

## **The monks of Syria according to Theodoret of Cyrus**

In his intent to drive human kind to its damnation, men's common enemy has opened a great many avenues to vice. Conversely, those nurtured by faith have found many diverse ladders to reach heaven. Some chose to join in a group to endeavour to reach the ladder's much sought top and win an everlasting crown: there are thousands of convents of this kind, more than can be counted. Others embrace solitary life seeking to speak to God alone; they do not allow themselves the least human consolation: thus do they achieve recognition for their victory. Some attend to the praise of God in shacks or huts others prefer living in caves and caverns. Many, I have mentioned some of them, have decided to have neither cave nor cavern nor shack nor hut but have thrust their body into the open, at the mercy of the seasons' variable fare: sometime frozen by merciless cold, sometime burnt by the blazing sun. And among the latter, practice further differs. Some perpetually keep standing up, others regularly shift from sitting to standing throughout the day; some remain enclosed behind walls and want no communication with anyone, others reject such a screen and are there to be seen by whomever so wishes.

(translation by the translator of the course)