

An Historical Sketch

(We present this Historical Sketch because many people have asked for it)

More than fourteen hundred years have passed away since the Founder and Father of Western Monachism gave to the world, from the solitude of Monte Cassino, in Italy, the Code of religious life which the consensus of Christian centuries has stamped with the distinctive title of THE HOLY RULE. Forming as it did for so many ages one of the most powerful instruments of the civilization of Europe, the RULE of St. Benedict possesses, apart from its intrinsic merits, an interest which is not limited to the Benedictine Family alone, but which cannot but be shared by every thoughtful student of history.

The Seventh Century saw the propagation of Benedictine Monachism in the countries of Western Europe, a movement which gained rapidly in momentum until there existed innumerable monasteries following the Rule of St. Benedict. For the service of these monasteries there were made copies of the Rule. Of course, the question soon arose as to which was the true text.

The first editor to give the text of the RULE a full examination in the light of the most ancient manuscripts was Dom Edmund Schmidt of the Abbey of Metten, in Bavaria, ("Regula S. Benedicti Juxta Antiquissimos Codices Cognita," Metten, 1880). The text of the Holy Rule was translated into English by Rev. Boniface Verheyen, O.S.B. in 1902. Father Boniface, a monk of St. Benedict Abbey, Atchison, Kansas, rendered the translation of The Rule of St. Benedict in such a way that St. Benedict would recognize it in this English dress to be the same as that which he wrote originally. More recent translations have lost much of the refinement and poetic beauty of Father Boniface's translation.

As to whether the RULE is a mystical or ascetical document, it can be said that it is ascetic, rather than mystical. The Rule promotes the contemplative life, and provides for it in the Divine Office, private prayer, study, silence, and manual labor. The RULE does not