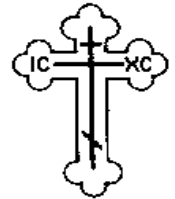


✠The Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil✠

✠The Basilians - The Basilian Fathers✠

✠The Society of Saint Basil✠



A Brief History - Outline of The Basilian Fathers, for the Layman

BASLORDS.PUB

Your Momma was Pro Life . . . "Darlin"

A Brief History Of Basilian "Orders" and Generalities About The Rule of Saint Basil and Some of those who Follow The Rule.

I. RULE OF SAINT BASIL

Under the name of Basilians are included all the religious who follow the Rule of St. Basil. The monasteries of such religious have never possessed the hierarchical organization which ordinarily exists in the houses of an order properly so called. Only a few houses were formerly grouped into congregations or are today so combined. St. Basil drew up his Rule for the members of the monastery he founded about 356 on the banks of the Iris in Cappadocia. Before forming this community St. Basil visited Egypt, Palestine, Coelesyria, and Mesopotamia in order to see for himself the manner of life led by the monks in these countries. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, who shared the retreat, aided Basil by his advice and experience.

The Rule of Basil is divided into two parts: the "Greater Monastic Rules" (*Regulae fusius tractatae*, Migne, P.G., XXXI, 889-1052), and the "Lesser Rules" (*Regulae brevius tractatae*, *ibid.*, 1051-1306). Rufinus who translated them into Latin united the two into a single Rule under the name of "*Regulae sancti Basilii episcopi Cappadociae ad monachos*" (P.L., CIII, 483-554); this Rule was followed by some western monasteries.

For a long time the Bishop of Caesarea

was wrongly held to be the author of a work on monasticism called "*Contitutiones monasticae*" (P.G., XXXI, 1315-1428). In his Rule St. Basil follows a catechetical method; the disciple asks a question to which the master replies. He limits himself to laying down indisputable principles which will guide the superiors and monks in their conduct. He sends his monks to the Sacred Scriptures; in his eyes the Bible is the basis of all monastic legislation, the true Rule. The questions refer generally to the virtues which the monks should practice and the vices they should avoid. The greater number of the replies contain a verse or several verses of the Bible accompanied by a comment which defines the meaning.

The most striking qualities of the Basilian Rule are its prudence and its wisdom. It leaves to the superiors the care of settling the many details of local, individual, and daily life; it does not determine the material exercise of the observance or the administrative regulations of the monastery. Poverty, obedience, renunciation, and self-abnegation are the virtues which St. Basil makes the foundation of the monastic life.

As he gave it, the Rule could not suffice for anyone who wished to organize a monastery, for it takes this work as an accomplished fact. The life of the Cappadocian monks could not be reconstructed from his references to the nature and number of the meals and to the garb

of the inmates. The superiors had for guide a tradition accepted by all the monks. This tradition was enriched as time went on by the decisions of councils, by the ordinances of the Emperors of Constantinople, and by the regulations of a number of revered abbots. Thus there arose a body of law by which the monasteries were regulated. Some

of these laws were accepted by all, others were observed only by the houses of some one country, while there were regulations which applied only to certain communities.

In this regard Oriental monasticism bears much resemblance to that of the West; a great variety of observances is noticeable.

The existence of the Rule of St. Basil formed a principle of unity.

II. THE MONASTERIES OF THE EAST

The monasteries of Cappadocia were the first to accept the Rule of St. Basil; it afterwards spread gradually to all the monasteries of the East.

Those of Armenia, Chaldea, and of the Syrian countries in general preferred instead of the Rule of St. Basil those observances which were known among them as the Rule of St. Anthony.

Neither the ecclesiastical nor the imperial authority was exerted to make conformity to the Basilian Rule universal. It is therefore impossible to tell the epoch at which it acquired the supremacy in the religious communities of the Greek world; but the date is probably an early one. The development of monasticism was, in short, the cause of its diffusion.

Protected by the emperors and patriarchs the monasteries increased rapidly in number. In 536 the Diocese of Constantinople contained no less than sixty-eight, that of Chalcedon forty, and these numbers continually increased. Although monasticism was not able to spread in all parts of the empire with

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

equal rapidity, yet what it probably must have been may be inferred from these figures. These monks took an active part in the ecclesiastical life of their time; they had a share in all the quarrels, both theological and other, and were associated with all the works of charity. Their monasteries were places of refuge for studious men. Many of the bishops and patriarchs were chosen from their ranks.

Their history is interwoven, therefore, with that of the Oriental Churches. They gave to the preaching of the Gospel its greatest apostles. As a result monastic life gained a footing at the same time as Christianity among all the races won to the Faith. The position of the monks in the empire was one of great power, and their wealth helped to increase their influence. Thus their development ran a course parallel to that of their Western brethren. The monks, as a rule, followed the theological vicissitudes of the emperors and patriarchs, and they showed no notable independence except during the iconoclastic persecution; the stand they took in this aroused the anger of the imperial controversialists.

The Faith had its martyrs among them; many of them were condemned to exile, and some took advantage of this condemnation to reorganize their religious life in Italy. Of all the monasteries of this period the most celebrated was that of St. John the Baptist of Studium, founded at Constantinople in the fifth century. It acquired its fame in the time of the iconoclastic persecution while it was under the government of the saintly Hegumenos (abbot) Theodore, called the Studite.

Nowhere did the heretical emperors meet with more courageous resistance. At the same time the monastery was an active center of intellectual and artistic life and a model which exercised considerable influence on monastic observances in the East. Further details may be found in "Prescriptio constitutionis monasterii Studii" (Migne, P.G., XCIX, 1703-20), and the monastery's "Canones de confessione et

pro peccatis satisfacione " (ibid., 1721-30).

Theodore attributed the observances followed by his monks to his uncle, the saintly Abbot Plato, who first introduced them in his monastery of Saccudium. The other monasteries, one after another adopted them, and they are still followed by the monks of Mount Athos. The monastery of Mount Athos was founded towards the close of the tenth century through the aid of the Emperor Basil the Macedonian and became the largest and most celebrated of all the monasteries of the Orient; it is in reality a monastic province. The monastery of Mount Olympus in Bithynia should also be mentioned, although it was never as important as the other. The monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, which goes back to the early days of monasticism, had a great fame and is still occupied by monks.

Reference to Oriental monks are here be limited to those who have left a mark upon ecclesiastical literature: Leontius of Byzantium (d. 543), author of a treatise against the Nestorians and Eutychians; St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, one of the most vigorous adversaries of the Monothelite heresy (P.G., LXXXVII, 3147-4014); St. Maximus the Confessor, Abbot of Chrysopolis (d. 662), the most brilliant representative of Byzantine monasticism in the seventh century; in his writings and letters St. Maximus steadily combated the partisans of the erroneous doctrines of Monothelitism (ibid., XC and XCI); St. John Damascene, who may perhaps be included among the Basilians; St Theodore the Studite (d. 829), the defender of the veneration of sacred images; his works include theological, ascetic,

hagiographical, liturgical, and historical writings (P.G., XCIX). The Byzantine monasteries furnish a long line of historians who were also monks: John Malalas, whose "Chronographia" (P.G., XCVII, 9-190) served as a model for Eastern chroniclers Georgius Syncellus, who wrote a "Selected Chronographia"; his friend and disciple Theophanes (d. 817), Abbot of the "Great Field" near Cyzicus, the author of another "Chronographia" (P.G., CVIII);

the Patriarch Nicephorus, who wrote (815-829) an historical "Breviarium" (a Byzantine history), and an "Abridged Chronographia" (P.G., C, 879-991); George the Monk, whose Chronicle stops at A. D. 842 (P.G. CX).

There were, besides, a large number of monks, hagiographers, hymnologists, and poets who had a large share in the development of the Greek Liturgy. Among the authors of hymns may be mentioned: St. Maximus the Confessor; St. Theodore the Studite; St. Romanus the Melodist; St. Andrew of Crete; St. John Damascene; Cosmas of

Jerusalem, and St. Joseph the Hymnographer. Fine penmanship and the copying of manuscripts were held in honor among the Basilians. Among the monasteries which excelled in the art of copying were the Studium, Mount Athos, the monastery of the Isle of Patmos and that of Rossano in Sicily; the tradition was continued later by the monastery of Grottaferrata near Rome. These monasteries, and others as well, were studios of religious art where the monks toiled to produce miniatures in the manuscripts, paintings, and goldsmith work. The triumph of orthodoxy over the iconoclastic heresy infused an extraordinary enthusiasm into this branch of their labors. From the beginning the Oriental Churches often took their patriarchs and bishops from the monasteries. Since the secular clergy was recruited largely from among married men, this custom became almost universal, for, as the episcopal office usually was not conferred upon men who were married, it developed, in a way, into a privilege of the religious who had taken the vow of celibacy. Owing to this the monks formed a class apart, corresponding to the upper clergy of the Western Churches; this gave and still gives a preponderating influence to the monasteries themselves.

In some of them theological instruction is given both to clerics and to laymen. As long as the spirit of proselytism existed in the East the monasteries furnished the Church with all its missionaries. The names of two have been inscribed by Rome

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

in its calendar of annual feasts, namely, St. Cyril and St. Methodius, the Apostles of the Slavs.

The Roman-Orthodox Schism [1054 A.D.] did not change sensibly the position of the Basilian monks and monasteries. Their sufferings arose through the Mohammedan conquest. To a large number of them this conquest brought complete ruin, especially to those monasteries in what is now Turkey in Asia and the region around Constantinople. In the East the convents for women adopted the Rule of St. Basil and had constitutions copied from those of the Basilian monks.

III. ORTHODOX BASILIANS

The two best known monasteries of the Orthodox Basilians are those of Mount Athos and of Mount Sinai. Besides these there are still many monasteries in Turkey in Asia, of which 10 are in Jerusalem alone, 1 at Bethlehem, and 4 at Jericho. They are also numerous on the islands of the Aegean Sea: Chios 3, Samos 6, Crete about 50, Cyprus 11. In Old Cairo is the monastery of St. George. In Greece where there were formerly 400 monasteries, there were, in 1832, only 82, which by 1904 had increased to 169; 9 Basilian convents for women are now in existence in Greece. In Rumania there are 22 monasteries; in Servia 44, with only about 118 monks; in Bulgaria 78, with 193 inmates. Montenegro has 11 monasteries and about 15 monks; Bosnia 3 and Herzegovina 11. In Dalmatia are 11 monasteries and in Bukowina 3. Hungary has 25 monasteries and 5 branch houses. The Orthodox monks are much more numerous in Russia; in this country, besides, they have the most influence and possess the richest monasteries. Nowhere else has the monastic life been so closely interwoven with the national existence. The most celebrated monasteries are Pescherskoi at Kieff and Troïtsa at Moscow; mention may also be made of the monasteries of Solovesk, Novgorod, Pskof, Tver, and Vladmir. Russia has

about 9,000 monks and 429 monasteries. There is no diocese which has not at least one religious house. The monasteries are divided into those having state subventions and monasteries which do not receive such aid. In America the Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil (S.S.B.) was formed under the autocephalic American Orthodox Church (Archbishop Aftimios Ofish) which was created at the beginning of the 20th century by the Russian Patriarch and the Russian Synod; the order retained its independence after the absorption of the American Orthodox Church into the Antiochian Orthodox Church and is composed of several small monasteries, parishes, hospices, and public service centers, the monasteries being celibate and the parishes and other centers usually with traditional Orthodox married priests; the S.S.B. has spread from North America to Central and South America, there being a monastery, seminary, convent, and several village schools as well as hospices and community service centers in Central America; and have also spread to Australia and Africa.

IV. ROMAN CATHOLIC BASILIANS

A certain number of Basilian monasteries were always in communion with the Roman Holy See. Among these were the houses founded in Sicily and Italy. The monastery of Rossano, founded by St. Nilus the Younger, remained for a long time faithful to the best literary traditions of Constantinople. The monasteries of San Salvatore of Messina and San Salvatore of Otranto may be mentioned; the monastery of Grottaferrata was also celebrated. The emigration of the Greeks to the West after the fall of Constantinople and the union with Rome, concluded at the Council of Florence, gave a certain prestige to these communities. Cardinal Bessarion, who was Abbot of Grottaferrata, sought to stimulate the intellectual life of the Basilians by means of the literary treasures which their libraries contained. A number of Roman Catholic communities contin-

ued to exist in the East. The Roman Holy See caused them to be united into congregations, namely: St. Savior founded in 1715, which includes 8 monasteries and 21 hospices with about 250 monks; the congregation of Aleppo with 4 monasteries and 2 hospices; that of the Baladites (Valadites) with 4 monasteries and 3 hospices. These last two congregations have their houses in the district of Mount Lebanon. St. Josephat and Father Rutski, who labored to bring back the Ruthenian Churches into Roman Catholic unity, reformed the Basilians of Lithuania. They began with the monastery of the Holy Trinity at Vilna (1607). The monastery of Byten, founded in 1613, was the citadel of the union in Lithuania. Other houses adopted the reform or were founded by the reformed monks. On 19 July, 1617, the reformed monasteries were organized into a congregation under a protoarchimandrite, and known as the congregation of the Holy Trinity, or of Lithuania. The congregation increased with the growth of the union itself. The number of houses had risen to thirty at the time of the general chapter of 1636. After the Council of Zamosc the monasteries outside of Lithuania which had not joined the congregation of the Holy Trinity formed themselves into a congregation bearing the title of "Patrocinium [Protection] B.M.V." (1739). Benedict XIV desired (1744) to form one congregation out of these two, giving the new organization the name of the Ruthenian Order of St. Basil and dividing it into the two provinces of Lithuania and Courland. After the suppression of the Society of Jesus these religious took charge of the Jesuit colleges. The overthrow of Poland and the persecution instituted by the Russians against the Uniat Greeks was very unfavorable to the growth of the congregation, and the number of these Basilian monasteries greatly diminished. Leo XIII, by his Encyclical "Singulare prae-sidium" of 12 May, 1881, ordained a reform of the Ruthenian Basilians of Galicia. This reform began in the monastery of Dabromil; its members have gradu-

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

ally replaced the non-reformed in the monasteries of the region. They devote themselves, in connection with the Uniat clergy, to the various labors of the apostolate which the moral condition or the different races in this district demands.

V. LATIN BASILIANS

In the sixteenth century the Italian monasteries of this order were in the last stages of decay. Urged by Cardinal Sirlet, Pope Gregory XIII ordained (1573) their union in a congregation under the control of a superior general. Use was made of the opportunity to separate the revenues of the abbeys from those of the monasteries. The houses of the Italian Basilians were divided into the three provinces of Sicily, Calabria, and Rome. Although the monks remained faithful in principle to the Greek Liturgy they showed an inclination towards the use of the Latin Liturgy; some monasteries have adopted the latter altogether. In Spain there was a Basilian congregation which had no traditional connection with Oriental Basilians; the members followed the Latin Liturgy. Father Bernardo de la Cruz and the hermits of Santa Maria de Oviedo in the Diocese of Jaen formed the nucleus of the congregation. Pope Pius VI added them to the followers of St. Basil and they were affiliated with the monastery of Grottaferata (1561). The monasteries of Turdon and of Valle de Guillos, founded by Father Mateo de la Fuente, were for a time united with this congregation but they withdrew later in order to form a separate congregation (1603) which increased very little, having only four monasteries and a hospice at Seville. The other Basilians, who followed a less rigorous observance, showed more growth; their monasteries were formed into the two provinces of Castile and Andalusia. They were governed by a vicar general and were under the control, at least nominally, of a superior general of the order. Each of their

provinces had its college or scholasticate at Salamanca and Seville. They did not abstain from wine. Like their brethren in Italy they wore a cowl similar to that of the Benedictines; this led to recriminations and processes, but they were authorized by Rome to continue the use of this attire. Several writers are to be found among them, as: Alfonso Clavel, the historiographer of the order; Diego Niceno, who has left sermons and ascetic writings; Luis de los Angelos, who issued a work on, "Instructions for Novices" (Seville, 1615), and also translated into Spanish Cardinal Bessarion's exposition of the Rule of St. Basil; Felipe de la Cruz, who wrote a treatise on money loaned at interest, that was published at Madrid in 1637, and one on tithes, published at Madrid in 1634. The Spanish Basilians were suppressed with the other orders in 1833 and have not been re-established. At Annonay in France a religious community of men was formed (1822) under the Rule of St. Basil, which has a branch at Toronto, Canada .

(See BASILIANS, PRIESTS OF THE COMMUNITY OF ST. BASIL.) BESSE, *Les moines d'Orient* (Paris, 1900); MARTIN, *Les moines de Constantinople* (Paris, 1897); GUÉPIN, *Un apôtre de l'union des églises au XVIIIe siècle, St. Josaphat* (Paris, 1897); LEROY-BEAULIEU *La religion in L'empire des Tsars et les Rusees* (Paris, 1889) III; CLAVEL, *Antigüedad de la religión y regla de san Basilio* (Madrid, 1645); HÉLYOT, *Histoire des ordres monastiques, I*; HEIMBUCHER, *Die Orden and Kongregationen, I*, 44-47; MINIASI, *San Nilo* (Naples, 1892); RODOTÀ, *Origine, progresso e stato attuale del rito greco in Italia* (Rome, 1755); SILBERNAGL-SCHNITZER, *Verfassung, etc., in Kirchen des Orients* (Munich, 1905); MILASCH-PESSIC, *Kirchenrecht d. morgene. Kirche* (2nd ed., Mostar, 1905). J.M. BESSE; partially from a transcription by the Cloistered Dominican Nuns, Monastery of

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