

The Beginnings of Sketic Monasticism in the Time of Saint Macarius of Egypt

PhD Senior Lecturer Dr. MARIUS TELEA,
University of Alba Iulia,
mariustelea@yahoo.com

Abstract

The complex personality of Saint Macarius of Egypt and the epoch of the beginning of Eastern monasticism, with the spiritual troubles and even the dogmatic and ecclesiastic ones, has constantly aroused interest and major reactions. Regarding the cleansing of the soul of passions, obtaining the unity of the being and partaking in the communion life of the Holy Trinity as fundamental motivations, numerous Christians left the citadel, going extra muros and founded in the desert, as an extension of the Church which is One, churches of asceticism and Christian perfection.

The sketic desert, one of the most arid and isolated regions of Nitria, situated in Lower Egypt, became in this context a place preferred by most of Egypt's anchorites. The prestige of this community is, undoubtedly, due to Saint Macarius of Egypt.

As spiritual guide of the community in Sketis, Saint Macarius of Egypt delivered several sermons. Tradition attributes him a rather impressive work made up of homilies, letters, treatises and apothegms. All these writings have been, for the last two centuries, the object of some controversies which have not been completely elucidated so far.

Beside these aspects, Saint Macarius of Egypt remains one of the most remarkable figures of the first generations of monks in the Egyptian desert, being righteously considered the founder of Sketis.