

Many people have been suspicious of the value of these cross-carrying pilgrimages because of their spectacular character. They argue that nothing is to be gained by mere feats of physical endurance, and we would agree with them. But the real achievement of these pilgrimages is the spreading of the Kingdom of God through the conquest of self. Here is a unique way of bringing our minds and bodies into subjection and of discovering the liberty of divine grace. It is an ideal way of carrying out the repeated injunctions of our blessed Lady at Lourdes and at Fatima to pray and to do penance for the sins of the world. Those who have witnessed its power will say with David when he was given his sword: 'There is none like that. Give it to me'.

Here is an ideal means of reaching the multitudes who know nothing about Christ because he has never been preached to them. It requires no money, no great cleverness, no reliance upon those things the world uses to extend its power. All that is needed are men who are prepared to become fools for Christ's sake and to leave all things to follow him. The Cross shall be lifted up again, may the generous souls who read these words pray that God may send many labourers to work in his vineyard.

THE SPIRITUAL HOMILIES


OF

MACARIUS OF EGYPT

[The fifty homilies printed in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 34, have until recently been attributed to St Macarius, an Egyptian monk of the fourth century whose miracles are told in Palladius's *Lausiac History* and Rufinus's *History of the Monks*. But this authorship has lately been seriously questioned; for some of the teaching contained in the Homilies bears a certain resemblance to the tenets of the heretical sect of the Messalians or Euchites, condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431. G. L. Marriott, in an article on 'The Messalians and the Discovery of their Ascetic Book' (*Harvard Theological Review*, vol. xix, No. 2) claims to find most of the eighteen Messalian propositions reproduced in St John of Damascus's *De Haeresibus* in the Macarian Homilies; but on closer inspection almost all the passages adduced from the latter are capable of a perfectly orthodox interpretation, whereas the condemned propositions are a crude and one-sided exaggeration of their teaching. The right solution of the question of the relation between the Messalians and the author of the Homilies seems to have been given by Dom L. Villecourt, O.S.B. ('La date et l'origine des Homélie's spirituelles

attribuées à Macarie', in *Académie des Inscriptions et belles-lettres*, *Compte rendus* 1920). He holds that they originated in Messalian circles before they had actually become heretical, i.e. at a time prior to 390, when they were first condemned; 'for', writes Dom Villecourt, 'the author's attitude is that of a spirit at peace with himself and with the Church', an impression shared by the present translator. They contain a very elevated and at the same time practical doctrine of the spiritual life, frequently reminiscent of St John of the Cross; and it is thus not surprising that they should soon have come to be attributed to a well-known ascetic, under whose name they not only survived the condemnation of the sect, but came to be one of the favourite spiritual books of both the Christian East and West down to the end of the Middle Ages.—H. C. GRAEF.]

ON FRATERNAL CHARITY (HOMILY III)

HEN the brethren do some work they should treat each other lovingly and cheerfully and he who works should thus speak about the one who prays: 'The treasure which my brother possesses is a common treasure; therefore it is also mine'. And he who prays should say about him who reads: 'What he profits from his reading is my gain, too'. And, again, he who works: 'The service I give is for the common good'.

For the members of the body, too, are many, though the body is one, and they help each other, each performing its own special task: the eye sees on behalf of the whole body, the hand works for all the other members, the foot walks, carrying the load of the whole body—thus also should the brethren behave towards each other. And let not him who prays judge the one who works because he is not praying; nor let the one who works judge him who prays, saying to himself: 'He takes his rest, while I am working'. Nor should the one who ministers judge the others. But whatever anyone does he should do to the glory of God. He who reads should love and rejoice in him who prays, saying: 'He prays for me'. And he who prays should think about the labour of the other: 'His work is done for the common good'.

Thus there will be among them much harmony, peace and concord in the 'bond of peace', and they will live with each other in sincerity and simplicity, well pleasing to God.

ON TEMPTATION (HOMILY V)

There are some who say that the Lord requires only visible fruits from men, and that he himself puts right the interior things. Now this is not so; but just as one is careful where the outer man is concerned,

so also ought we to be severe in the matter of our thoughts. For the Lord requires from you to hate yourself and to fight with the weapons of the mind, and not to consent to, much less to delight in, evil thoughts.

For war, strife, deliberation and comparisons between the love of God and the love of the world are first of all in the heart, for from there one proceeds to make decisions. If, for example, one is involved in a quarrel with one's brother, one argues with one's self: 'Shall I say it? Shall I speak? Or should I rather not say anything?' Indeed, the thought of God comes into one's mind, but then one is set on self-aggrandisement rather than on self-denial. Now if the love of the world weighs down the scales of the heart even a little, straightaway the evil word rises to one's lips. Then the mind, placing, as it were, an arrow in its bow, pierces the neighbour with the tongue, shooting darts of unseemly words with the consent of the will, in order to procure one's own advantage. Thus a man continues to harass his neighbour with these shameless words, until sin overflows into the body, leading sometimes even to violent clashes and physical hurt, because the limbs are making war on each other, maybe it will even lead to murder. Then the cupidity of the wicked is consummated in death. See where it began, and how it ended, that love of worldly glory that weighs down the scales of the heart with its self-will. Because a man would not deny himself and loved the things of this world, all these perversities have come to pass.

MEMBERS OF THE MYSTICAL BODY

(Homilies 43 and 31)

Just as many candles and lamps are lit from the fire, but all shine with the same light, so also the Christians are enkindled and shine with the same divine fire, which is the Son of God. With burning lamps in their hearts they shine before his face though they are still on earth, even as he himself once shone. For he says: 'Therefore God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness'. For this reason he is called Christ, that we also might be anointed with the same oil as he. Thus shall we ourselves become christs, for we are, so to speak, of the same substance and of one body.

From one point of view the Christians are, indeed, like lamps filled with oil, that is, with the fruits of justice. But unless the lamp in them be lit from the lamp of the Godhead, they are nothing. Now the Lord was, indeed, the burning lamp, because the divine Spirit that was in him substantially inflamed his heart in a way fitting to his human nature. So it should also be with the Christians, though in their case it is rather as if a dirty old purse were filled with pearls:

outwardly they should be lowly and of small account, but within they possess the pearl of great price.

Therefore the Christian ought always to keep God before his mind—not only when he goes into his oratory, but also walking, talking and eating he should think of him and love him. Let us, then, take this body and make it an altar and place on it every thought of ours, and ask the Lord to send from heaven his great invisible fire and consume the altar and all that is thereon.

THE MOTHERLY LOVE OF GOD

(Homily 46)

Though the soul may have transgressed the Commandments and languidly succumbed to the passions, yet when she turns to the Lord and believes, he will help her to give up her former evil life. Even if she be still held by her old weakness, incapable of leading the true life, yet should she ardently long for this life, asking it from the Lord, the true physician.

Now there are people, misled by false teaching, who say that once a man is spiritually dead, he can do nothing good whatsoever. But this is not so. For even a baby, too weak for anything and unable so much as to walk to his mother on his own little feet, can yet roll about and scream and cry because he wants her. Then the mother is sorry for him, and at the same time pleased that the little one desires her so much. Therefore, as he cannot come to her, she, moved by his longing and by her own love of her child, takes him up and sweetly fondles and feeds him.

Thus also deals the loving God with the soul who comes to him and longs for him. And, as he himself is moved even more by his own love and tenderness, he unites himself to her spiritually, becoming, as the Apostle says, one spirit with her. For when the soul clings to the Lord, he has mercy on her and comes lovingly and joins himself to her, and she abides in the embrace of God. Her body, indeed, is thrown to the ground, but her mind sojourns in the heavenly Jerusalem, for she is raised to the third heaven, united to the Lord and serving him.