ministry he received this gathering of so many brothers; and he walks the way of the apostles...in the beginning when I became a monk there was no community to nurture others souls... And then your father did that beautiful thing from the Lord."²⁰⁵

Attributing the speech to Antony, who is "the paradigm of ascetic monasticism",²⁰⁶ lends authority to the testimony in that Antony is declaring the superiority of Pachomius' communal innovation as being "the path of the apostles." Hence, as William Harmless states, "In this story we see the way the Pachomian community understood itself – its intense sense of its historic destiny and its unwavering conviction about the superiority of its mission and its way of life."²⁰⁷

²⁰¹ *HM* 18.

²⁰² *HM* 1.62-63 On John of Lycopolis.

²⁰³ This tribute is Pachomian in origin.

²⁰⁴ This statement recalls to mind Serapion's similar statement concerning Antony's monks after the saint had passed away. As they mourned, Serapion comforted them saying, "Each one of you be blessed Antony." (Coptic *Letter of Serapion of Thmuis to the Disciples of Antony* 17).

²⁰⁵ *GI* 120.

²⁰⁶ Harmless 2004:136.

²⁰⁷ Harmless 2004:136.

Whilst the monastic experiments of Pachomius, Macarius and Amoun were established roughly within a decade of each other,²⁰⁸ the following apophthegm proves to what extent the semi-anchoritic communities recognised the prominence of Pachomius' style:

“Abba Isaac of Nitria said, ‘When I was younger, I lived with Abba Cronius. He would never tell me to do any work, although he was old and tremulous; but he himself got up and offered food to me and to everyone. Then I lived with Abba Theodore of Pherme and he did not tell me to do anything either, but he himself sat at the table and said to me, ‘Brother, if you want to, come and eat.’ I replied, ‘I have come to you to help you, why do you never tell me to do anything?’ but the old man gave me no reply. So I went to tell the old men. They came and said to him, ‘Abba, the brother has come to your holiness in order to help you. Why do you never tell him to do anything?’ The old man said to them, ‘Am I a cenobite, that I should give him orders? As far as I am concerned, I do not tell him anything, but if he wishes, he can do what he sees me doing.’ From that moment I took the initiative and did what the old man was about to do. As for him, what he did, he did in silence, so he taught me to work in silence.”²⁰⁹

Pachomius himself considers his life's work on a par with those of his contemporaries Athanasius and Antony, and believes that “his work is equally a sign and vehicle of God's grace.”²¹⁰ Hence he declares:

“In our generation in Egypt I see three important things that increase God's grace for the benefit of all who have understanding: the bishop Athanasius, the athlete of Christ contending for the faith unto death; the holy Abba Antony, the perfect model of the anchoritic life; and this *koinonia*, which is a model for all those who wish to assemble souls in God.”²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Monks join Antony around 305; Pachomius founds monastery at Tabennesi in 320; Macarius in Scetis and Amoun in Nitria around 330.

²⁰⁹ AP [G] Isaac of Nitria 2.

²¹⁰ Harmless 2004:116.

²¹¹ GI 136.

William Harmless explains that rather than speaking of monasteries, Pachomius speaks of *koinonia* meaning 'fellowship', for it is a term that described the early Christians who had all things in common.²¹² The implication therefore is that Pachomius was not just a pioneer of communal monasticism, but a pioneer in Christian living who was divinely instructed to resurrect the life of the early Christian community.²¹³

In another sense, Pachomius' declaration can be taken to mean that his community fulfilled three important aspects: interpreted metaphorically, Athanasius represents Orthodoxy, Antony represents renunciation and Pachomius represents service. Hence, it is because Pachomius himself and his *Koinonia* lived in accordance with these principles that his mission became "very renown,"²¹⁴ and served as a model for future generations to emulate,²¹⁵ both in the East²¹⁶ as well as in the West.²¹⁷

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²¹² Harmless 2004:116, 122; Acts 4:32-35.

²¹³ Harmless 2004:122.

²¹⁴ Sozomen, *HE* 3.14.

²¹⁵ Griggs 1988:149; William Harmless states (2004:115) that Pachomian *Rules* provided a model for Basil of Caesarea in the Greek East and Benedict of Nursia in the Latin West.

²¹⁶ By Basil of Caesarea, as expressed in Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 43, 62.

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