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'Tears flowed from his eyes unceasingly': weeping and total devotion in Egypt in late antiquity

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the practice of weeping in Pachomian monasticism as a performance of absolute devotion. Theories about radical religion and approaches to emotions are used as a theoretical lens. Pachomian sources show a religious society in the making. Its emotional practices, including weeping, reflect a form of total devotion toward the divine, the monastic father, and the religious group. The article looks into how weeping was performed, what its scales were, in which ways it reflected religious excellence, and what sort of emotional regime it supported. Weeping interacted with a hierarchical organization and an authoritarian leadership intent on control. Leadership issues were set in a context of intense weeping, founded on the submission of the monastic son to the monastic father and on the son's total devotion to the monastic father and the divine. In the monastic story world, weeping and tears are strong textual signals and a pull factor in radical religion.

Ascetic weeping

Pachomius founded the first monastery in Upper Egypt ca. 320 CE. During the following decades, a federation with several monasteries was developed. This is the first example of Christian ascetics who created a community (*koinonia*) built on rules (Rousseau 1985, 57–76).[1] Life in the *koinonia* demanded total devotion, and weeping was part of the performance of this devotion.[2]

The emotional practice of weeping was characterized by high intensity, and the primary weeper was frequently followed by others, who joined in. This shared weeping created a feeling of *communitas*, which served the Pachomian *koinonia* well. Weeping monastics interacted with each other, with the superhuman world, and, through texts and narratives, with reading audiences. While tears of joy are rare in these texts, there is a delight in tears – some of the Pachomian leaders were passionate

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[1]According to the tradition, Pachomius was trained by Palamon, who was an anchorite (SBo 8 and G[1] 6).
[2]The Coptic verb used for 'weep' is *rime/rimi* connected to *rmeie* 'tear'. In Greek mainly, *dakrúo*, which is closely connected to *dákruon* 'tear'. Because both the main Greek and the Coptic term have a close connection to tears, weeping, and not crying, is in the main used in this study. A distinction between weeping and crying in English, is that the second term has more stress on sound than the first.

weepers, especially Theodore, who together with Horsiesios, was the most important of Pachomius' successors.

Weeping belonged to the religious repertoire of the ascetic world.[3] Research on ancient Christian weeping has discussed reasons for crying, such as mourning over sinfulness, penance, fear of damnation, and a strong wish to be saved from the sinful world,[4] and also stressed the wider philosophical and rhetoric context, for instance, the ideal of *apatheia*.[5] Weeping was a way to completely commit to the deity, but it was also a way of engaging with the world, which worked meaningfully in specific cultural contexts and social situations. It is therefore fruitful to relate weeping to the internal dynamics of religious groups. This article regards weeping in the Pachomian *koinonia* as an embodied practice, situated in a social context, and discusses it as a performance of total devotion.

How did monastics practice their weeping, what were its scales? To what sort of emotional regime was weeping subject? Does management of emotions play a special role? In what ways was weeping part of total devotion? How were stories about weeping pull factors in high-intensity and radical religion?

The main sources[6] are the Life of Pachomius, especially the *Sahidic-Bohairic Life* (SBo) and the *First Greek Life* (G[1]), but other Pachomian sources are consulted as well, especially a *Letter of Bishop Ammon* and *Paralipomena*. The *Apophthegmata Patrum* (AP), which are connected to the anchoritic and semi-anchoritic ascetic milieus in Lower Egypt,[7] Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca*, Evagrius' *Protrepticus*, and some of the Nag Hammadi-texts[8] are also drawn into the discussion.

Theoretical framework

Theories about radical religion serve as an analytical lens in the present study of weeping as a religious performance in Pachomian monasticism. Gideon Aran's article on contemporary radical religion among the Haredim, ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel, has been an inspiration. Aran suggests that religion has more to do with performance of the self and the group than with belief and experience (Aran 2013). His focus is on inward-facing performance and competition over religious excellence within the group. He highlights measures of religiosity used by the practitioners themselves and presents new perspectives on scaling religiosity and on high-scale religion.

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[3]When weeping is expected and encouraged, it can be seen as part of ritual situations and as a religious activity – 'tears can be experienced as religious when they arise in a ritual setting and symbolic community' (Tweed 2020; 37).
[4]See Müller 1997 and 2000; Dilley 2017, 131–133; 230–231; Muehlberger 2018; Görföl 2021. According to John Chryssavgis, weeping played a dominant role by the fourth century, he mentions especially the desert fathers, the Cappadocians, Evagrius of Pontus, Isaiah of Scetis, Diadochus of Photice, the *Macarian Homilies*, Isaac the Syrian, and John Cassian (Chryssavgis 2002). Piroska Nagy has treated weeping as ritual in the Middle Ages (2004) and has looked into the genealogy of tears in late Antiquity (2000).
[5]Ilaria Ramelli focuses on Origen and Gregor of Nysa, especially on the philosophical context and the ideal of *apatheia* in relation to tears, *pathos*, and death (Ramelli 2009).
[6]Quotes are from the translations referred to in the bibliography.
[7]Weeping in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* is discussed by Barbara Müller (1997, 2000). Her stress is especially on *pénthos*, 'sorrow, mourning.'
[8]Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott have made a strong case for the monastic origin and Pachomian ownership of the Nag Hammadi codices (Lundhaug and Jenott 2015). According to Christian Bull, subgroups of these codices were produced in the Pachomian monasteries of Sheneset (Chenoboskion) and Shmin (Panopolis) and were part of a monastic book-exchange network (Bull 2020).

In addition to research on radical religion, theoretical approaches to emotions have been helpful. These are approaches which have only recently been applied to ancient Christianity, for instance Andrew Crislip's study of emotional communities and suffering in Shenoute's White Monastery Federation (Crislip 2018), and Paul C. Dilley's monograph, *Monasteries and the Care of the Soul in Late Antique Christianity: Cognition and Discipline* (2017), which focuses on the molding of the cognitive, but also on the affective capacities of the monastics (Dilley 2017).

This article uses concepts of 'emotional communities,' 'emotional regimes,' and 'emotional practices'. 'Emotional communities' is a term coined by Barbara H. Rosenwein. These are communities united by a common emotional ideal, a system of feelings, and by common ideas about the feelings, which should be cultivated, and harmful feelings that should be limited and repressed (Rosenwein 2010).[9] William Reddy's term, 'emotional regimes,' overlaps to a certain degree with Rosenwein's 'emotional communities,' but stresses the aspect of power. According to Reddy, regimes at one extreme of a spectrum 'require individuals to express normative emotions and to avoid deviant emotions' (Reddy 2001, 125) and offer strong emotional management tools (Reddy 2001, 126). At the other end of the spectrum are regimes that 'use such strict emotional discipline only in certain institutions (armies, schools, priesthoods), or only at certain times of the year or certain stages of the life cycle' (Reddy 2001, 125). Weeping gets its meanings in social and cultural contexts and is part of emotional regimes with specific norms. The emotional regime, which is reflected in the Pachomian texts, was rather totalitarian. Even small things were regulated, and the regulations were ideally internalized (Layton 2007, 70–71). According to Reddy, norms and ideals 'must become anchored in practice through emotional navigation efforts that are more-or-less successful over a period of time' (Reddy 2008, 96). In Pachomian monasticism, the practice of weeping was part of the process of developing emotional norms and ideals. Reddy points out that changes in such norms and ideals were accompanied by improvisation and by trying things out (Reddy 2008, 96). This is a fruitful perspective in relation to the growth of cenobitic monasticism and the development of weeping as a successful emotional practice.

The concept 'emotional practices' is borrowed from Monique Scheer. The concept is dynamic and in line with a performance perspective on weeping (Scheer 2012, 216). According to Scheer, the concept

> should imply 1) that emotions not only *follow* from things people do, but *are* themselves a form of practice, because they are an action of a mindful body; 2) that the feeling subject is not prior to but emerges in the doing of emotion; and 3) that a definition of emotion must include the body and its functions, not in the sense of universal, pristine, biological base, but as a locus for innate and learned capacities deeply shaped by habitual practices (Scheer 2012, 220).

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[9]In Rosenwein's study of the Middle Ages, she presents a more complex model of emotional communities: 'Imagine, then, a large circle within which are smaller circles, none entirely concentric but rather distributed unevenly within the given space. The large circle is the overarching emotional community, tied together by fundamental assumptions, goals, feeling rules, and accepted modes of expression. The smaller circles represent subordinate emotional communities, partaking in the larger one and revealing its possibilities and its limitations. They too may be subdivided. At the same time other larger circles may exist, either entirely isolated from or intersecting with the first at one or more points' (Rosenwein 2006, 24).

Weeping is a type of practice, which potentially changes those who weep and the state of their social context.

Scales of weeping

Weeping heroes are not a new phenomenon. Gilgamesh, the Mesopotamian hero, wept bitterly over the loss of his friend Enkidu and when a serpent snatched away the plant of immortality (*The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, tablet IX 1-2 and XI 307–309). In the Hebrew Bible, David and Jonathan weep (1 Samuel 20:41), in Christianity, the blessing in Luke that those who weep now will laugh was important (Luke 6, 21b and 25b). Weeping heroes exist in abundance in the Homeric epics.[10] While changes in masculine ideals had made Plato claim that weeping was incompatible with manliness (*Rep.* 10 605d7-10; *Phaed.* 117c5-d1; see Föllinger 2009, 32), it became part of the Christian emotional regime, especially connected to new ascetic ideals, male as well as female.[11] In Christian Egypt, the Stoic teaching about human passions supplied the premises for how Origen in the third century and in the late fourth century Evagrius systematized emotions and feelings (Ramelli 2009). Evagrius attempted to take control of emotions and make them effective in monastic practices by, for instance, presenting lists of acclaimed and ideal emotions as well as of unwanted and rejected emotions. For Evagrius, weeping is a spiritual exercise, which makes prayers more effective (Muehlberger 2018, see below). In the Pachomian sources, we catch sight of a religious society in the making. Its emotional practices, including weeping, reflect total devotion toward the divine, the monastic father and the religious group.

The sources show that there was a spectrum of weeping with different degrees of religious intensity. At one end of the spectrum, the weeping was loud, for instance when 'the brothers' weeping reached far from the synaxis' (G^1 131) or when they were 'wailing and weeping with a loud voice' (*A Letter of Bishop Ammon* 23). Frequently the criers 'weep greatly', 'weep a great deal' (SBo 94) or 'weep copiously' (G^1 128). Loudness as well as a large quantum of tears make the effect of weeping stronger, for instance when profound weeping took place over several days, or when the clothes of the weeper became drenched in tears. At the other end of the spectrum was the silent inner weeping, mentioned in a gloss in the *First Greek Life of Pachomius*.[12]

Generally, weeping was part of social and ritual situations with specific norms, such as personal loss and funerals, but ascetic and monastic weeping was not restricted to such occasions. On the contrary, the present life was a source of grief, a permanent reason for weeping, in contrast to the heavenly life to come. According to an apothegm, the monastics should weep for their sins all the time (S 3.44.2, N 141), and some brothers are described as doing exactly that.[13] When he was working with his hands, abba Arsenius

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[10]Sabine Föllinger notes the semantic variety of the terms used for lamenting and weeping in Homer, and lists reasons for weeping and tears 'above all, sorrow, fury, despair, yearning and fear, but also desire for revenge and disappointment, indeed even joy' and mentions also defeat in a sporting event (Föllinger 2009, 17, 29). See also Hélène Monsacré, *Les Larmes d'Achille*, 1984.

[11]Jerome writes for instance approvingly about Paula that 'her tears welled forth as it were from fountains, and she lamented her slightest faults as if they were sins of the deepest dye (*Letters* 108. 25, 1).

[12]According to the gloss, 'tears are always a mark of emotion. And even if someone does not weep although he is moved at the time the event happens, there is also the inner weeping' (G^1 53; Veilleux 1980, 413). The gloss suggests that silent weeping was a possibility.

[13]Barbara Müller has written extensively about weeping and sorrow (*penthos*) among the desert fathers (Müller 1997, 2000).

had always 'a rag on his lap on the account of the tears falling from his eyes' (S 3.3.3., A Arsenius 41), and he finally wept so much that 'his eyelashes had fallen out' (A Arsenius 42). Palladius, who wrote about his visit to ascetics and monastics in Egypt, describes a monk in Alexandria named Isidore, who burst into tears at table many times and when he was asked why, he said that I am 'ashamed to partake of the food of an irrational [beast] when I am rational and, by the power given us by Christ, I ought to exist in a paradise of delight' (*Historia Lausiaca* 1.3, see also *AP* S 4.33.2 and A Poemen 17).

While weeping strengthens social ties and is usually met with empathy, it can also be regarded as inappropriate and even cause anger (Hendriks et al. 2008, 93). For while it was an ideal, associated with prominent ascetics, continuous weeping was not necessarily optimal in the daily life of a cenobitic society. In Pachomian monasticism, when people lived, ate, and worked together for a living, profound weeping could be disturbing. A story about Silvanos reflects the ambiguity (*Paralipomena* 2.3). Silvanos had been an actor before he became a monk. Among his virtues 'was his absolute humility and the tears that flowed from his eyes unceasingly,' but he was 'unable to control his weeping, and his tears were mingled with his food.' And this was the problem, the brothers found his weeping disgusting, not least when it happened in front of strangers, 'what thought keeps you so ceaselessly soaked with tears that many of us seeing you are turned from eating to satiety (*kóron*)?'[14] They ask Silvanos why he weeps and suggest that he should weep with invisible tears. His answer points to past, present, and future: He mourns for his earlier life, feels that he does not deserve to be waited upon by holy men during meals, and fears for his salvation.

Silvanos presents three valid causes for monastic weeping, repentance, humility, and fear of damnation, and Pachomius holds him up as an example for the other brothers to imitate (*Paralipomena* 2.4). However, the story reflects an ambiguity between spiritual ideals and the demands of daily life. It indicates that it was a difference between the monastic heroes, who in the sources were allowed their excessive weeping, and what was tolerated of the average monastic.

Excessive weeping, be it measured by amounts of tears, loudness, or duration, makes everything else recede into the background and is a way to perform total devotion. It reflects a type of religious excellence, which transcends the usual practices of the average monastic in this emotional regime.[15] However, such a permanent high-intensity religious performance can be inconvenient in a community, where members have to keep up their day-to-day self-supporting activities. According to Aran, 'excessive religiosity' may threaten those with a lower level of religiosity, but it may also threaten the religious authority of the leadership and the integration of the group. Striving at an optimum religiosity could be considered unacceptable (Aran 2013, 186). In the case of Silvanus, his weeping was ambiguous. His continuous flood of tears was criticized by his peers, but it was finally approved by Pachomius. All the same, it is tempting to see the story as reflecting a conflict between actual practices and spiritual ideals. A solution is to idealize the extreme performance of high intensity weeping in narratives about religious super-achievers, but at the same time discourage the extremes of this performance in daily

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[14]*kóros* means satiety, but also in an uncomfortable way.
[15]John Chryssavgis discusses weeping in John Climacus who lived in the 6.-7th centuries as part of the Christian way to excellence (Chryssavgis 2002).

life. For while weeping reflects the right attitude to life in this world and monastics were urged to 'allow a spring of tears to flow every day, and night' (*Instructions to Horsiesios* 1:3 in Veilleux 1982, 136), it was probably better to restrict its excesses to rituals, especially prayer, and special situations, which called for intense loyalty and devotion (see below).[16] The Pachomian *koinonia* was a community, built on emotional practices, but also on a management of these practices, which aimed at making them optimal in monastic life.

The emotional regime and the biblical context

Monastic discourses on weeping refer to Scriptural models and quotations, which contributed to make weeping effective. This is in consonance with how monastic literature has a resonance in Christian Scripture, both in the Septuagint and the New Testament. Hugo Lundhaug points out that what 'emerges from the Pachomian sources is a picture of a monastic culture that literally breathed the Scriptures' (Lundhaug 2010, 143). Pachomian monasticism practiced an emotional regime with biblical legitimacy.

In the gospels, Jesus is the prime example of emotional weeping. His reaction to the death of Lazarus is described in a poignant sentence: 'Jesus wept' (John 11: 35: *edakrysen ho Iēsus*). According to the gospels, Jesus wept several times (Luke 9: 41; John 11: 35; Hebrew 5: 7). and this was later seen as part of his humanity, since emotional weeping is an exclusive human phenomenon (Augustine, *De civ*. 14.9; see Corbeill 2009, 306–307).[17] While Jesus wept, the gospels never mention that he laughed. On the contrary, in several New Testament texts, laughing is contrasted to weeping, and weeping is described as an appropriate reaction to life in this world. Luke includes a reversal, because weeping will eventually turn to joy and laughter:[18] 'Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh' (Luke 6: 21b), and Luke also turns the reversal around: 'Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep' (Luke 6: 25b).

In Pachomian sources, the contrast between laughing and weeping is applied to worldly joking and merrymaking and shows how the emotional regime of the monasteries worked. When four brothers 'began to tell jokes to one another, to make fun and to laugh aloud,' it grieved the Holy Spirit who promptly revealed the names and their offence to Theodore (*A Letter of Bishop Ammon* 23). Theodore rebuked them with several quotes from Scripture, which condemn joking and laughing on a general basis (Jr 15:16-17, Job 31:5, Qo 7:6, 2:2, 7:3, Jm 4:9, Lk 6:25, Ps 38:17). His rebuke led to the brothers 'wailing and weeping with a loud voice, looking to the east and casting themselves down before God.' The erring brothers asked the others to pray for them, which they did with 'copious weeping' (*A Letter of Bishop Ammon* 23). Their weeping generated and fueled the emotions of the four brothers and kindled similar emotions

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[16]When weeping accompanies prayer, it is part of a ritual situation (see Meuli 1975, 374–300, *Das Gebetweinen*). Ritual weeping is often based on the same functional mechanisms as ordinary weeping and reflects 'the expression of a need for help and/or submission to get a positive response from important, powerful figures, as well as the strengthening of social bonds' (Gračanin, Bylsma, and Vingerhoets 2018, 126).

[17]Corbeill points out that pagan gods were criticized for crying, Augustine interprets the weeping of the statue of Apollo at Cumae as a sign of the weakness of gods, who in reality are demons (*De civ*. 3.11; see Corbeill 2009, 299).

[18]Luke has seven descriptions of a reversal of weeping (*klaiō*) (Luke 7:11–17; 7: 31–35; 7: 36–50; 8: 40–56; 19: 41–44; 22: 54–62; 23: 27-31). Sung Min Hong sees 'Luke's display of the reversal of weeping as a distinctively Lukan interest' (Hong 2018: xv).

in the other brothers. Wailing and weeping was a way to engage with the specific situation. It was socially anchored and activated the whole group in a passionate embodied experience of humility and full commitment toward divinity.

In a similar situation, some brothers launched a boat into the water with much hilarity (SBo 192). The joking and merrymaking made Theodore, who was in charge, depressed: 'if you continue to behave this way, you are going to weep and be afflicted and groan because of the pleasures in which you are indulging' (SBo 192). And he threatened them: 'But the Lord knows that if you continue to behave so stupidly, you are going to weep and weep and weep again with groans' (SBo 182: 7-8: *tetennarimi ouoh tennarimi ouoh tetennarimi*). The author concludes: 'When he had said these things, most of the brothers wept, understanding the pains which he took for their salvation and the safety of everyone's soul.' The Lukan model is visible, and the severity of their future weeping is stressed since the verb 'weep' (*rimi*) is repeated three times (*epizeuxis*). The literary device of *epizeuxis* creates a strong emotional appeal, and makes the reader understand that Theodore refers to the eternal eschatological weeping of those who are in hell, an idea about the post-mortem fate, which resurfaces regularly in monastic literature.

Another and more peculiar aspect of the laughing/weeping dichotomy is found in a story about monastic bakers who had been talking while they were working, which was forbidden (SBo 77).[19] Theodore, who was in charge, had not stopped them, as he should have done, and because of that, an angel told on him to Pachomius. The information made Pachomius so angry that 'straight away he laughed in his [Theodore] face with great anger' (SBo 83: 6-7: *afsôbi henpefho henousôbi efmeh njônt emašô*). Theodore, who saw 'the nature of his laughter' was even sadder. He fasted for two days and 'prayed with tears night and day about what the brothers had done.' Then he practiced ascesis for three weeks before Pachomius allowed him to stop.

The breach of monastic rules led to Pachomius' demonstration of authority, followed by Theodore's tearful praying of repentance. This was in line with monastic practice. What is strange is that Pachomius laughed in anger. This, rather unexpected reaction, which is, in a way, contradictory and in need of interpretation, created a new context for laughter and weeping. What is 'the nature of this laughter'? It can be compared to Yahweh's laughter in Psalms, which tends to be an expression of superiority and derision (Psalms 2, 4; 37, 13; 59, 9; see Gilhus 1997, 25–27), and through his furious laughter, Pachomius reflected the divine attitude to sinners and enemies of God. The angry, non-playful laughter of Pachomius had a divine model, and its function was to keep up the social and moral order in the monastery. The reaction to this rather scary laughter was also in line with the divine model – Theodore's prolonged weeping. There is 'high correlation between divine wrath and human weeping' (Bosworth 2019, 135).

Why do superhuman beings care so much about worldly communication, especially laughing and joking, that they bother to report it to the monastic superiors? In an emotional regime where things were regulated and the regulations were internalized, informal information and interaction were restricted. Ideal communication happened through prayers, reciting, and preaching (Watts 2016, 55). According to the Pachomian

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[19]The Pachomian *Praecepta* explicitly forbids the brothers to talk when they are kneading, they should recite (Scripture) and knock if they wanted to communicate (*Praecepta* 116; see Veilleux 1981, 190–191).

Rules, a monastic who speaks or laughs during eating or praying must do penance (*Praecepta* 31 and 121; in Veilleux [1981], 150, 164). The Pachomian sources give the clear impression that the *koinonia* was a weeping, not a laughing community.[20] Laughter helps people bond together, but in a wrong way, because it promotes the values of a secular community instead of those of the *koinonia*. The ideal monastic society relates to a superhuman world of angels and divinities, as well as to demons and to the fallen state of humans. Ideally, it should be an emotional community of repentance and mourning where joy and happiness were, in the main, postponed to the world to come. Laughing and joking are manifestations of worldly communication, which belongs to and characterizes the world outside the monastery and marks the boundary between the Pachomian in-group and the outsiders. Laughing disturbs the ideal of total devotion, which is the foundation of monastic life, and it should therefore be arrested. When superhuman beings, be it angels or the Holy Spirit, took laughing so seriously that they intervened, then it contributed to giving the emotional regime a divine sanction.

World rejection and eschatological goals

The continuous need for mourning found its ritual expression in prayer. Weeping and praying in Pachomian sources are modeled on biblical prototypes. According to Flemming Hvidberg, weeping for Yahweh after the exile focused on repentance and confession of sin (Hvidberg [1938], 125), which is very much in line with a large part of weeping in monastic sources.[21] In his comparative analysis of Akkadian and Hebrew prayers, David Bosworth stresses that people cry and pray for similar reasons: both are 'social behaviours by which people seek to coregulate their emotions with others, both human and divine, and to elicit support from them' (Bosworth [2019], 3).

The active use of biblical prototypes was not restricted to the Pachomians. In his *Protrepticus*, Evagrius suggests that those who are attacked by demons should use phrases from the Bible and borrow dispositions and emotional attitudes of biblical characters (Muehlberger [2018], 184–187):

> Think of yourself in comparison with others as an aborted fetus that is not fully grown; a dead dog; a worthless flea. Ask for mercies as the adulterous woman did (John 8). Weep bitterly like Peter (Matthew 26:75). Seek the small crumbs like the Canaanite woman (Mark 7:28). Speak from you whole heart, like David, saying that you have sinned and offended the Lord; baptize your bedding with tears at night; groan and mourn at every hour in likeness of him (2 Samuel 13:13).[22]

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[20]There are a few examples of laughing monastics. One is Pambo who never smiled, but one day demons who wanted him to laugh, stuck wing feathers on to a lump of wood (*AP* A Pambo 13). When Pambo saw them, he began to laugh, and the demons mocked him, 'Ha! Ha! Pambo has laughed.' But Pambo out jested their weak joke: 'I have not laughed, but I made fun of your powerlessness, because it takes so many to carry a wing.' Pambo laughs from the superior position of the monastic hero, who has seen through evil and realized its lack of power (Gilhus [1997], 73).

[21]Egyptian ascetic literature sometimes refers to Classical sources as well. In the *Exegesis on the Soul*, a treatise found at Nag Hammadi, which Kimberley Fowler has convincingly argued fits well with Pachomian views on repentance and intense, prolonged prayer (Fowler [2017]), there are several references to weeping and longing for something better. The treatise combines biblical references with references to Odysseus sitting on the island of Calypso, weeping, grieving, and longing for Ithaca, turning the island into a metaphor for the heavenly destination of the soul (Fowler [2017], 87).

[22]The passage is translated from Syriac by Muehlberger (Muehlberger [2018], 184–185, *Protrepticus,* BM Add. 14578 154ab-ba).

According to Ellen Muehlberger, Evagrius adopts the Classical rhetoric of *ethopoeia*, which means to represent and impersonate a character (Muehlberger 2018). It was part of the ascetic program, which Evagrius offered to monastics in Lower Egypt. This program also included intense and prolonged weeping, but it is mentioned in the quotation that the tearful crying should take place at night. In this way, it would perhaps be less troublesome for the other brothers. This is a pedagogical text, which shows that the use of tears and crying were monitored by the superiors. How well monastics performed, was a sign that demonstrated their degree of religious excellence.

The ascetic attitude made standard reasons for weeping, such as grief, separation, and worldly loss, rather dubious (Hendriks et al. 2008, 91). Grieving for relatives who joined monastic communities received no reward. On the contrary, when Theodore's mother and little brother wanted to see him, Theodore refused to meet them, even when Pachomius was sympathetic to their wish (SBo 37-38). Theodore's refusal made his mother and brother cry even more. When the little brother, weeping and running after Theodore, decided to join the monastery as well, and their mother had to leave her two sons, she was 'in deep affliction and weeping very bitter tears for her sons' (SBo 38). The moral of the story is that those who joined a monastery had left worldly things behind, and secular tears should not force them back. The opposition between family and monastery, which is reflected in this example, shows clearly what it took to live out such a radical religious life. The secular costs are reflected in the mother's desperate weeping. When monastics did not relent to the pressure of secular weeping, it made their religious achievement even more admirable.[23]

Death and burials are universal sources for weeping. In ancient Egypt, mourning at funerals consisted of loud ritual expressions of sadness and weeping (Volokhine 2008). In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus wept over Lazarus, and the monastic *vitae* present prolonged mourning when the leader dies. However, when Antonius, the main character in Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*, saw that the brothers wept because Pachomius had died, he asked them, according to the *First Greek Life*, not to weep (G^1 120). Antonius points to Pachomius' merits, his place in the kingdom of heaven, and the hope that they will see him again in the hereafter. And, according to the *First Greek Life,* after Theodore had died, Athanasius wrote a letter of comfort: 'Therefore, dear and beloved brothers, do not weep for Theodore, for he is not dead, but asleep. Let no one cry remembering him but emulate his way of life. There is no point in grieving for someone who has gone to a place that is free from grief' (G^1 150, cf. also SBo 210). Weeping over the leaders of the community demonstrated their uniqueness and saintliness and how much the brothers had loved them, but weeping was at the same time ambiguous, because sorrow over mundane loss competed with prescribed joy over future salvatory gains. Those who had successfully completed their ascetic life had reached the heavenly state of salvation, and therefore the bereaved brothers should not weep over them.

A legitimate cause for weeping was fear of damnation. One example is a monastic who bragged to Pachomius and Palamon that he was able to walk on glowing coals while he was praying, without being burnt, which he also successfully did. But the Pachomian *vita*

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[23]Weeping may lead to the weeper's getting what he/she wants, or it may not. Successful healing miracles are sometimes introduced by tears. One example referred to by Palladius is a mother who was 'weeping and lamenting' over her son, who was 'prey to a spirit and paralysis.' The boy was then miraculously cured by the monk Isidore (*Historia Lausiacae* 44.4, cf. also 44.5).

says that he was deceived by a demon who continued to approach him (SBo 14, see also G^1 8). When the brother finally realized the demonic attack, he ran to Palamon and Pachomius, wept 'with an abundance of most bitter tears' and begged them to help him, and they 'wept in great affliction' and prayed over him. Suddenly the possessed man tried to kill Palamon and Pachomius, before he ran away, threw himself into the fire of a bathhouse and was burnt to death. The emotional narrative anticipated the burning fire of damnation and worked as a pedagogical example to scare the brothers so that they kept away from demons, feared the fires of hell, and worked on their salvation.[24] For these purposes, tears and prayers were the chosen remedies.

Among the Pachomians, weeping was a performance of total devotion where the monastics lived out their love of God, longing for salvation, mourning over sins, and fear of hell. The desperate weeping of the family, which the monastic had left behind, showed the costs of monastic life, and the imagined weeping of those in hell, illustrated their terrible fate of the monastics if they failed. But weeping does not only express world rejection and eschatological goals; it interacts with a hierarchical organization and an authoritarian leadership in an emotional regime, intent on controlling its members.

Leadership issues

Weeping as a religious practice intertwined with hierarchy and leadership was performed by the monastic leaders Pachomius, Horsiesios and Theodore, who wept for different causes and with different purposes, dependent on their positions in the hierarchy of authority and leadership in the *koinonia*. Theodore was the one who wept most frequently, most intensely, and for the longest periods of time. He was, according to the sources, a young man from an upper-class family who joined the *koinonia* at an early age. He was close to Pachomius, but fell out with him, which meant that Petronius and Horsiesios were made leaders of the *koinonia* before Theodore. In addition to Pachomius, Theodore is the main protagonist in the Sahidic-Bohairic and the *First Greek Life of Pachomius*.

When Theodore first came to Pachomius, he wept and prayed because of his profound religious longing (SBo 30 and 31, G^1 33 and 35). Pachomius was surprised that he wept so much 'although he was so new' (SBo 33). Theodore's weeping is seen as a laudable activity because it reflects that he wanted to leave the secular world behind, and that he longed for monastic life and salvation. It reveals his intensity, seriousness, and religious maturity. The dedication of Theodore is further stressed in the story about his mother who wanted to meet him and whose weeping requests were left unanswered (see above). Seen together, these two stories about legitimate weeping (longing for salvation) and illegitimate weeping (reclaiming monastics to secular life) are in different ways about the superiority of the monastic life, which Theodore so wholeheartedly embraced. It makes Theodore stand forth as a model of total ascetic devotion.

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[24]Weeping for fear of damnation was, of course, not restricted to the Pachomian sources. It is seen, for instance in an apophthegm, when a young maiden talks about her vision of hell, 'the amount of her tears got so great that they drenched all her clothing.' (*AP* S 18.49). There is also a cosmic weeping when evil powers weep over their final destruction, for instance in the Nag Hammadi treatise, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, where weeping is part of the end-time scenario: 'Then the authorities (*eksousia*) will relinquish their age; and their angels (*angelos*) will weep over their destruction; and the demons (*daimon*) will lament their death' (NHC II 4, 97: 11-14).

The main context for Theodore's weeping, however, was leadership issues in the Pachomian federation. What really happened around 340 CE is impossible to know, because the sources transmit these events in a revised and adapted form for the consumption of later audiences. According to the Sahidic-Bohairic vita, one time when Pachomius was very ill, the brothers begged Theodore to take over the leadership if Pachomius died (SBo 94). Theodore gave his consent, but Pachomius survived his illness. When he learnt what had happened, he was angry with Theodore, denied him all authority and sent him to a solitary place where he fasted and wept, 'with a great many tears and sighs without number.' Pachomius' harsh words made Theodore weep and repent. Weeping is contagious, and Theodore's prolonged weeping made the other brothers weep as well (SBo 94):

> And seeing the abundance of his tears, all the brothers too wept a great deal along with him. When he had finished making his prostrations, he went back to his retreat and went on weeping and afflicting himself day and night before the Lord in conformity with our father Pachomius' command. Actually, many brothers as they went past his retreat heard him weeping and would themselves weep greatly over him.

Weeping invites interpretation, and to find out why people cry is often a first step in turning a situation. The reason for weeping is usually implied in a narrative and sometimes explicitly stated, and when different reasons are suggested, the correct reason is eventually imparted to the readers. The suggestion of different reasons increases the tension in the text. First the brothers discuss if he weeps because the rank had been taken from him, but Theodore denies this vehemently and stresses that he was 'not crying over his loss of rank, but because of the wicked thought he had made room for in his heart' (SBo 94). He also states that what Pachomius did to him, he did for his soul's salvation. Then a brother comes to Theodore and says, untruthfully, that Pachomius has told him that Theodore was removed because he was caught being impure. This makes Theodore weep without stopping, but he did not deny the accusation, because he did not want to 'make a liar of our father.' Finally, it becomes clear that Theodore's profound weeping shows that he is in line with the monastic ideal of the repentant sinner who submits to the monastic hierarchy and its leader, and that the prolonged weeping is part of the process of repentance and healing.

The healing process began when Theodore went back to Pachomius, coming up from behind, taking hold of his head and kissing it many times. Pachomius asks who it is, and when he is told that it is Theodore, Pachomius invites him to sit down with him, but Theodore chooses to return to his retreat. The text does not give any explanation of why Theodore does the kissing. To sneak up from behind and kiss someone on the head, could be interpreted as taking a superior position toward the one who is kissed, but that is obviously not the meaning in this case. It is better to interpret the kissing as an act of humility, the fact that Theodore did it anonymously is meant to stress this point. The kissing obviously has a positive outcome because Pachomius invites Theodore to join him.

After this and because of a vision, Pachomius sent Theodore away from Pbow, the administrative center in the federation, to another monastery, Sheneset (SBo 95). When Theodore waited for the ferry, he listened in on a conversation between two old monks and heard a parable, which was aimed at him. The readers are told that the

two are angels in disguise. They said that if Theodore bore up with everything his father has done to test him, he would become one of God's elected. Theodore went on his way, 'weeping because of the sweetness of the words he had heard from angels' lips.' When Theodore returned to Phbow, he was greatly consoled, but nevertheless, 'he was still in affliction and cried unceasingly saying, 'I have sinned by letting such vainglory enter my heart.'' Theodore was then sent to Alexandria to comfort him in his distress, 'for it was to be feared that his eyes might suffer as a result of much weeping' (SBo 96). Theodore maintains his humble attitude, and the conflict is finally rounded off, when Pachomius says to the brothers that they should not think that Theodore

> suffered a diminution before the Lord because he was publicly demoted before men. In no way. On the contrary, he has grown in his progress far beyond what he formerly was, because of his humility with which he patiently endured it (SBo 97).

The sources reflect what must have been an extremely traumatic experience in the Pachomian federation when Pachomius' authority and leadership were challenged. The narrative solves the conflict by soaking the story in a flood of tears and taking refuge to the imperatives of humility and repentance, and, not least, humbleness and submission to the leader, expressed in Theodore's incessant weeping. The practice of weeping makes people malleable, resets them and alters their state of being in the world. In this way, the relationship between Theodore and Pachomius became a model for the ideal relationship between a monastic father and his monastic son. The working of this type of relationship was crucial in monasteries and a cornerstone of monasticism. It reflected the ideal relation of humans to the divine, founded on submission of the monastic son toward the monastic father and on total devotion. The intensity of the relation is produced through the incessant tears of Theodore. The emotional character of the narratives about Pachomius and Theodore, made the consumption of these stories part of the emotional priming of future monastics (see below).

Performing loyalty, maintaining hierarchy

Two further examples of weeping and leadership issues broaden the picture. The first example is about Horsiesios. When he was made leader of the Pachomian federation, the Greek *prima vita* quotes him saying: 'I wept copiously' (*eklausa ikanôs*) (G[1] 126). In a similar way, he 'wept copiously' (*eklausen ikanôs*) when he thought that he did not manage to lead the brothers in the way he thought that he should have done (G[1] 128). When Horsiesios told the brothers that he was going to step down from his position as leader of the *koinonia*, they 'raised their voices and cried' (SBo 139). Horsiesios then resigned and Theodore was finally made leader (G[1]129-130).[25] When Theodore gave his first speech to the brothers, their 'weeping got so loud that those passing on the road outside the community heard the sound of their weeping. Whenever the sound of their weeping died down, then he himself (Theodore) wept loudly' (SBo 141, also G[1] 131). According to Paul C. Dilley, Theodore 'adopted a standard ritual procedure for speeches of collective repentance: he delivered them standing as the members of the congregation mourned, shedding tears and prostrating themselves' (Dilley 2017, 230, SBo 188). Dilley identifies this procedure as a rhetoric of *ekpathy*, which is intended to call

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[25]When Theodore died, 18 years later, Horsiesios was again made the leader of the *koinonia*.

forth intense feelings in the audience. Weeping is an affective and effective ingredient in the rhetoric performance.

In the stories about Horsiesios and Theodore, the weeping of the *koinonia* demonstrates the unity of the group which, with its change of leader, is in a position of transition. Horsiesios' weeping when he steps down is connected to problems of authority and legitimizes the transfer of power from one leader to the next. The liminal situation and the need to stand together is expressed in the loud crying where all brothers take part. The collective crying is an act of a group, which performs absolute loyalty toward its leader.

Pachomius himself constitutes a special case of monastic weeping. One type of occasion for his weeping was visions, where he received divine instructions and knowledge about the future.[26] His tears confirmed the truth of the visions, which contributed to establish his authority and unique position in the community (Dilley 2017, 210). Pachomius' unique position is further stressed because he wept for the sins of the community rather than for his own sinfulness.

This weeping over the sins of the community is different from how Theodore and Horsiesios wept for their own shortcomings. Pachomius wept, for instance when he took part in a meal with several dishes and the other brothers ate of them all, while Pachomius, in accordance with monastic ideals of frugality, only ate bread (SBo 59). He also wept when the brothers refused to give meat to a brother who was ill, which showed their lack of compassion (SBo 48). His weeping affected the brothers and taught them the true ideals of the community. With his visions, tears, and care for the community, Pachomius takes the role as a 'weeping prophet,' similar to Jeremiah, when he weeps for the shortcomings of his community.[27] A general connection to biblical prophets is made when it is said about Pachomius that 'he pursued in its entirety the way of life of the prophets' (SBo 194). These are words which seem to be rooted in the life of the historical person. In the cartonnage to the Nag Hammadi codices, there is a letter to 'my prophet and father' (*papr[o]phēt[es] neiot*), who from the context is named Pachomius and seems to be the founder of Pachomian monasticism (Bull 2020). Weeping played a key part in the performance of his superior religious position.

In the emotional regime of early Pachomian monasticism, Pachomius, Theodore, and Horsiesios had different weeping profiles. While Pachomius' weeping embodies his religious excellence, Theodore weeps because he is a repentant sinner, who subordinates himself to a monastic father, and Horsiesios weeps because he falls short of expectations to his leadership. Taken together, the weeping of Pachomius, Theodore and Horsiesios are staged in a context of leadership and authority. According to Watts, 'the Koinonia worked simultaneously as a cooperative enterprise that

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[26]According to Paul Dilley, 'the Pachomian biographical tradition contains more accounts of revelations than perhaps any other corpus of Christian literature' (Dilley 2017, 210). Some of the revelations were solicited by practice, others were unsolicited (Dilley 2017, 212–213). Visions could lead to weeping. When Pachomius had a frightening vision about the future of the community of the Koinonia, he 'lay face down and wept copiously' (SBo 66). In another vision Pachomius sees God, and when he talks about his vision to some of the ancient monastics, he does it, 'with sighs and tears' (SBo 73). In the *First Greek Life of Pachomius* (G[1] 112), Pachomius was called to a synod in Latopolis in 345 because of his clairvoyance, 'once there arose a debate about his being called clairvoyant (*dioratikos*)' (Jenott 2013, 332, note 24).

[27]Nearly hundred years later, Shenoute, the leader of the White Monastery, develops the role of a weeping prophet to new extremes with his use of passionate weeping to make his community repent. Shenoute's emotional speeches – a rhetoric of *ekpathy*, is tempered with curses and blessings, with anger as well as with crying and laughing (Dilley 2017, 129).

collectively guided monks towards ideal monastic practices and as a steeply hierarchical environment in which authority was strictly fixed' (Watts 2016, 48). Bentley Layton has pointed out that the totalizing character of cenobitic monasticism 'even extends into the mind and the voice of the monk when he is alone in his cell' (Layton 2007, 70–71). Weeping was an emotional practice that adapted monastics to this type of cenobitic life.[28]

Weeping reflects docility and lack of aggression internally in the group.[29] The communal weeping in the Pachomian sources is comparable to, for instance, weeping among modern *jihadi*, which Thomas Hegghammer has recently analyzed. He describes how much *jihadis* cry and suggests that 'religious emotions may operate somewhat differently from other types of emotion, for example, they may be less contagious to out-groups, but all the more intense within the group' (Hegghammer 2020, 386). Hegghamer also makes the interesting point that the crying of the *jihadi* is partly influenced by historical roots in Sufi practices (Hegghammer 2020, 360–61, 386). Weeping reflects attachment behavior, which promotes social bonding, at the same time as it maintains boundaries against outsiders. It is further a sign of religious excellence and part of a super-religious performance of full commitment (Aran 2013).

Narrating weeping

Monastic sources are not reports of what really happened in the Pachomian federation in the fourth and fifth century. They are literary representations with roots in historical events, which offer emotional portrayals of monastic leaders. The stories of them continued to be read and affected readers through the centuries. Pachomian texts were, for instance, read in the monasteries, which were later founded by Shenoute. Together with stories about the desert fathers, they have stimulated monastic networks across space and time. Weeping continued to inspire the religious life of Egyptian monastics and got new literary imprints. Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria (1923-2012), wrote, for instance, the edifying treatise, *Tears in Spiritual Life* (1997), where he systematized weeping, interpreted biblical passages, and reproduced stories about weeping ascetics and monastics.

In antiquity, imitation, *mimesis*, was a widespread technique in education, secular as well as religious (Stefaniw 2016), and ideal monastics were clearly examples to be imitated. According to Paul C. Dilley, the 'hierarchical strategy of imitating a single individual, rather than a number of different monks, was the primary model of mimesis in cenobitism' (Dilley 2017, 239). Watts has recently analyzed the social structure in which monastic education was embedded. According to him, anecdotes about the leaders created identity and community (Watts 2016, 48). He stresses that 'what one

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[28]Weeping, to cry and shed tears, is the result of emotional and cognitive processes and a human universal experience. It is a complex phenomenon, which is influenced by biological, psychological, and sociocultural forces (Vingerhoets 2013, 2, 11). According to Arvid Kappas, 'it can be assumed that crying has biological origins and can then gain new meanings and functions within a specific social-historical context' (2009, 432).

[29]According to attachment-theory, weeping communicates distress, elicits sympathy, empathy, and support, inhibits aggression, triggers weeping in others, and promotes social bonding. People who weep are seen as sadder than those who do not weep; they are 'typically perceived as more agreeable and less aggressive,' and 'seeing tears might make us feel more closely connected to the crying individual' (Vingerhoets, van de Ven, and van der Velden 2016, 456).

finds is an elaborate textual tapestry woven from Scriptural quotations, Apostolic example and the history of the Pachomian community,' and that the 'success that the Pachomian system promised ascetics grew out of the effective blending of these three elements from which Pachomian identity derived' (Watts 2016, 50). Oral stories about Pachomius and the early leaders, 'eventually formed the basis of the substantial biographies that the community wrote on Pachomius' and were used in the monastery in the education of the brothers to integrate them into the monastic community (Watts 2016, 53–54).

Emotions play a significant role in the influence that literary models have on an audience. According to Sarah Iles Johnston, 'it is easier to get people to believe in things that they cannot experience through suggestions than by persuasion through authority and that a significant means of persuasion through suggestion is the telling of vivid engaging stories' (2017, 154). People form relationships with the fictive characters in the stories, 'that can be just as cognitively and emotionally satisfying as relationships with real people' (Johnston 2017). Reddy points out that emotions 'are subjected to normative judgements and those who achieve an emotional ideal are admired and endowed with authority' (Reddy 2001, 323). The socializing process and emotional development of monastics were partly built on the consumption of emotional portraits of literary models as well as of one's peers and leaders. Considering that the general appeal of religion is more emotional than intellectual (Inglehart 2021, 37), this points to the emotional effect of mimetic models in monastic life.

Imitation is further part of a basic function of weeping, for weeping is contagious. This is reflected several times in the sources, for instance when Theodore's tearful speeches to the monastic community made his audience cry (see above). Tears catch on and this also makes them into strong textual signals. Tears are marks of sincerity, which insist that much is at stake and involve the emotions of the audience. The emotional effect on the audience was also dependent on exaggeration and hyperbole – on the continuous weeping and the huge number of tears, which are transmitted in these stories.

Narratives are tools for handling, shaping, and training emotions, and they have emotional effects, because they elicit emotions in readers (Feldt 2023). According to Scheer, media use 'is an extremely important emotional practice,' which helps to modulate feelings, and feelings must further be identified and named (Scheer 2012, 2010–212). This is obvious in relation to weeping, which is a bodily practice in need of interpretation to detect the feelings and issues, which are involved. That weeping is part of a communication that needs decoding goes both for the actual experience and for its transmission through texts, as seen in the various reasons that were suggested for why Theodore wept when Pachomius' position as leader was challenged (see above).

The stories of weeping monastics demonstrate the religious excellence of elite ascetics and monastics, affect readers, and activate an emotional commitment, which contributed to developing a shared monastic identity. The lachrymose virtuosity of monastic models made weeping under certain circumstances an expected and preferred activity in monastic communities. Under the right circumstances, weeping *was* a type of total devotion.

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