The Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture in John Cassian

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Department of the Centre for Medieval Studies, in the University of Toronto

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This thesis considers the monastic teaching of John Cassian in its historical context. It argues that while he composed a series of discursive treatises, Cassian successfully adapted an understanding of monastic reading drawn from the Origenist monks of Nitria, Kellia, and Scetis, and, more specifically, from Evagrius's *sententiae*. His discourse was not based on abstract argument or even the particular application of general rules. Cassian instead demanded a change in the very life of his reader.

After briefly surveying the what is known and can be surmised about Cassian's life, the thesis considers the historical circumstances in which he wrote. Chapter 2 takes up the monastic *milieu* of his formation, and Chapter 3 evaluates the ideals and attitudes of his intended audience.

Chapter 4 is a detailed reading of the *Institutes* which demonstrates that Cassian encouraged a reciprocity between reading and the practical application of the principles in the text. Cassian encouraged this by anticipating his readers' expectations and through a careful use of voice,
structure, mnemonic devices and imagery. While he avoided terms that had become tainted with "Origenism," as well as the very name of his mentor, Cassian led his readers to a largely Evagrian understanding of praxis and contemplation.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine how this new method of reading influences the interpretation of Cassian's teaching. The former considers his understanding of anachoresis and argues that Cassian used this term more to describe a withdrawal to the inner life of the soul rather than a flight from the monastic community. The latter takes up what Cassian understood as spiritual knowledge and considers the relationship between prayer and exegesis.
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Abbreviations

CCSL Corpus christianorum. Series latina
CSEL Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
PG Patrologia graeca
PL Patrologia latina
PO Patrologia orientalis
SC Sources chrétiennes
SP Studia patristica
TU Texte und Untersuchungen
Introduction

In the second decade of the fifth century, Castor, the bishop of Apt, established a monastery in his episcopal see. Having already undertaken an ascetic vocation on his own, Castor was concerned to find a model of monastic life by which he could regulate both his own conduct and that of his community. ¹ There were already several ascetic communities in the surrounding region which could have provided a satisfactory example. There were also at Lérins and elsewhere rudimentary rules which Castor could easily have adapted to govern his own fledgling community. ² Nevertheless, Castor rejected the examples provided by his fellow countrymen and instead looked to the East for his model. Castor, it would seem, had accepted the widely held belief that only in the East, and particularly in Egypt, was monasticism practised in its truest form. He therefore commissioned John Cassian, a recent emigre from the East and an erstwhile resident of the Egyptian monastic communities of Nitria, Kellia and Scetis, to describe the fundamental principles of Egyptian monastic life. ³ Cassian responded to this commission with a

¹Cassian, De institutis coenobiorum, praef. 2-3; hereafter Inst.
²E.g., de Vogüé, "Regula," 39-45.
³Cassian's commission was to relate the "instituta monasteriorum, quae per Aegyptum ac Palaestinam custodiri conspeximus." Inst., praef. 3. He would later use regula in place of instituta. Inst., praef. 8.
series of books on the institutes of the Egyptians and an elementary discussion of the discernment of thoughts. Before he had even seen the Institutes, Castor commissioned Cassian again, this time to relate the spiritual teachings of the desert fathers. At the behest of Castor and others after him, Cassian would eventually complete twenty-four dialogues or Conferences, each of which purported to describe his conversations with the elders of the Egyptian desert.

To have earned these commissions, Cassian must have commanded significant respect. He had already been allowed by Proculus, the bishop of Marseilles, to establish monasteries for both men and women in the city's environs. The interest of Castor and later patrons shows that Cassian's reputation had spread well beyond this port. Nevertheless, Cassian's authority to teach did not stem from his own abilities as an abba as much as from the fact that he had travelled among and been taught by men much holier.

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4 Cassian, Conlationes 1-10, praef. 1; hereafter Con.

5 Cassian composed the first ten Conferences at Castor's request and together with the Institutes they form a coherent whole. He later composed two sets of seven Conferences which are related to the first ten but are not part of the original corpus.

6 Smith and Wace, Dictionary, 4:489-490, suggest that Proculus may have held his see beyond 426. He could not have been archbishop after 428, Gams, Series, 573, and Duchesne, Fastes, 1:274. All agree that he held his post from at least 381. For Cassian's monastic foundations, Gennadius, De viris inlustribus 65.
than he. It was the Egyptians whom Castor and the others wanted to hear, not a wanderer who had spent time among them. Cassian ostensibly accepted these limitations and described his function as an author as being nothing more than that of an organizer and reporter. He cast his ascetic works in the form of an autobiography in which he claimed to record the very words that the desert fathers spoke to him. Cassian promised that he would describe only what he had seen and experienced while travelling among the Egyptians more than twenty years earlier, and that he would introduce no innovations of his own.

For the most part, Cassian was taken at his word. While his contemporaries noted that some of his conferences had more to do with western theological debates than with life in the Egyptian desert, Cassian was nevertheless respected as a witness to a long line of saints who had surrendered all for the sake of union with God.7 Fifteen centuries later, the first modern scholars to examine Cassian also took him at his word.5 While Salvatore Marsili and M. Olphe-Galliard noted that Cassian's monastic teaching

7E.g., Prosper of Aquitaine, in his De gratia Dei, accused Cassian of placing Pelagian heresy in the mouth of the Egyptian Chaeremon.

5The following brief survey is intended merely to indicate the general direction that studies of Cassian have taken. For a more complete survey of the scholarship through 1960, see Weber, Stellung, 1-18.
differed in some respects from that of his masters, Cassian's "historical account" went largely unchallenged.\footnote{Marsili, \textit{Giovanni Cassiano}; Olphe-Galliard, "Pureté de coeur," 28-60 and "Vie contemplative," 252-288.}

This credulity was due in part to ignorance of ancient Egyptian monastic life, for much of the literary and archaeological evidence upon which we rely today was not available to earlier scholars. However, Cassian's historical account was also accepted because of modern expectations about the nature of autobiography. Cuthbert Butler, for example, wrote that he found "it impossible to doubt the substantial truth of Cassian's picture of monastic life, based, as it appears to be, upon the writer's personal observation."\footnote{Butler, \textit{Lausiac History}, 1:205.} Surely if Cassian was describing his own life he would not deliberately misrepresent its crucial events. Consequently, scholars traced Cassian's itinerary, identified the saints he mentioned, and used his description of the lives and doctrines of the monks to fill out otherwise sketchy information about the origins of Christian monasticism. If Cassian contradicted earlier Egyptian witnesses it was attributed to lapses in memory that would inevitably have occurred over so long a period of time.

A greater knowledge of monastic life in Egypt and a closer analysis of Cassian's claims, however, have led scholars of a later generation to doubt seriously Cassian's

\footnote{Butler, \textit{Lausiac History}, 1:205.}
authority as an historian. Owen Chadwick, for example, demonstrated that Cassian's account of the origin of Matins is inconsistent and cannot possibly be accurate. \(^\text{11}\) Adalbert de Vogüé noted that the two different versions of early monastic history that Cassian put forth are more concerned with monastic theology than historical fact. \(^\text{12}\) Finally, Jean-Claude Guy examined the full range of Cassian's historical claims and effectively sounded the death knell for Cassian as an historian. \(^\text{13}\) Guy concurred with the assessments of Chadwick and de Vogüé. Furthermore, he argued that Cassian's itinerary is unlikely at best, that his topographical errors cannot be put down to mere lapses in memory, and that his account of the anthropomorphite controversy is one-sided and incomplete. Most importantly, Guy argued that Cassian could not possibly have met many of the fathers whose acquaintance he had claimed. Consequently, while the fictive aspect of Cassian's dialogues had long been acknowledged, it now seemed likely that many of the events they relate had not occurred at all. Cassian's work was therefore not "autobiographical", for in it he deliberately misrepresented his earlier career. While Guy did not deny the fundamental role that Cassian's Egyptian

\(^{11}\) Chadwick, \textit{John Cassian}, 2nd ed., 71-77.

\(^{12}\) De Vogüé, "Monachisme et église," 213-240.

\(^{13}\) Guy, "Jean Cassien, historien," 363-372.
experiences had played in his formation, he asserted that Cassian's choice of an autobiographical form was little more than an attempt to invoke the authority of a venerated lineage of desert fathers.\(^{14}\)

Cassian's devaluation as a monastic historian encouraged the examination of his writings in a new light. Guy himself described Cassian as a thinker of "remarkable originality and depth".\(^{15}\) Weber and de Vogüé looked beyond the confines of the Delta region to examine the wide variety of ascetic writers who had helped to shape Cassian's teaching.\(^{16}\) Peter Munz largely avoided the question of Cassian's monastic roots and instead interpreted his understanding of friendship and community according to the thought of both Origen and Cicero.\(^{17}\) Others shifted the focus of study from the environment that had provided Cassian's formation to the one in which he wrote. Philip Rousseau, for example, suggested ways in which the contemporary situation in Gaul had influenced Cassian's thought.\(^{18}\) Paul Christophe and more recently Robert Markus examined Cassian within the context

\(^{14}\)Guy, "Jean Cassien, historien," 372.

\(^{15}\)"En fait, Cassien n'a rien d'un historien: il est un théoricien de la vie spirituelle, et un théoricien d'une originalité et d'une profondeur remarquable." Guy, "Jean Cassien, historien," 372.


\(^{17}\)Munz, "John Cassian," 1-22.

of the growing christianization of Gaul and the universal
development of an ascetic, bicameral world-view.\textsuperscript{19} Most
recently, Elizabeth Clark has suggested that Cassian's
thought should be examined under the rubric of
"Origenism".\textsuperscript{20} She cautions, however, that "Origenist" must
be understood to signify a set of theological presupposi-
tions molded much more by fourth-century debate than by
Origen's own writings.

While great strides have been made toward understanding
Cassian as a monastic writer, this increased interest in
particular aspects of his thought has created difficulties
of its own. Since it is now accepted that Cassian was not
an historian, much less an "autobiographer", any serious
consideration of the autobiographical structure of his works
has been largely abandoned. Moreover, the Institutes have
increasingly come to be ignored, for they are often regarded
as little more than an amalgamation of disparate literary
sources and an expansion of Evagrius Ponticus's teaching on
the \textit{vitia}.\textsuperscript{21} Scholarly interest has instead focused on the
synthesis of monastic teaching that Cassian developed in his
Conferences. Cassian's ascetic works have been culled to

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{20}Clark, \textit{Origenist}, 249-259.
\textsuperscript{21}De Vogüé, "Interpolation," 217-221, and "Morceau," 7-
12, is an exception to this, although even his interest is
primarily one of source criticism.
\end{flushright}
determine where and how he addressed issues relevant to patristic theology or monastic spirituality.

Moreover, in light of the fact that Cassian's ascetic works are no longer regarded as "historical", their evident lack of any systematic arrangement is no longer as easily forgiven. Instead, they are now often characterized as circular, repetitive, and disorganized. In what he considered to be an act of charity, Chadwick went so far as to suggest that Cassian's writings have suffered from a disorganized exemplar rather than a disorganized mind. When examining particular themes or aspects of Cassian's ascetic corpus, however, scholars have risked introducing "systems" of their own. The thematic or topical analysis of Cassian's corpus has heightened the danger of creating from its seemingly disjointed parts a theological structure that Cassian himself would not have recognized.

Alarmed by this trend, de Vogüé charged that the analysis of Cassian's monastic teaching has suffered from the failure of scholars to consider adequately its form and arrangement. To demonstrate that there is in fact a discernible structure or organization to Cassian's writings, de Vogüé sketched a brief outline of the Conferences that suggests an alternation between the discussion of ascetic doctrine and its practical application in the life of the

\[\text{22 Chadwick, John Cassian, 2nd ed., 43.}\]
While he did not entirely discount the validity of a thematic approach, he nevertheless contended that the analysis of any facet of Cassian's thought must take into account not only its immediate context, but also its place within the overall arrangement of the Conferences. More recently, Columba Stewart has shown that similar attention must be given to the internal arrangement of individual Conferences. He substitutes the term "spiralling" for the derogatory "repetitive" and argues that while Cassian frequently returns to issues he has already discussed, his treatment becomes progressively more sophisticated and sublime. However, while Stewart shares de Vogüé's conviction that Cassian's monastic teaching cannot be removed from the vehicle in which it is conveyed, he has struck out on a divergent path. Instead of interpreting Cassian's Conferences as an alternation between praxis and theoria, Stewart has suggested that the key to unlocking Cassian's "system" lies in his use of Scripture.

De Vogüé and Stewart have gone far to show that the content of Cassian's writings cannot be separated from its form. The limited scope of their articles, however, has

\[\text{De Vogüé, "Comprehendre," 250-272.}\]
\[\text{Stewart, "Unceasing," 159-177.}\]
\[\text{Stewart, "Scripture," 457-461.}\]
left many questions unanswered.\textsuperscript{26} A consideration of the form of Cassian's text must also take up the related question of how the text was to be used. Both the identity of the reader and the manner in which the text was to be read weigh heavily upon any assessment of the author's intent. Since the final form of the text is structured to encourage particular cognitive acts within the reader, the discernment of the text's structure is an integral step toward the interpretation of the work as a whole. First and foremost, Cassian's text is a literary construction which was meant to be read by a narrowly defined audience within a limited set of circumstances. It would therefore be helpful to describe briefly the historical context of Cassian's literary efforts.

Modern scholars were not the first to notice the difficulty of representing Cassian's monastic teaching as a "system". Cassian himself alluded to this problem at the outset of his work.\textsuperscript{27} In the preface to his Institutes Cassian wrote that Castor had not comprehended the magnitude of his commission. Though a literary commonplace of the day, this statement contained an essential truth, for Cassian had

\begin{Verbatim}
\textsuperscript{26}Stewart's latest article was merely a prolegomenon to a lengthy study of Cassian's use of Scripture that is now in progress. De Vogüé will presumably take up his arguments concerning Cassian in his monumental study of Latin ascetic literature.

\textsuperscript{27}Inst., praef. 3.
\end{Verbatim}
been commissioned to collect in a single work, or to "systematize", what were in fact widely different and often contradictory monastic customs.\textsuperscript{28} Cassian addressed this problem by refusing to represent "eastern monasticism" as a unified or synthetic experience. Palestinian monasticism, he claimed, was inferior to that of Egypt, and there were different customs and teachings even among the Egyptians.\textsuperscript{29} Instead, he emphasized the practices of a small group of settlements in a limited geographical area: those of Nitria, Kellia and Scetis. Similarly, he took his understanding of the ascetic life and of the larger world principally from the Greek-speaking "Origenist" monks who resided there. Cassian particularly relied on the writings of Evagrius Ponticus, whose collected works are our best source for the thought and practices of these monks.

The establishment of strict geographical and doctrinal boundaries, however, was still not sufficient to allow Cassian to relate the institutes of the Egyptians. Instruction and learning in these settlements were largely experiential. Doctrine was integrally related to praxis and both depended upon the interaction between the master and the student. Typically, the master would offer logoi, or words that would lead to salvation, after he had discerned the particular

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28}E.g., \textit{Inst.} 2.6; 4.1,17,19.
\item \textsuperscript{29}E.g., \textit{Inst.} 2.6; 4.1,17,19; \textit{Con.} 17.2,5.
\end{itemize}
needs of the one seeking advice. These *logoi* received elaboration or explanation in a number of ways: from the master himself, either verbally or by example; from the personal enlightenment of a particularly introspective monk; from discussions among the brethren; etc. Each of these ways had in common the fact that they were situated within a coherent and systematic way of life. The relations between the master and student, and among the brethren themselves, were clearly demarcated. Each member had to act within established parameters if the community as a whole was to function effectively.

Cassian's difficulty lay in how to "systematize", or convey in a written text, an experience heavily based upon supervision, discernment, and discourse among one's fellows. The simple delineation of the customs and principles of monastic life, even if narrowly defined, would barely have pierced the surface. A guide for conduct or a list of monastic practices would not have conveyed the depth and richness of the monastic experience. Nor would it have addressed the practical problems of guidance and supervision. The young monk seeking a *logos* from a book could not benefit from the discernment of an *abba*. There would be no certainty that the *logoi* would address either the reader's plight or his capacity for understanding. Instead, he would be left to his own devices, seeking from a written text the salve for a self-diagnosed disease. On the other hand, a
theoretical discourse on the goals of the spiritual life would have risked offering sacred mysteries to those who should not possess them. If a monk were more ambitious than spiritually trained, he might stumble upon texts for which he was unprepared. Like Evagrius and the fathers of the Apophthegmata, Cassian believed that incautious authors shared in the guilt of their readers.30

These difficulties were compounded by the fact that Cassian's Gallic audience had at best a very limited access to the literary and cultural milieu of the Origenist monks. They did not share with their Egyptian counterparts a common monastic experience; nor did they possess the exegetical keys to unlock Egyptian monastic teaching. The view of Egyptian monasticism which prevailed in Gaul was in some ways worse than ignorance. Instead of a tabula rasa, Cassian was confronted with a series of misconceptions and unrealistic expectations. One must include among these a peculiar fascination with miracles and thaumaturgy; a skewed perception of anachoresis as absolute isolation; a partial knowledge of mysteries that exceeded any degree of praxis; and little understanding of the relationship between master and student that was the crux of Egyptian monastic life. Perhaps most importantly, Cassian's readers had recently

30 Inst. 7.13.; Con. 1.1; 21.32.
seen the summary condemnation of Origen's entire corpus.\footnote{Origen's corpus had been condemned by Pope Anastasius I in 400. More important, Jerome's polemic against Origen was still circulating among Gallic ascetics, for much of it was imbedded in his biblical commentaries and studies of the ascetic life.} Thus, while they often did not truly understand the crucial issues of Origen's theology, they were nonetheless hostile to things "Origenist".

Cassian's task was consequently threefold. First, he was asked to convey in a written text the totality of the Nitrian monastic experience. Second, he was compelled to anticipate the expectations and preconceptions of his readers in order to lead them to a more profound understanding of their vocation. Finally, he was confronted with the difficult task of navigating between the Scylla of failing to convey the fundamental principles of his spiritual tradition and the Charybdis of composing a set of treatises that would be unintelligible to his western readers.

From the standpoint of hermeneutical analysis, these three problems are closely related. This study will argue that Cassian addressed the absence of a common monastic experience by attempting to recreate it as an experience of reading. In other words, Cassian encouraged a form of interaction between reader and text that in some ways corresponded to the interaction between disciple and elder. To understand this interaction, we must first examine the ways
in which the structure of Cassian's text encouraged structured acts within the reader. This requires an analysis of how the text both anticipates and transforms the images the reader can be supposed to have brought to it. It is this transformation that led the reader to a deeper understanding of himself and his vocation, and his deeper understanding in turn facilitated the development of new modes of conduct. Consequently, Cassian's first two tasks are closely linked, for the successful creation of a particular kind of reading experience depended upon his ability to anticipate and respond to his reader's expectations. The third aspect of Cassian's task comes into play when we consider the implications of this reading experience for the reader. As the reader's understanding of himself and his vocation is transformed through the act of reading, it will combine with newly formed or altered habits to create a disposition different from that which had existed before. This transformation is described according to the understanding of the human condition and of ascetic life that Cassian had gained while among the monks of Egypt. Consequently, as the reader is transformed through interaction with the text, he is transformed according to the terms of Origenist monastic thought.

The problems that Cassian faced and the way in which he attempted to address them bring us back to the foundational questions of the identity of the reader and the manner in
which the text was to be read. At first glance, the identity of the historical reader would seem easy to determine. Cassian's audience was limited to monks and the literary influences on Gallic monasticism are not entirely shrouded in mystery. A significant body of Latin ascetic literature has survived that can be gleaned to construct a composite image of Cassian's reader. The Latin *Vita Antonii*, Jerome's correspondence and his *Vita s. Pauli primi eremitae*, Sulpicius Severus' Martinian literature and Eucherius' *De laude heremi* allow us to view some of the images and ideals that the reader would have brought to Cassian's own ascetic works. The question remains, however, whether this composite picture of the historical reader corresponds to the role that Cassian expected his reader to assume. In other words, who Cassian's implied reader is, and whether there is any connection between this reader and the historical reader, these are the points of the issue.

How did Cassian meet and transform the reader's expectations and what are the implications of this?

These questions bring us once again to the "autobiographical" structure of Cassian's text, for it is through this structure that the connection between historical and implied readers was established. Cassian's description of his travels in Egypt is vivid. He does not merely observe the Egyptians; he interacts with them. He accepts their warm hospitality and, in exchange, adopts their way of
life. As a fellow monk he shares in their synaxeis and participates in their sacred rites. He records the words of the monks not as a mere stenographer but as one who has shared in their conversations. Cassian himself seeks words of advice from the elders. Their responses address his innermost needs and fears. Through his discourse with the elders and the application of their words, Cassian eventually sheds his youthful ignorance and acquires the maturity necessary for pure prayer.

The true subject of Cassian's account is his inner self. His autobiography is a journey of the soul. It is his interior life that is important, for his interior self forms the essence of his humanity. Any account of events that pertained more to his external condition was of secondary importance. While Cassian misrepresented or even entirely fabricated some of the "historical" events of his life, he nevertheless faithfully represented the growth and transformation of his inner self. Guy's argument that Cassian's account is not autobiographical is therefore not entirely accurate. The fact that Cassian's physical sojourn could not have occurred exactly as described does not mean that he misrepresented the salient features of the journey of his soul. Cassian's itinerary was spiritual, not physical. Guy confirmed this, for Cassian's spiritual journey
and the maturity he acquired along the way allowed him later to be termed a profound and innovative thinker.\(^{32}\)

If Cassian's interior self is the subject of his account, we must inquire further into the role of this self in the text. More precisely, we must examine whether and how the self of the text interacts with the self of the reader. Cassian did not merely describe his own spiritual transformation; he also encouraged that of his reader. This was accomplished by encouraging the reader to identify with the self in the text. As the reader progressed through the text, he gradually appropriated the voice of Cassian and, as a consequence, became in a way the self in the text. It was therefore the reader, not Cassian, who journeyed through Egypt and who grew into spiritual maturity. It was the reader who adopted the discipline of the Egyptian monastic communities and acquired the purity of heart necessary for true contemplation.

The inclusion of false historical detail particular to Cassian's own life does not hinder this progress. While many of the historical events Cassian describes did occur and can be confirmed from other sources, these events are not significant in themselves. They in no way create an obstacle to the appropriation of Cassian's voice. One might take note of a related, though more celebrated, concern in

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\(^{32}\)See above, p. 6, n.14.
Augustine’s *Confessions*. Pierre Courcelle has argued that the details of Augustine’s conversion in a Milanese garden are to a large extent a literary fiction. It is unlikely that children or anyone else would have been chanting the improbable expression of *tolle, lege*. It is far more likely that Augustine was representing in physical terms the inner voices of his soul or an angelic call to abandon his current situation and to live wholly for God. Similarly, Augustine’s account of his stealing fruit from a tree as a youth receives far more attention than simple petty theft would seem to merit. What is important is the interior reality of sin, not the specific nature of the sinful act. While there is little reason to doubt that both the conversion and the theft occurred in some fashion or another, the details of the stories do not prevent the reader from appropriating Augustine’s voice as one’s own. They are images that can be appropriated because of the unity of all human experience. All have sinned. All who seek God have in some way been called to Him. This call has led them to regret their sin and to fear its consequences. Consequently, the reader need not have heard voices in a garden or stolen his neighbor’s fruit to share with Augustine the

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34 Augustine, *Confessiones* 8.12.

35 Augustine, *Confessiones* 2.4.
more profound experiences of sin and conversion.

Like the Confessions, the Institutes and the Conferences appealed to the shared experiences, images and ideals of their readers. To accomplish this, they needed to establish some connection, some sort of link between the ideas of the reader and those of the text. A common point of reference was necessary to allow the reader to make the leap from his own self to the self in the text. Cassian facilitated this leap in two ways. The first was to represent in the text the reader's own images of the ascetic life. In other words, he adapted the text to cultivate the empathy of the reader, which in turn promoted a link between the self of the reader and the self of the text. The reader was therefore able to appropriate Cassian's experiences as his own. The questions and presuppositions of the youthful Cassian, inspired by his spiritual infancy, were made to echo the reader's own.

This is not to say, however, that Cassian merely confirmed the images of his reader. In fact, he took great pains to transform them. Cassian encouraged his reader to view the ascetic life from a new standpoint and actively undermined some of the historical reader's most cherished presuppositions. As the Cassian of the mise en scène matured and was transformed by a new knowledge and way of life, so too was the reader. To borrow a term from Wolfgang Iser, Cassian adapted his own experience to "prestructure"
that of his reader.\textsuperscript{36} He created a set of images that encouraged the reader to identify with the self of the text. He then encouraged structured activities in the reader to reorient his perspective and encourage a new disposition. Again following Iser, this is not to say that the reader's own disposition ever entirely disappeared. Instead it formed "the background to and a frame of reference for the act of grasping and comprehending."\textsuperscript{37}

The repeated formulation and cancellation of the reader's expectations, however, leads us to the second way in which Cassian encouraged a link between the reader and the text. Cassian challenged the images of the reader and questioned the validity of his knowledge in the same way that his own had been challenged by the desert fathers. However, as Cassian undermined the initial presuppositions of his readers, he also undermined the original basis for the empathy of the reader for the text. A new set of images had to be provided; a set moreover, that could resolve the crisis of the reader who had been cast adrift from the norms he had brought to the text. This required Cassian to structure his text in a manner that would anticipate his reader's reaction and growth. The cornerstone of this structure is

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{36}Iser, Act, 34.
\textsuperscript{37}Iser, Act, 37.
\end{flushright}
an understanding of ascetic life derived from the Origenist monks of Nitria and Kellia.

Modern hermeneutical theory can go far toward explaining Cassian's intention as an author and the interaction between the reader and Cassian's text. However, Cassian already had at his disposal an analysis of the spiritual and psychological difficulties of the ascetic life based on long experience in a self-conscious, closely knit community. He also had to hand a sophisticated understanding of reading and of the self which was derived to a large extent from Origen's method of biblical exegesis and Stoic ethical teaching.

Origen's exegesis of the Psalms is to a large extent a matter of voice appropriation. The goal of Origen's interpretation is "to locate the hearer or reader <of the Psalms> within the situation of <the Psalmist> and to place the words of the text in the mouth of the listener so that he can appropriate them as his own."38 The reader is to ascertain the situation of the Psalmist and to dwell upon how the Psalmist's situation reflects his own. After the reader has grasped the way in which he and the Psalmist share particular needs, joys, sorrows, fears, etc., he (the reader) can speak the words of the Psalmist as his own. The differences in historical situation are not barriers to

38 Torjeson, Hermeneutical, 50.
this. The Psalmist and reader are linked by a shared humanity and a shared need for union with God that transcend particular historical circumstances.

This method of reading was not limited to Origen. Termed *prosopopoeia*, it was employed by other exegetes of the Psalms.\textsuperscript{39} It was also recommended to monks as a form of *praxis* in Athanasius's *Epistula ad Marcellinum* and Cassian described it as a sublime method of prayer that could be achieved when the key to pure prayer had been found.\textsuperscript{40} More important, *prosopopoeia* was a method of reading that was not limited to the Psalms. To varying degrees, it could be applied to other books of the Bible and also to didactic exempla.

Another feature of monastic instruction, at least at Nitria and Kellia, was its frequent reliance on Stoic models. Stoic thought insisted that philosophical argument cannot be separated from the method of instruction. Overwhelming the student with philosophical arguments will achieve little. Instead, instruction must take into account the student’s needs and abilities. The process of instruction and argumentation is as important as the content. This has led Martha Nussbaum to conclude that later Stoic literature "is so context-dependent that it can be fully

\textsuperscript{39} Rondeau, *Commentaires*, passim.

\textsuperscript{40} Con. 10.11; Athanasius, *Epistula ad Marcellinum* 15-23.
understood in no other way."\textsuperscript{41} By this, Nussbaum means that Stoic instruction was designed to lead the student through a process of transformation that would eventually result in a virtuous and rational person. This instruction, moreover, is not limited to the classroom. Stoic texts, such as Seneca's \textit{Epistulae morales}, often served the same function.

Cassian adapted both Origen's exegetical method and the Stoic instructional model in his own text. Just as Origen encouraged the interiorization of the Psalmist's voice, so Cassian encouraged the interiorization of his own. A crucial part of Cassian's method of instruction was therefore the act of reading itself. Consequently, like the Stoics, and like stoicizing monks such as Evagrius, the process of instruction is as important as its content. In other words, the content cannot be separated from its form.

\textsuperscript{41}Nussbaum, \textit{Therapy}, 7.
Chapter 1
John Cassian

One cannot begin to address Cassian's life or thought without reference to the various manifestations of the Origenist controversy. The events of the controversy help us to chart the course of his life. Cassian was in Nitria when Theophilus of Alexandria condemned anthropomorphism in his paschal letter and then dramatically reversed himself a short time later. Cassian later took part in a delegation to Rome in order to defend John Chrysostom against the attacks of both Theophilus and Jerome. Cassian may even have been in Palestine when the Origenist controversy arose once again during a dispute between Pelagius and Jerome. More important for the study of Cassian as a monastic teacher, however, is the fact that the Origenist monks of Nitria and Kellia provided the basis of Cassian's understanding of the monastic life. Just as the events of the controversy helped to shape the course of his life, so too the theological disputes helped to shape his teaching. Before racing ahead, however, it would be helpful to trace what is known about Cassian.

The information that Cassian provided in his Institutes and Conferences is limited. His overarching task was to relate the customs and doctrines of the Egyptian monks. The events of his life were relevant only to his authority as a
teacher, and Cassian was far more concerned to describe events of didactic import than to follow his tracks through Egypt in a slavish manner. Moreover, when Cassian did refer to himself, it was most often within the context of his spiritual rather than temporal journey. When he described his infantia and pueritia, for example, he more likely referred to his spiritual development than to his physical age.1 These factors have combined to render it impossible to derive a precise chronology of Cassian's career from the internal evidence of his works.

Nevertheless, Cassian did reveal a few things about himself. He was born of wealthy Christian parents, whose piety was such that they would have supported him in his monastic endeavors if he had ever returned home.2 Longing for his home in his last Conference, Cassian described its surrounding terrain in some detail.3 At some point early in his life, he had befriended Germanus. Despite Germanus's greater age, the two were of one mind in their monastic zeal.4 At an uncertain date, they travelled together to Palestine where they entered a monastic community near the

1 Inst.3.4; Con. 11.1; 17.7.
2 Con. 24.1.
3 Con. 24.1; also Con. 19.1.
4 Con. 1.1. Cassian frequently refers to Germanus as father or abba. Cassian is also described as adulescentior, Con. 14.9. Cassian and Germanus were not related, Con. 16.1.
cave of the nativity.\(^5\) They soon became dissatisfied with
the monks of the region. Cassian later expressed his
frustration with the Palestinian monks, describing certain
elders as having been remarkably intolerant of their younger
brethren.\(^6\) He also criticized the Palestinians for their
legalism and lack of hospitality, and compared their customs
unfavorably to those of the Egyptians.\(^7\) Cassian's com-
plaints were general, and cannot with certainty be taken as
referring specifically to his own community near Bethlehem.
However, he did write that he and Germanus had feared their
spiritual life would be retarded if, upon returning from
Egypt to Bethlehem, they had been compelled to remain
there.\(^8\)

Having become frustrated with their situation in
Palestine, Cassian and Germanus began to look to Egypt as
the home of a more fruitful monastic life. Sometime during
their stay in Bethlehem, they had been visited by the Egyp-
tian Pinufius, who had fled from his responsibilities as
abba of the monks at Panephysis.\(^9\) Pinufius's humility
greatly impressed them and reinforced their perception of

\(^5\) Inst. 3.4; 4.31.

\(^6\) Con. 2.12.

\(^7\) E.g., Inst. 5.24; Con. 2.12; 5.12; 11.1.

\(^8\) Con. 17.2,5,7,10,23.

\(^9\) Inst. 4.30-31.
Egypt as a place where they might further their spiritual life. The friends would later visit Pinufius, who had since returned to Panephysis, and his exhortation to humility serves to conclude the fourth book of the Institutes.\textsuperscript{10} The companions hoped eventually to dwell among the anchorites of the Egyptian desert, who had come to exemplify the utter abandonment of one's self for God. Their expectations were also heightened by the popular belief that the eremitic was superior to the communal life.\textsuperscript{11}

According to the itinerary set out in the Conferences, the two travelled a great deal in lower Egypt and the Delta, and eventually settled at Nitria.\textsuperscript{12} They sought guidance from a number of monks, and the logoi that were given to them comprise the bulk of the Conferences. Before leaving Bethlehem, however, Cassian and Germanus had been compelled by their superiors to vow that they would soon return.\textsuperscript{13} This came to weigh heavily upon them and after seven years in Egypt they felt it necessary to fulfill their vow.\textsuperscript{14} This return was merely perfunctory. Upon arriving back at

\textsuperscript{10}Inst. 4.32-43.

\textsuperscript{11}Inst. 5.36.

\textsuperscript{12}While Guy has shown that their itinerary is suspect, this does not preclude the possibility that the two wandered for some time among the monastic communities of the Delta region.

\textsuperscript{13}This vow serves as the principal topic of Con. 17.

\textsuperscript{14}Con. 17.30.
Bethlehem, the companions announced to their superiors that they intended to reside permanently at Nitria. However, although they quickly returned to Egypt, this intention would also go unfulfilled. Sometime after their return, Theophilus's paschal letter of 399 inaugurated strife and even violence among the monks of Nitria and Kellia. Cassian is next seen in Constantinople being ordained deacon against his will by John Chrysostom.

Cassian later composed his Institutes and Conferences at the request of several monastic and episcopal figures in southern Gaul. The first of these works, the Institutes, was dedicated to Castor, for whom the only date is a mention in a papal letter from 419. Chadwick has plausibly argued that Cassian's second set of Conferences, numbered 11-17, were published in 427 and that the third set, Conferences 18-24, were published a year later. Cassian's last work, written against Nestorius, would have been superfluous after the Council of Ephesus in 431. It is therefore possible on the basis of internal evidence to place Cassian's literary activity roughly in the third decade of the fifth century.

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15 Con. 10.2-3.

16 De incarnatione domini 7.31. This was against his will, Inst. 11.18.

17 Bonifatius, "Valentinae." For the date, Duchesne, Fastes, 1:282, and Jaffé, Regesta, 53.

18 Chadwick, "Euladius," 204-205. The first set would therefore have been composed sometime before 427.
It is reasonable to assume that he had resided in Provence for some time before receiving his commission.

Other writers have also provided information about Cassian’s career. Gennadius, although he wrote in the latter part of the fifth century, is the most authoritative source. He related that Cassian had been born in Roman Scythia minor, or modern Dobrudja, and had been ordained deacon by John Chrysostom. As a priest at Marseille, he had founded two monasteries, one each for men and for women. Gennadius also provided a detailed description of Cassian’s ascetic and theological works which confirms the order of composition set out in their prefaces. Finally, Gennadius confirms that Cassian died a monk in Marseille, probably in 435.19 Palladius wrote half a century earlier than Gennadius but from a greater distance. He related that Cassian had been a disciple of John Chrysostom and had served as an emissary to Rome on his behalf. Though only a deacon, Cassian had played a significant role in the mission by bearing a letter from Chrysostom to Innocent.20 The Roman bishop’s reply verifies Cassian’s role, and the Greek version of this reply was recorded by Sozomen.21 In two later letters, Innocent

19Gennadius, De viris inlustribus 62, recorded that Cassian died "Theodosio et Valentiniano regnantibus." These two emperors were consuls in 435. PLRE, 2:1243.

20Palladius, Dialogus 3.

21Innocentius, Epistula 7.1; Sozomenus, Historia Ecclesiastica 8.26.
again mentioned a certain compresbyter Cassianus, now a priest, serving as an emissary from Alexander, the patriarch of Antioch.22 However, it is not certain that these last two letters referred to John Cassian.

Though sparse, most of the evidence concerning Cassian's career is straightforward and requires little elaboration. The sequence of the known events can be mapped fairly easily. The precise chronology of these events is far from certain, however, and has been the object of much speculation. Cassian's activities between his mission to Rome in 403 and his arrival at Marseille, not later than 426, are also a matter for conjecture. Yet another question remains, however, which has received an inordinate amount of attention: the place of Cassian's birth.

Gennadius reported that Cassian was natione Scytha.23 That Cassian was born in Scythia Minor accords very well with what is known of him. There can be little doubt that Latin was the language of his birth and education. Being raised in an eastern Latin province would go far to explain his facility with Greek. Moreover, Marrou has noted that Cassianus is recorded as a family name in a region of Scythia Minor whose geography corresponds to Cassian's des-

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22 Innocentius, "Apostolici favoris" and "Quam gratia mihi." For the dates, see Jaffé, Regesta pontificum, 47.
23 Gennadius, De viris ilustribus 62.
cription of his homeland. Some, however, have attempted to place Cassian's patria anywhere from Provence to Scythopolis to an unknown Serta. Marrou, reviewing these efforts, rightly concluded that "c'est bien là le type de ces 'problèmes' où l'érudition, accumulant des efforts désordonnés, n'a abouti qu'à embrouiller, jusqu'à la rendre inextricable, une question à la vérité fort simple."  

Cassian did not reveal his age upon entering the monastery near Bethlehem. While he spoke of himself as being very young, he more probably referred to his spiritual rather than his physical development. Owen Chadwick has suggested that Cassian was most likely not an oblate. While he conceded that youths, or even boys, were not unheard of in monasteries at this time, he rightly pointed out that placing a boy in a monastery so far from his home would have been very unusual. Chadwick instead proposed that, as a youth, Cassian made a conscious decision to travel to Palestine to pursue a monastic vocation. Cassian's departure from Palestine for the more rigorous, and potentially more fruitful, ascesis in Egypt would indicate a personal


25 Marrou, "Jean Cassien," 7. Marrou provides an excellent survey of the various arguments concerning Cassian's place of birth. Chadwick, in the first edition of his study of Cassian, does much the same thing, John Cassian, 1st ed., app. B.

vocation and would suggest that he was not simply an oblate. His journey to Egypt might also shed light on his willingness to travel from Scythia Minor to Bethlehem, for it shows that distance and inconvenience were not a barrier to his spiritual endeavors. Eduard Schwartz has suggested that Germanus encouraged Cassian's initial venture, but again this is not certain. Cassian was deferential to Germanus and frequently referred to him as abba. However, he also spoke of Germanus as a companion in spiritual combat and noted the harmony of their minds and souls, which would imply equality rather than subordination.

Cassian was also silent about when he arrived at Bethlehem and how long he remained there. Schwartz, noting Cassian's frequent references to ill health and fear of not completing his literary endeavors, assumed that he died sometime in the 430's. This is also supported by Gennadius. Counting back, Schwartz concluded that Cassian must have arrived in Palestine within the last two decades of the fourth century. An earlier arrival, Schwartz suggested, would have warranted comment as to Cassian's longevity.

Chadwick attempted to be more precise and argued that Cassian probably left Bethlehem before 386 and must have

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28 Con. 1.1.
left by 391. The first date hinges on Cassian’s relative silence about Jerome, who with Paula took up residence near the cave of the nativity in the autumn of 386. Essentially, Chadwick doubted that Cassian could have been so reserved when commenting on Jerome if they had lived within close proximity of each other. If Jerome’s forceful personality had not provoked comment, then surely his bitter harassment of the Origenist monks fleeing to Palestine from Nitria would have required some mention. Palladius, who was a younger contemporary of Cassian and a partisan of the Origenists, had been acerbic in his description of Jerome.

Chadwick’s argument is not compelling. Admittedly, in his polemic against Nestorius, Cassian praised Jerome as a teacher of the Catholics. This praise is not effusive, however, and may very well have been exaggerated according to the principles of the genre. To bolster his position, Cassian would have wanted to inflate the reputations of all those who supported the orthodox view. In like manner, Cassian praised Rufinus of Aquileia, whom Jerome had come to hold in bitter contempt. Moreover, the Nestorian debate did

31 Kelly, *Jerome*, 129, for the date of Jerome’s arrival in Palestine.
33 PallADIUS, *Historia Lausiaca* 36, 41.
34 Cassian, *De incarnatione domini* 7.26.
not touch directly upon the ascetic life. In his Institutes, Cassian alluded to Jerome's original ascetic writings as well as to his translation of the *Regula Pachomii*. Cassian criticized Jerome for describing only what he had heard, not what he had experienced. In this way he belittled Jerome's monastic experience and quietly undercut him as a monastic writer. Finally, Chadwick's argument would not stand even if Cassian had not criticized Jerome. Cassian made no mention of figures who had made a far greater impact on his life, such as Evagrius and Melania the Elder. He also avoided openly criticizing the supporters of Augustine, who had labelled Cassian as heterodox. Cassian's associations with other people and affiliations with certain schools of thought are not to be traced through the names he dropped. Rather, they are to be traced through the ideas he espoused.

Chadwick's second date hinges on Cassian's brief return to Bethlehem. To have remained in Egypt for seven years, visited Palestine and returned to Nitria in time to hear the paschal letter of 399 would require him to have first arrived in Egypt by 391. However, in the second edition of his work, Chadwick himself suggested that the passage describing Cassian's brief return to Bethlehem may be an interpolation. Consequently, the seven-year delay, and even the

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35 *Inst.*, praef. 5-7.
return itself, may not have occurred.\textsuperscript{36} Therefore, Cassian may have been in Egypt for a period that could be measured either in decades or in months.

This uncertainty calls into question the nature of Cassian's formation. His sojourn in Palestine could very well have been much longer than that in Egypt. Also, though undoubtedly influenced by Evagrius, Cassian may not have been in Egypt sufficiently long to have become his disciple. If, as the Conferences suggest, Cassian and Germanus wandered for some time before settling in Nitria, their residence there may have been very brief.

The chronological uncertainties also leave Cassian's relationship to the monks at Nitria and Kellia in doubt. Cassian wrote that he was among them when Theophilus' paschal letter was read by Paphnutius.\textsuperscript{37} Since Cassian is next found in Constantinople, it has generally been assumed that Cassian left Nitria in the company of the fleeing monks. Cassian truncated his account, however, leaving the reader with the impression that the Origenists had triumphed. He mentioned neither Theophilus' reversal nor the riots and subsequent flight of the Origenists. Cassian's final Conference also reveals a longing to return home. This has led Rousseau to suggest that Cassian might have left Egypt


\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Con.} 10.2-5.
before Theophilus's reversal. Rousseau further contended that Constantinople had originally been merely a layover on the way to Scythia Minor.\textsuperscript{38} Taking a different tack, Marrou suggested that Chrysostom's reputation, rather than the Origenist conflict, may have drawn Cassian from Egypt.\textsuperscript{39} Thus, the extent of Nitria's role in Cassian's formation might not have been as great as has been supposed.

On the other hand, there are many reasons for Cassian to have truncated his account of the Origenist conflict. The most obvious of these is that he wished to avoid reviving the storm against Origen's supporters which had raged so violently at the turn of the century and which had just recently been rekindled in Palestine. It need not show that he was absent during the subsequent events. The chronological uncertainties, however, make it impossible to determine the role that Nitria and Kellia played in Cassian's formation. One must look instead to his monastic teaching.

Regardless of when he arrived in Constantinople, Cassian remained there and was ordained by John Chrysostom. His mission to Pope Innocent in 404 was made necessary at least in part because of John's support of the Nitrian monks who had fled from Theophilus. John had appointed many of

\textsuperscript{38}Rousseau, \textit{Ascetics}, 172. This argument is problematic, however, for according to Cassian's chronology, \textit{Con.} 24 occurred before \textit{Con.} 1-10.

\textsuperscript{39}Marrou, "Jean Cassien," 17.
these monks to church offices, and Cassian and Germanus had been placed in charge of the church treasury. The presence of these monks in Constantinople angered many. Even if Cassian had left Egypt before the exodus, once in Constantinople he would have been closely associated with the monks from Nitria and Kellia. It was in this context that Palladius remembered him.

After his mission to Innocent, Cassian disappeared from the record for at least a decade. It has often been suggested that he had remained in Rome and there formed the friendship with Leo to which he alluded in the preface to his anti-Nestorian treatise. It need not have been during the first decade of the fifth century, however, that Cassian befriended a much younger Leo. This is too much to assume from the brief reference to him in the preface. Moreover, the conventions of correspondence in Late Antiquity would have allowed Cassian to refer to Leo as a friend even if they had never met.

Élie Griffe has pointed out that it would be more reasonable to assume that Cassian returned to Constantinople to report on the success of his mission. While he was only one of many who had appealed to Innocent on Chrysostom's behalf, Cassian played an important role as

\[40\] De Incarnatione domini, praef. 1.

\[41\] Griffe, "Cassien," 240-244.
messenger. This role was perhaps facilitated by his knowledge of Latin. Griffe has further argued that the com-presbyter Cassianus mentioned in Innocent's later letters was indeed John Cassian. Upon returning to Constantinople, he would have accompanied many of the other Johannites expelled from the city to Syria and Palestine.\(^{42}\) There, he would have come to know Alexander, the future patriarch of Antioch and a supporter of the Johannine party. According to Griffe, Cassian then conducted a second mission to Innocent on behalf of Alexander, who wished to reestablish communion between the two patriarchates. Cassian, may have been elevated from the diaconate to the priesthood as preparation for this mission.

This raises the question of why Cassian made his third and final journey to the West. Griffe has proposed that Cassian accompanied Lazarus of Aix on his return to Provence from Palestine. Lazarus's friendship with Proculus, the bishop of Marseille, would explain how Cassian came to head a monastery just outside the city. Cassian's third journey to the West would also reveal something about his character. Rather than having fled the turmoil of the East at the turn of the century, it would show him as once more travelling a great distance to find an atmosphere conducive to the spiritual life. Rather than as a fugitive, he should be

\(^{42}\) Palladius, *De vita Joannis* 20, mentions this region among others as a place of refuge.
portrayed as a restless, unsettled man, who at least four different times abandoned his current situation in the hope of finding something better. It still remains to be shown, however, why Cassian and Lazarus should have been drawn to one another and what Lazarus could have offered Cassian in Marseille.

The answer to the first question may come from a brief glimpse at Lazarus's career. In the last decade of the fourth century, Lazarus had acted with Proculus to bring the charge of adultery against Briccius, the successor to Martin of Tours.\(^4\) They were aided in this by Heros, the archbishop of Arles. Briccius, deposed not by an ecclesiastical court but by popular outcry, was eventually restored to his see. Pope Zosimus was later to call the charge against him nothing but calumny.\(^4\) Lazarus, along with Heros, who had suffered misfortunes of his own, left Gaul for the East. They eventually arrived in Palestine, where they once again became involved in an ecclesiastical dispute. They accused Pelagius, who was also in Palestine, of heresy, and their accusation led to the calling of the Council of Diospolis. Pelagius's teaching was found to be orthodox at this council, at least in part because Lazarus

\(^4\) Zosimus, "Cum adversus statuta," 2.

\(^4\) Zosimus, "Postquam a nobis," 3.
and Heros failed to attend.\footnote{Augustine, De gestis Pelagii 2.} Nothing more is heard of Heros. Lazarus, however, is next seen in Marseille in the summer of 417, once again assisting Proculus in an ecclesiastical dispute.\footnote{Zosimus, "Cum adversus statuta," 2, written 21 September 417. For the date, see Jaffé, Regesta, 49.} Following Griffe's hypothesis, Cassian would have accompanied Lazarus from Palestine to Marseille and arrived there in 416 or very early 417.

Lazarus's action against Briccius betrays an affinity with the Martinian party who had bitterly opposed Briccius's elevation to the episcopacy. This attitude would have extended to Proculus as well, and thereby establishes one more thread connecting Provence with Martin and his followers. Heros, Lazarus's companion in other misadventures, was also associated with Martin. Prosper of Aquitaine, painting a very different portrait of him than did Zosimus, termed Heros a "vir sanctus et beati Martini discipulus."\footnote{Prosper, Epitoma Chronicon, an. 412 (1247).} Cassian may have been attracted to Lazarus through a shared interest in the ascetic life. Lazarus could also have promised support for Cassian's endeavors if he returned to Marseille with Lazarus.

Very soon thereafter, Cassian either founded or was placed in charge of the monastery of St. Victor in the port of Marseille. He could only have done this with the permis-
sion of Proculus. It is plausible that Lazarus, drawing upon his friendship with the bishop, had persuaded him to welcome Cassian. In turn, Cassian could have been attracted by the prospect of living out his life in a region that spoke his native tongue, had numerous contacts with the East, and was still relatively unscathed by the political turmoil besetting the rest of the Empire.\(^48\)

Much of this is of course supposition. Griffe himself admitted that there is no way to be certain of the identity of the two Cassians.\(^49\) Nor is there any proof of the connection between Cassian and Lazarus. However, Griffe's reconstruction is plausible, and the possibility that Cassian remained in the East at least a decade longer than has generally been supposed is intriguing. The nature of Cassian's formation is again called into question, this time in the light of the Palestinian and Syrian monasteries which were greatly influenced by the Egyptian exiles and the fallout from the Origenist controversy. It is possible that Cassian read Evagrius's works only after having left Nitria and interpreted his works in the light of their initial condemnation. The circumstances of Cassian's arrival in Mar-

\(^{48}\) Much of Palestine had been overrun by raiders, possibly Arabs, in 411. Jerome and his community had felt it necessary to flee. Jerome, Ep. 126.2; Kelly, Jerome, 306, n. 53.

\(^{49}\) Griffe, L'église des gaules, 254-255, later became much more sure of his hypothesis.
seille also provoke thought. If Cassian had been enticed to the West by what was in fact a "Martinian camp", his later rejection of accounts of miracles and the voyeurism of monastic tourists would indicate significant differences with his hosts.

What is not known about Cassian is perhaps more intriguing than what is known. We simply cannot be sure of Cassian's activities between 403 and his writing of the Institutes. However, Griffe's hypothesis is reasonable. It is more plausible than the assumption that Cassian abandoned his first mission to Rome without reporting back to Constantinople. It also helps to indicate at least some of the threads linking Martinian monasticism and the growth of an ascetic movement in Provence. The sparse details of Cassian's life can only suggest the atmosphere of his spiritual development and the context of his literary efforts. If these suggestions are to be given any weight, we must examine Cassian's ascetic works with an eye to the milieu from which they arose. This requires a basic understanding of the origins and development of Christian monasticism in Egypt and in Gaul.

Consequently, Chapter 2 will examine the development of Christian monasticism in Egypt. This study will show that recent scholarly efforts have eroded the traditional view of Christianity in Egypt and that new directions must be pursued. What is important to the study of Cassian is the
growing consensus that there was extensive contact between Egyptians and Greeks by the end of the third century, both within the Christian Church and within the region as a whole. This requires a reconsideration of the nature and content of monastic instruction in Egypt and the utter abandonment of the assumption of a harsh division between illiterate Egyptians and educated Origenist Greeks.

Chapter 3 will take up the spread of the ascetic ideal in Gaul. Of particular interest will be the development of a literary image which presented absolute isolation as the pinnacle of ascetic life. While this can be attributed in part to the Latin versions of the Vita Antonii, we must look to Jerome as the principal source to whom Gauls turned for knowledge of the eastern monks. Jerome's influence went much further than the creation of a literary image: he helped to write the very "history" of monasticism. Modern scholars as well as ancient Gauls have turned to Jerome to learn of the origins of Christian ascesis. Finally, Jerome had a tremendous influence on the manner in which Egyptian monastic teaching was disseminated in the West. His participation in the Origenist controversy at the turn of the century and his later revival of it during his conflict with Pelagius were to influence greatly the western understanding of apatheia. Once we have grasped the historical context in which Cassian wrote, we can begin to examine his ascetic corpus in detail.
Chapter 2

Praxis and Theoria: Instruction and Learning among the Monks of Egypt

The story of the beginning of Christian monasticism is one that has been told and retold many times. It is, according to many narrators, a story that is easy to tell.\(^1\) With the advent of a Christian Empire, ascetic withdrawal replaced martyrdom as the ultimate expression of selfless love for God. This new ideal was first manifested by the hermits of Egypt, who rejected all human intercourse for the sake of communion with God. The life of the hermits was harsh and their ascetic practices exceeded the limits of human endurance. They shunned all forms of human interaction and penetrated deeper and deeper into the desert to find peace. Their journey into the desert, however, was more than simply a flight from the crowds; it was also a declaration of war against the powers of darkness. If the desert was a shelter from the distractions of daily life, it was also a wasteland inhabited by demons.\(^2\) The hermits were the first to flee society, but they were also the vanguard

\(^1\)The following survey is derived from a number of studies and is intended to represent the most commonly accepted view of the origin of Christian monasticism. The survey merely indicates the direction previous studies have taken and is in no way meant to provide a detailed study of the scholarship in the field.

\(^2\)For this two-fold image of the desert, Guillaumont, "Conception," 3-21.
for the conquest of the desert and its demonic inhabitants in the name of God. Freed from all distractions, the hermits could confront the demons with a fixed mind and clarity of purpose that could be achieved nowhere else.

While no one doubted the sanctity of such a life, few could endure its hardships. Consequently, eremitical zeal was slowly harnessed and trained, and the communal virtues of humility and obedience came to be emphasized over anchoretic contemplation. Cenobitic monasticism, especially in the form articulated in the rules of Pachomius, came to be regarded as the second of only two legitimate monastic vocations. Monks who wandered from village to village, or who depended on the gifts of others for their sustenance, or who lived in small and undisciplined groups, were regarded as being in some sense heterodox. Eventually, all true monks began their vocation within a community. If they proved their worthiness, they could later join an elite group who had progressed beyond the more limited life of the cloister to pursue a solitary life of prayer. As the fourth century drew to a close, the number of cenobites was growing almost exponentially while that of the hermits was slowly dwindling.

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3Hardy, Egypt, 90; De Clercq, "Influence," 169-76; Spidlik, Spirituality, 21.

4Chitty, Desert, 32; Byrne, "Cenobitic," 282.
Whether hermits or cenobites, Egyptian monks shared a profound mistrust of speculative theology. Drawn largely from the ranks of Egyptian peasants, few spoke Greek and most were illiterate. Their faith was simple, almost crude, and they possessed a child-like simplicity. Some had not even progressed sufficiently beyond their former pagan idolatry to allow them to conceive of an abstract God. The monks were therefore deeply suspicious of "Greek" cosmological speculation and principles of allegorical exegesis that had originated in Alexandria. They were particularly careful to avoid the heretical teachings of Origen and his followers.

After more than half a century of glory, Egyptian monasticism was rent asunder by heresy, violence and the corruption of its institutions. Origenism had penetrated the desert and tainted the spiritual teachings of the fathers. Strife had arisen between the native Egyptians and the Greek interlopers and the ensuing violence reverberated throughout the Mediterranean world. Proven to be the dangerous asps that they were, the Origenists were finally driven from Egypt. This could not halt the decline of Egyptian monasticism, however, for even the native communities had declined. Discipline had become lax and the reasons for many practices had been forgotten. Where discipline had

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5 Baus, Reichskirche, 378; Clark, Origenist, 56-57.
been preserved, it had taken on a regimented, almost military aspect.⁶ The heroes of the past had gone and they had not been replaced. Instead of demons in the desert, the pious now feared the presence of boys within the community.

Nevertheless, even as it declined in its native land, Egyptian monasticism flourished as an ideal that had already spread throughout the Christian world. Athanasius had been the first to carry this ideal to the West, first through the example of the monks in his entourage and then by the Latin translations of his Vita Antonii.⁷ After Athanasius the West became inundated with ascetic literature. Pilgrims brought back accounts of monks. Ecclesiastical turmoil produced many exiles, exposing the West to eastern practices and allowing westerners access to monastic havens in the East.⁸ Jerome offered advice based on his experiences as a hermit in Syria and later as a cenobite in Bethlehem. He defended the burgeoning monastic tradition from the malicious attacks of Jovinian and others, and he translated Pachomius's rules into Latin. Rufinus of Aquileia, though not as innovative as Jerome, was an even more prolific translator. He gave to the West several works of Origen, Basil's Asceticon, the Historia monachorum in Aegypto, the

⁶Griggs, Egyptian, 201.
⁸Baus, Reichskirche, 390-391.
Sententiae of Sextus, and the Practicus, Sententiae ad monachos and Ad virginem of Evagrius Ponticus.

The Latin West embraced the Egyptian ideal with astonishing enthusiasm. Accounts of western monks were patterned after Egyptian models. Monks in Gaul were measured according to Egyptian standards and, at least in the case of Martin of Tours, an ascetic competition between Gaul and Egypt was created. Information about the Egyptian way of life was eagerly sought, for this served as the basis for the establishment of western communities. John Cassian played a crucial role in providing this information, for he recounted his own experiences in Egypt at length and recorded the words of the elders themselves.

Although it was undoubtedly inspired and given form by the Egyptians, Latin monasticism nevertheless evolved to accommodate the more reserved, perhaps more civilized, disposition of the West. While westerners continued to venerate the hermit as an ascetic hero, they clearly emphasized the establishment of well-run, orderly communities. Obedience to an abbot replaced charismatic discipleship. Monastic rules were expanded and refined. Ascesis was modified and regulated both to accommodate the

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9 Baus, Reichskirche, 398.
10 Byrne, "Cassian," 4-5.
Gallic climate and to avoid extreme and unsavory behavior.\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, the monastic communities felt an obligation to provide for the education of their members and many monastic schools were established.\textsuperscript{13} This was partly due to a need to accommodate the aristocratic sensibilities of many of the monks.\textsuperscript{14} It has also been attributed to a greater degree of interaction between the Latin monks and the church as a whole. Western ascetics were much more receptive to ecclesiastical authority and to holding ecclesiastical office than were their eastern counterparts.\textsuperscript{15} The emphasis on education, however, has also been frequently described as an outgrowth of the Latin temperament.\textsuperscript{16}

It would be difficult to have imagined a better story. There are identifiable protagonists (Antony, Athanasius, and Jerome) and antagonists (Jovinian, the Origenist monks, and monks who by their manner of life can be classified neither as hermits nor as cenobites). It explains the origin and nature of many of the monastic practices which still exist today, and places many aspects of ascetic life into easily grasped and readily recognizable categories. The story also

\textsuperscript{12}Courtois, "Évolution," 53.
\textsuperscript{13}Bardy, "Occident," 86-104, challenges this view.
\textsuperscript{14}Frend, "Paulinus," 10.
\textsuperscript{15}J. F. Kelly, "Gallic," 506.
helps to define orthodoxy, both in doctrine and in practice. What can be traced back to this clear line of descent is acceptable, while what cannot be so easily traced is at the very least suspect. Finally, the story has a happy ending. After a variety of fits and starts, the threads that appear to be so tangled at the beginning are slowly woven together to produce a beautiful fabric that is the origin of the Western European monastic tradition.

Regrettably, this story is not accurate. The origins of Christian monasticism are not so easy to trace and the multitude of ascetic practices that existed in the fourth century are not so easily categorized. The story that has been told is not so much an historical account as it is a pastiche of literary artifacts taken largely from the Vita Antonii and Jerome's ascetic works. It is therefore derived from a genre of ascetic literature that accentuated the eremitical hero to the point of excluding more common forms of monastic life, and it is more a part of the history of early monasticism than a description of it.

The proper appraisal of Cassian therefore depends upon both a revision of this story and an appreciation of the impact it had. The story must be revised in order to gain a better understanding of Cassian's own formation. The impact of the story must be assessed in order to determine the context in which Cassian wrote. It lies beyond the scope of this thesis, however, to trace the history of monasticism,
even if the survey be limited to Egypt and Gaul. By way of compromise, the following chapters will take up those threads of the story that impinge directly upon the study of Cassian and will discuss how more recent studies have radically changed our understanding of monasticism in the fourth century. The chapters will then examine the questions of how the story arose and what impact it had.

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We must first examine the contention that Egyptian society was strongly divided between Greek and Egyptian, for earlier views of the history of monasticism have been built upon this antiquated view of Egypt as a whole. The earlier view of Egyptian society described the penetration of the Greek language into southern Egypt as very limited. Greek would only have been heard in the larger cities, if it were heard at all. The spread of Hellenistic culture followed the same paths as Ptolemaic and later Roman administration. From its fountainhead in Alexandria, it flowed first to the metropolitan cities and then, at a much diminished level, to the smaller towns and villages. According to this view, contact between Greeks and Egyptians would have been few and the dominance of those who spoke Greek would have been firmly established. Any introduction of Hellenistic culture or religion into the countryside would have been imposed from above.
One could therefore imagine that Christianity was received first by Hellenistic Jews and other Greek-speaking peoples, and only later by native Egyptians. The budding Egyptian Church arose as an institution hostile to the Greek interlopers and developed a written form of Egyptian (Coptic) in direct opposition to Greek. Egyptian monasticism arose as a movement independent of the authority of Alexandria and was hostile to Greek language and education. Eventually, the underlying linguistic and cultural differences between the two churches gave way to open theological dispute in which the Egyptian monks sided with their national church against the Greek patriarch of Alexandria.

Late Roman Egypt, however, was a much more complex society than this picture would allow. Its civic and administrative institutions were in a state of flux. Augustus had replaced the lax administration of the Ptolemies with a Roman prefect who ruled from Alexandria and who was answerable directly to the emperor. While the prefect relied upon the administrative skills of the Egyptian landholders, Egypt was nevertheless administered from the capital. Nearly two centuries later, Septimius Severus extended considerable administrative authority to the metropolitan cities by allowing them to form their own coun-

17 Although based on a variety of studies and the examination of relevant monastic sources, the following survey of Egyptian society owes a particular debt to Roger Bagnall's *Egypt in Late Antiquity*. 

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cils, or boulai. The authority of these organizations was limited. They maintained the food supply and infrastructure of the cities, helped to supply the army, and ensured the collection of taxes. They had no legislative powers. Although limited, Severus's reorganization of Egypt signalled a major shift away from a central administration to a greater reliance on the Egyptians themselves. This had considerable impact on the organization of the nomes, for they increasingly came to be run in a manner similar to Greek city-states. The authority of the cities was extended into the countryside, and new social and economic relationships were forged.

Membership in the boulai entailed some risk, for the office-holders were responsible for making up any short-fall in the taxes out of their own pockets. Nevertheless, many thought the risk worth taking when these councils were first introduced and paid large sums for the privilege. As the Empire fell into greater and greater disarray during the third century, however, these offices became increasingly burdensome. The maintenance of the food supply became more difficult and many civic institutions began to decline. Traditional magistracies, especially those associated with the gymnasion, gradually disappear from the record.

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18 Bowman, Town Councils, 126-127.
19 Bagnall, Egypt, 56.
altogether.\footnote{Bagnall, \textit{Egypt}, 59-61.} An attempt was made to incorporate wealthy villagers into the ranks of the \textit{bouleutai} in order to relieve the burden of the position, but this apparently met with little success.\footnote{The record concerning this case is incomplete and the verdict of the judge can only be surmised. Lewis, \textit{Life}, 49-50.}

It is at this time that one begins to read more often of withdrawal (\textit{anachoresis}) as a means of fleeing financial and civic responsibilities. Both the economic turmoil of the Empire and the failure of the Severan reforms contributed to the distress of propertied and poor alike. Farmers began to abandon their land because they were unable to pay the taxes on it. Prominent citizens began to grow more aggressive in their attempts to avoid the liturgies that were imposed upon them. Land began to lie fallow and the population as a whole became more transient.\footnote{Rubenson, \textit{Letters}, 93.}

\textit{Anachoresis} became a significant concern for both the Romans and the Egyptians. The Romans wanted to maintain the supply of wheat that Egypt provided and the Egyptian villagers shared a corporate responsibility to ensure that Rome's demands were met. When people fled, the burden increased for those who remained. The imperial response was to offer a reward for the return of anchorites and to forbid towns
and villages from harboring them. This resulted in poorer Egyptians becoming tied to their villages in a manner similar to coloni tied to their estates.

Bagnall has argued that "far from being crushing and steadily increasing, the system of taxation was moderate, fairly proportioned to normal productivity of land, and stable over a period of more than 250 years." This does not address the manner in which the taxes were levied, however, or the question of who bore the brunt of the tax. Boak and Youtie, for example, have noted a papyrus from 309/310 that complains of townsmen who had plotted to burden yet another person in the town with an unfair proportion of the liturgies. Moreover, these same townsmen were sheltering others from having to pay any tax at all. It is not hard to imagine such machinations occurring fairly frequently as responsibilities were placed more and more into the hands of local land-holders.

Diocletian again reorganized Egyptian municipal government. He weakened the boulai in favor of the administration of a single logistes, or curator civitatis, who was himself

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25 Bagnall, Egypt, 172.

a townsman. The financial administration of the surrounding countryside was reorganized in a piecemeal fashion and a new set of offices was created within the towns themselves. The effect of these changes was to link the administration of the countryside more directly with that of the towns and their principal citizens. As administration came to be accomplished more and more through the liturgical responsibilities of the native Egyptians, Egyptian property owners in turn established closer relations with the imperial government. The divisions between urban and rural became less distinct, and the separation between local, native government and imperial administration became less clear. "In a small village, it is not difficult to imagine that a quarter or a third of the adult male population had some liturgical appointment, even without taking compulsory labor into account. When villagers met the bureaucracy, then, it was themselves."

The role that Egypt's traditional religion had played in providing an institutional and cultic basis for the towns and villages was also in decline. In the early stages of Roman rule the emperors had continued to foster the Egyptian

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cult. Augustus, for example, had sponsored building projects throughout Egypt and had portrayed himself as the successor to the pharaohs. This practice quickly fell to the wayside, however, and there is no evidence of imperial sponsorship after Antoninus. While the temples would not have fallen into immediate disuse because of lack of maintenance, Augustus had introduced another policy that had a more immediate effect. In an attempt to bring the priesthood under his control, he had confiscated temple land and instead provided Egyptian priests with direct monetary support. There is no evidence, however, of temples receiving money from the imperial administration after the middle of the third century. Consequently, priests no longer had the wherewithal to provide the festivals that were so crucial to Egyptian religious life. Records of festivals largely disappear in the third century, as does information about the temples and the religious function of the priests themselves.

Yet another important role of the priesthood had greatly diminished by the third century: that of providing written documents as records of transactions. The Ptolemies had replaced Egyptian with Greek as the official language of

31 Bagnall, Egypt, 262; Lewis, Life, 15.
32 Bagnall, Egypt, 267.
33 Bagnall, Egypt, 267-268.
the government. The obsolescence of the courtly scribes left the priesthood as the only significant institution which preserved Egyptian in any kind of written form. A vicious cycle developed in which the decline of written Egyptian led to the further decline of the priesthood, and fading of the priesthood from public view discouraged the already rare use of the Demotic script. By the middle of the third century Egyptian very often had to be translated into Greek in order to be recorded.\textsuperscript{34} By the end of the third century the Egyptian priests could not support their cult or maintain a significant public presence.

It is not belief that was lost; the Egyptian peasant of the fourth century believed as securely as his ancestors in the sacral character of the Nile and in the necessity of pleasing the divine to ensure fertility of fields, animals, and women. But cult as an organizing principle in society was lost.\textsuperscript{35}

Thus, by the beginning of the fourth century, Egyptian towns and villages had lost much of the institutional and cultic framework that had previously sustained them.

The decline of Demotic, a very difficult script to write, had paved the way for various attempts to transliterate Egyptian into Greek characters. Coptic eventually triumphed. It did not, however, arise in opposition to Greek. It instead arose as a practical necessity within a largely bilingual milieu and functioned alongside Greek for

\textsuperscript{34}Bagnall, \textit{Egypt}, 237-238.

\textsuperscript{35}Bagnall, \textit{Egypt}, 268.
several centuries. Moreover, Coptic was not the product of an educated or clerical elite. While it is not certain that Coptic directly paralleled spoken Egyptian, it did possess several regional dialects and various degrees of borrowing from Greek. The presence of regional dialects together with the use of Coptic as a biblical and liturgical language would at least suggest that it could be understood by the average Egyptian.

Contrary to the older view, there is little evidence of hostility between the two linguistic groups. To be fair, Greek remained the language of the government and pejorative references to native Egyptians do appear. On the other hand, the dissolution of traditional administrative and religious institutions tended to blur the distinctions between Egyptian and Greek. Egyptian religion had been waning since the Ptolemies, and its twilight was marked more by disuse than by the imposition of Hellenistic culture from above. Ewa Wipszycka has shown that by the fourth century there is evidence of an Egyptian elite in the towns and villages. Egyptians possessed considerable autonomy, especially at the local level, and there was extensive and varied interaction between the two linguistic groups. Finally, there was not a wide linguistic gulf between native

\[36\] Bagnall, *Egypt*, 238.

\[37\] Wipszycka, "Monachisme," 41.
and newcomer. While Egypt cannot be described as a wholly bilingual society, papyrological evidence shows that the use of Greek was widespread and that there was a significant overlap between the Greek and Egyptian communities. It is now necessary to show how this new understanding of Roman Egypt affects the interpretation of the origins of Christian monasticism in the region.

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In the first and early second centuries Christians in Egypt had for the most part been a sect within the large and prosperous Jewish community. As such, they had enjoyed close ties with the Judaeo-Christian communities in Palestine. Moreover, while most of Egypt's Jewish population resided in Alexandria, many Jews had settled further south. This enabled Christianity to spread rapidly southward as well. The Jewish community in Egypt was largely destroyed during its revolt against Trajan (115-117) and this compelled Christians in Egypt to forge an identity

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38 Bagnall, *Egypt*, 259; Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 7, concludes that "it is no longer possible to suppose that the Hellenistic culture of Alexandria inspired only a few Greek-speaking notables in the southern metropoleis and confirmed a sharp distinction between people of their standing and the Egyptian peasantry."

39 Pace Klijn, "Jewish Christianity," 161-175, who argues that there was more theological and ethnic variety in the early Alexandrian communities.

independent of their Jewish forebears.\textsuperscript{41} By the end of the second century evidence begins to appear of widespread and unstructured Christian communities throughout Egypt.\textsuperscript{42}

This evidence is largely papyrological. Surprisingly, most of the papyri that betray a definite Christian provenance are not in educated or cultivated hands. The scripts instead suggest that the papyri were written by "tradesmen, farmers, minor government officials to whom knowledge of and writing in Greek was an essential skill, but who had few literary interests."\textsuperscript{43} This argues against the view that Christianity had originally been the possession of an educated elite and instead suggests the rapid diffusion of Christianity into all levels of society. It also argues against Christianity being imposed by Hellenes from Alexandria. The Egyptian Church of the late-second and third centuries, which was prospering in Middle and Upper Egypt as well as in the Delta region, was "composed not so much of intellectuals or the wealthy as of ordinary men of the middle and lower classes."\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41} For the devastation of both the Jewish and the Gentile populations that resulted from these revolts, Smallwood, \textit{Jews}, 393-412.

\textsuperscript{42} Roberts, \textit{Manuscript}, 71.

\textsuperscript{43} Roberts, \textit{Manuscript}, 21.

\textsuperscript{44} Roberts, \textit{Manuscript}, 25.
The fact that the earliest Christian papyri are Greek cannot be used as proof that the copyists were not of Egyptian origin. As mentioned above, the decline of Demotic had led to the adoption of Greek as the only readily available written language. As Coptic script came to be more widely used, however, it was taken up by Egyptian Christians for use in biblical and liturgical texts. Many of the earliest Coptic papyri have a Christian provenance and Christianity gave impetus to the widespread use of the script. This should not be taken to mean that Egyptian Christianity arose independently of or in hostility to its Greek counterpart. Coptic would have failed as a liturgical language if some form of Greek had not been common currency, for Coptic's numerous borrowings from Greek would otherwise have rendered the liturgy unintelligible: "Christianity was neither Greek nor Egyptian in any adversarial sense."45

The history of Christianity in Egypt cannot be considered in greater detail. It is important to recognize, however, that by the beginning of the fourth century the Egyptian Church resembled Egyptian society as a whole. There was not inherent within the Egyptian Church, just as there was not inherent within Egyptian society, a fundamental division between Greek and native. Christianity was not imposed from above, even in the South, and it was not a

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45 Bagnall, Egypt, 283.
mechanism of social or economic exclusion. More important to this study is that this revised description of the Egyptian Church can also be applied to its monks.

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The first recorded use of the term monachos provides a significant insight into the role of Christian ascetics in Egyptian society. The papyrus in which the term occurs describes a criminal assault to which a deacon and a monk were witnesses. Monachos is used in the papyrus in a straightforward manner, which implies that the term was accepted as a title within legal, or at least conventional, discourse. Moreover, the fact that the monk was cited as a witness to a crime suggests that he would be available for any future proceedings. It is therefore reasonable to assume that he was not a dweller of the deep desert. Judge has taken the monk's association with a deacon to mean that the former was associated with a local church. This may not have been the case, for the meeting of the two may have been chance, or the deacon may have been associated with a nearby monastery. Judge is correct, however, in his assertion that the monk was easily recognizable, readily available and likely connected with the village in some way. This would not have been unusual. Other papyri reveal

46 Judge, "Earliest," 72-89.

apotaktikoi, the more common term for monks, functioning within a wide variety of circumstances. They owned, inherited and bequeathed property, they rented rooms, and they appeared as both plaintiffs and defendants in civil and criminal cases.\textsuperscript{48}

It is tempting to dismiss these worldly ascetics as belonging to Jerome’s Remnuoth, false monks who were regarded with scorn by the Christian community.\textsuperscript{49} This dismissal would be inappropriate, however, for these apotaktikoi appear too often in the papyri and their existence seems to have been accepted by the general population. Moreover, a brief look at the traditional sources of monastic history reveals that even properly delimited hermits and cenobites often played active roles in neighboring villages and towns.

The Pachomian communities, for example, were established in the midst of populated areas.\textsuperscript{50} This was in consonance with Pachomius’s ideal of "an asceticism closely bound up with a sense of obligation toward other people," an obligation which entailed both relief of suffering and the

\textsuperscript{48} Judge, "Fourth-Century," 619. This article lists and describes the contents of papyri which mention ἀποτακτικοὶ and μοναχοὶ.

\textsuperscript{49} Jerome, Ep. 22.34.

\textsuperscript{50} Wipszycka, "Monachisme," 11-14, suggests that by the end of the fourth century a community founded along Pachomian lines was present in Alexandria itself.
evangelization of the countryside. The communities engaged in extensive economic activity, both to support themselves and to aid their efforts to relieve the plight of the poor. They produced clothing, baskets and other goods both for themselves and for public sale. They farmed their own land and hired themselves out as laborers. They received and managed extensive estates and farmed abandoned land. The latter activity would have been of great assistance to the neighboring villages, for it would have helped to ease their corporate responsibilities. The monasteries were not free from taxation and therefore would have shared the burden with surrounding farmers. This extensive economic activity blurred the distinction between monastic community and wealthy estate, and Pachomian monks would have been a common sight in the surrounding region.

This sort of activity was not limited to the Pachomians. The Historia monachorum describes Oxyrhynchus as a veritable city of monks. Apollo, although a hermit living in the desert, nonetheless was frequently of service to neighboring villages. He interfered with a pagan proces-

51 Rousseau, Pachomius, 65.

52 Rousseau, Pachomius, 153-158. Palladius, Historia Lausiaca 32, also describes the different trades plied by the Tabennesiotes, although at a later date.

53 Historia monachorum 5.
sion in order to convert a village. On more than one occasion he interceded between villages about to engage in armed combat over disputed boundaries. He also acted as a healer and provided relief to the poor during a famine. Sarapion is described as both ruling a large community and managing a sizable rural estate. The monks under his jurisdiction produced so much surplus food that they were able to ship some of it to Alexandria to relieve the poor in that city. The author of the Historia monachorum noted that all the monks whom he mentioned carried out a similar service. While he recorded this activity to show the sanctity of the monks, his description goes far toward demonstrating that even hermits were not entirely isolated from the surrounding community. They interceded in crises, healed the sick, fed the poor and even helped to influence the occasional wild animal.

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54 Historia monachorum 8.26-29.
55 Historia monachorum 8.30-31,36-37.
56 Historia monachorum 8.7,44-47.
57 "πολλὴν τε ἄλλα τῆς ἁδελφότητος ἐκτελοῦντα οἰκονομίαν." Historia monachorum 18.1.
58 Historia monachorum 18.3.
59 Bes saved farmers from a rampaging hippopotamus and a crocodile on different occasions. Historia monachorum 4.3. Elias healed the sick. Ibid. 7.2.
Other sources suggest much the same thing. Evagrius described a monk who sold his Bible in order to help the poor and elsewhere wrote of the need to give alms. While there can be no doubt that Evagrius vigorously championed complete detachment from the distractions of urban life, he nevertheless acknowledged that this might not be possible. Even the gnostic who had acquired the stillness necessary for the contemplation of divine mysteries was expected to receive guests hospitably and to care for the poor through alms and healing. Palladius mentioned the presence of Christian ascetics in and around Atribis and Arsinoë. The Canons of ps.-Athanasius also attest to urban ascetics.

The need for both anchorites and cenobites to support themselves is reflected throughout the monastic literature. Palladius described the monks of Nitria as supporting them-

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60 Goehring, "World," 134-144, surveys the economic activity of the monks; Wipszycka, "Monachisme," 1-44, describes the presence of ascetics within cities.

61 Evagrius, Practicus 97, for the story; Gnosticus 7, Ad monachos 25, 29, and Antirrheticus 3.37 for the need to give alms.

62 Evagrius, Rerum 6 for the need avoid distraction; Practicus 41, and Ad monachos 83, for proper conduct while in a village.

63 Evagrius, Gnosticus 7, 22, 33.

64 Palladius, Historia Lausiaca 29.1; 58.1; 59.1.

selves through the manufacture of cloth.\textsuperscript{66} Palladius, Evagrius, Cassian and the \textit{Apophthegmata} record the presence of bursars to manage the economy of the monasteries.\textsuperscript{67} The \textit{Apophthegmata} provide further testimony to the economic affairs of the monks.\textsuperscript{68} The monks traded with nearby towns and villages to obtain the necessities they could not produce themselves and to acquire the raw materials for their manufacturing.\textsuperscript{69} They owned and cultivated fields, and hired themselves out to other land-owners during the harvest season.\textsuperscript{70} John the Dwarf wove baskets and ropes and arranged for their transportation to market.\textsuperscript{71} Poemen interceded in the affairs of a nearby town in a manner reminiscent of Apollo.\textsuperscript{72} The layout and location of monastic cells also suggest economic activity. The cells contained walled gardens, storage rooms, diversified living

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Historia Lausiaca} 7.5.

\textsuperscript{67} Palladius, \textit{Historia Lausiaca} 10.3; Evagrius, \textit{Gnosticus} 30; Cassian, \textit{Inst.} 4.40; \textit{Apophthegmata} Anoub 1.

\textsuperscript{68} Cf. Chitty, \textit{Desert}, 34; Goehring, "World," 139.

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Apophthegmata} Agathon 27,30; Isidore the Priest 7; Macarius 30; Poemen 10, 163.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Apophthegmata} Benjamin 1; John the Dwarf 35; Macarius 7; Pion 1.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Apophthegmata} John the Dwarf 5,30-31; Goehring, "World," 139.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Apophthegmata} Poemen 9.
spaces, and in some cases luxurious appointments. Many communities were located in or near suburbs in order to facilitate this activity.

Trade was not sought for its own sake and in many instances the Apopthegmata praise those who managed to avoid such distractions. For example, although John the Dwarf engaged in manufacture and trade, he is praised for the utterly detached manner in which he carried this out. Complete isolation was an option available to only a very few, however, and the more typical monk labored to support himself and his community in a manner similar to that of his previous life in a nearby village or town. Not surprisingly, this continuity of activity is also reflected in monastic dwellings. Many of the cells that have been uncovered in recent excavations bear a strong resemblance to the houses that existed in the nearby villages.

The traditional view of Egyptian monks as illiterate peasants completely withdrawn from the world must therefore be revised. Most monks did not entirely abandon all forms of human intercourse. Many lived within towns and villages, and for others the desert was nothing more than the strip of wasteland that immediately adjoined cultivated fields. Some

73 Site monastique, 21-27; Husson, "L’habitat," 191-207.
74 Wipszycka, "Monachisme," 35.
75 Apopthegmata John the Dwarf 5,30-31.
monks even inhabited pockets of desert that were in the midst of populated areas. Many retained ties with local churches and several assumed important roles within neighboring towns. Monks engaged in a wide range of economic activity and this variety suggests that they came from a wide range of backgrounds. Moreover, "the bilingualism of the fourth-century papyrus finds connected with monastic establishments certainly shows that literate members of these communities were bilingual, but it may also point to bilingualism as a widespread - but not universal - condition of life."\textsuperscript{76} The fact that most of the monks were Egyptian does not mean that most were illiterate peasants.\textsuperscript{77}

The papyri can suggest the demographic composition of the monks and reveal the nature and extent of their economic activity. They can even show the prevalence of Greek within the monastic communities. They cannot, however, describe the manner in which Greek language and culture helped to shape the method and content of monastic teaching. For this we must turn to the monastic texts themselves.

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The \textit{Epistulae} of Antony provide the best starting point. The \textit{Vita Antonii} describes Antony as unlearned, dis-

\textsuperscript{76}Bagnall, \textit{Egypt}, 245.

\textsuperscript{77}Cf. Wipszycka, "Monachisme," 41, who suggests that the division between Origen's supporters and detractors lay in their allegiance to Theophilus rather than in their literacy.
interested in school and opposed to Hellenistic philosophy. Modern scholars have largely accepted this description and have regarded the *Epistulae* as being of little value to the understanding of either Antony himself or of early monasticism more generally. Samuel Rubenson, however, has recently undermined this view by showing that the *Epistulae* were composed in Coptic and deserve precedence over the *Vita Antonii* as a source for the historical Antony. More important, Rubenson has demonstrated that the *Epistulae* betray a writer who was at ease with Hellenistic thought and who couched his understanding of the Christian life in Platonic terms. Specifically, Rubenson argued that the *Epistulae* employ a Platonic understanding of knowledge, cosmology and anthropology.

In his *Epistulae* Antony wrote that true knowledge consists of knowledge of God. We may attain this knowledge because we are created in the image of God. Knowledge of

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78 *Vita Antonii* 1, 72-73, 79-80. Jerome found this image so striking that he attempted to subvert it in his *Vita Pauli*. See below, Chap. 3, pp. 105-108.

79 Gribomont, "Review," 50, noted the possible significance of the *Epistulae* many years ago in his review of Garitte's edition.


82 Antony, *Epistulae* 6.4. The *Epistulae* are numbered according to their arrangement in *PG* 40.
God therefore begins with knowledge of ourselves.\textsuperscript{83} In order truly to know ourselves and to recognize the image of God within us, we must resist the deleterious effects of our material bodies and cultivate our rational natures. We must therefore purify the members of our bodies and calm their disturbances.\textsuperscript{84} We must also quell the interior movements of our souls and live in accordance with reason.\textsuperscript{85} A rational life requires discernment, which enables us to distinguish not only good from bad, but what is real from what is unreal.\textsuperscript{86}

The salvation of the soul is gained through knowledge of God. Antony did not describe the human condition as one of sinfulness which requires sacrifice and reconciliation. He instead described it as having been wounded or suffering from a disease that can be healed by the recovery of knowledge of God lost through the fall.\textsuperscript{87} Essential to this notion is a belief in the unity of the soul which preceded the fall.\textsuperscript{88} Salvation for Antony is the return of the soul to its original unity, and he described the future unity of

\textsuperscript{83}Antony, \textit{Epistulae} 6.1,4; 7.
\textsuperscript{84}Antony, \textit{Epistulae} 1.2,4.
\textsuperscript{85}Antony, \textit{Epistulae} 1.3.
\textsuperscript{86}Antony, \textit{Epistulae} 4.3.
\textsuperscript{87}Antony, \textit{Epistulae} 1.7, 2.2, 5.2, 6.2.
\textsuperscript{88}Antony, \textit{Epistulae} 2.1, 4.1.
the restored soul through the metaphor of membership in Christ's body.\textsuperscript{89} Antony emphasized the recovery of knowledge rather than the work of expiation and reconciliation. He claimed that God provided for this knowledge by three great dispensations which, though revealed in time, constitute a logical whole. These are natural law, Mosaic law, and the coming of Christ.\textsuperscript{90} As the mind of God, Christ mediates between our rational natures and the divine nature. For Antony, ascesis was "mainly the method of purification of the body and soul in order to bring them into harmony and regain man's natural condition."\textsuperscript{91}

Antony's \textit{Epistulae} resist close analysis. They are brief and repetitive, and he left many crucial terms undefined. Their content is nevertheless sufficient to prove that Hellenistic ideas were discussed among Egyptian monks writing in Coptic in central and southern Egypt. The \textit{Epistulae} therefore help to erode the older assumption of a division between illiterate Egyptian and Greek foreigner, or between Egyptian monasticism and the Hellenistic Egyptian Church. Regrettably, Rubenson attempted to go further than this by attributing Antony's ideas to the Alexandrian theological tradition and especially to the thought of

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\item \textsuperscript{89}Antony, \textit{Epistulae} 2.9, 4.2.
\item \textsuperscript{90}Antony, \textit{Epistulae} 2.2, 6.1.
\item \textsuperscript{91}Rubenson, \textit{Letters}, 139.
\end{itemize}
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There can be little doubt that the Epistulae were influenced by a popular Hellenizing world-view. Nevertheless, there is simply not enough in them to warrant such a claim. While Antony's understanding of spiritual knowledge would seem to have been influenced by a vague Platonic epistemology, it is not possible to trace his ideas to any one text or tradition.

The association of knowledge and praxis was common within Hellenistic schools. While the different intellectual traditions, such as Stoicism and Platonism, made different cosmological and epistemological claims, they were united in regarding philosophy as a manner of knowing as well as the acquisition of knowledge. Pierre Hadot has shown that ancient philosophy was regarded as a spiritual exercise, or as an "activité intérieure de la pensée et de la volonté." The goal of philosophy was not to acquire knowledge but to form the entire life so that one could live according to reason. To this end Stoicism, for example, recommended an ascēsis, or an interior discipline which entailed attention to one's self (prosoche) in order to examine one's conscience and to discern what is right and

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92 Rubenson, Letters, 186.
94 P. Hadot, Exercices, 61.
wrong. While this notion was developed by Clement within a Christian context, this understanding of moral activity transcended any one tradition in Late Antiquity.

The understanding of philosophical study as a spiritual exercise had a significant impact upon methods of instruction. Philosophical instruction was often regarded as spiritual guidance in which dialogue between teacher and student played a major role. While the teacher was expected to impart an understanding of the world and of humanity's role within it, he was also expected to encourage the self-awakening of his student. This was best accomplished through dialogue. The student was "to be an active and self-governing participant in the process of the argument." Through dialectic the teacher would encourage his student to explore every aspect of his personality, leaving no aspect of his emotional life unscrutinized.

For the Hellenistic schools, education was oral because only the spoken word makes dialogue possible, that is, it makes it possible for the disciple to discover the truth himself amid the interplay of questions and answers and also for the master to adapt his teaching to the needs of the disciple.

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98 Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 328
99 P. Hadot, "Forms of Life," 498.
Dialogue was a spiritual exercise in which the student submitted to reason and found truth in the depths of his soul.\textsuperscript{100} The exercise of pure reason through the dialectical process was "un itinéraire de l'esprit vers le divin."\textsuperscript{101} Moreover, the responsibility for self-examination did not lie solely with the student. The authority of the teacher rested precisely on his own ability to live the life he recommended for his students. He taught by example as well as by word.\textsuperscript{102}

When written texts were required, they were often composed in a way that attempted to reproduce at least in part the personal relationship between the teacher and the student.\textsuperscript{103} They were "written not so much to inform the reader of a doctrinal content but to form him, to make him traverse a certain itinerary in the course of which he will make spiritual progress."\textsuperscript{104} Hellenistic philosophical texts were therefore rarely systematic. Stoics, for example, often employed aphorisms and exempla in order to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{100}P. Hadot, \textit{Exercices}, 36.
\item \textsuperscript{101}P. Hadot, \textit{Exercices}, 37.
\item \textsuperscript{102}I. Hadot, "Spiritual Guide," 448-449.
\item \textsuperscript{103}P. Hadot uses the platonic dialogues as an example; Nussbaum describes Seneca's \textit{Epistulae morales}.
\item \textsuperscript{104}P. Hadot, "Forms of Life," 499; Nussbaum, \textit{Therapy}, 339.
\end{itemize}

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encourage the internalization of an idea.\textsuperscript{105} Reading these works was in itself a spiritual exercise.\textsuperscript{106}

One can discern many of these same elements in Antony's \textit{Epistulae}. In them Antony frequently called for the self-awakening of his correspondents, encouraging them to know themselves so that they might know God.\textsuperscript{107} He also described the path to true knowledge as a process of purification. While the \textit{Epistulae} cannot be described as a dialogue, Antony did attempt to cultivate a relationship between himself and his readers based on love and respect. He also appealed to his own experience as the source of his authority. Like his Hellenistic contemporaries, it was necessary for Antony to live the life he recommended for others.\textsuperscript{108}

The \textit{Epistulae} are not the only monastic texts that reveal an interest in the relationship between the teacher and the student. The \textit{Apopthegmata} show that this relationship was also a concern in the communities of Nitria, Kellia, and Scetis. When describing monastic instruction among the desert fathers, Guy identified three principal features: the role of an elder in the formation

\textsuperscript{105}Nussbaum uses Seneca's \textit{Medea} as an example of this.

\textsuperscript{106}P. Hadot, \textit{Exercices}, 47-58.

\textsuperscript{107}Antony, \textit{Epistulae} 6.1,4; 7.

\textsuperscript{108}Rubenson, \textit{Letters}, 63.
of a beginner, an apprenticeship based on experience, and the exposure of one's thoughts to the elder. While the patterns of monastic life revealed in the Apophthegmata were quite varied, Guy argued that the method of education was universal. The basis of the teaching relationship was the absolute obedience that the disciple owed to his abba. The abba was not simply the disciple's superior; he was the disciple's spiritual director. Instruction was highly personal, and the elder's advice often varied according to whom he was advising. The elder was to use "his gift of spiritual discernment to adapt each of his prescriptions to the needs and capacities of his disciple." For his part, the disciple was expected to expose all his thoughts to his elder in order that they might be examined. His trust in the elder was to be complete. Only gradually would the disciple learn to discern his own thoughts.

More recently, Graham Gould considered the teaching relationship among the Desert Fathers as one of many forms of interaction revealed in the Apophthegmata. He agreed with Guy that the teaching relationship "was a personal relationship which made great demands on the abba and his

110 Guy, "Educational," 47.
111 Guy, "Educational," 49.
disciple alike."

\textsuperscript{112} He also accepted Guy's claim that the disciple owed absolute obedience to his elder, but added that the choice of an elder belonged to the student. The instruction the disciple received would affect the rest of his career as a monk, and if the instruction were proving unfruitful he was free to look elsewhere.\textsuperscript{113} Gould surpassed Guy, however, by suggesting that the responsibilities of the abba went beyond the proper discernment of his disciple's needs to the regulation of his own conduct.\textsuperscript{114} Like his Hellenistic contemporaries, the abba was expected to live the life he recommended to others.

This is not to suggest that the method of instruction found among the Desert Fathers or in Antony's Epistulae was derived solely from Stoic or more general Hellenistic philosophical instruction. It is intended merely to refute Guy's claim that the Desert Fathers had developed "an altogether original method of education."\textsuperscript{115} The elements of instruction that Guy and later Gould enumerated are markedly similar to the concerns that were raised within

\textsuperscript{112}Gould, Desert Fathers, 25.

\textsuperscript{113}Gould, Desert Fathers, 73-74. Considerable thought went into dissolving the teaching relationship, however, for the disciple had to be sure that the urge to leave arose from a genuine risk of harm rather than from an assertion of self-will.

\textsuperscript{114}Gould, Desert Fathers, 58-63.

\textsuperscript{115}Guy, "Educational," 45.
Hellenistic philosophy more generally. In both instances, teaching took place "in the context of a personal relationship." ¹¹⁶ Both traditions were concerned with the student's life and moral development as well as the imparting of knowledge. Both devised methods of instruction that allowed for meditation and rumination. One therefore cannot easily separate the instruction of the Desert Fathers from the Hellenistic milieu in which it arose, just as one cannot easily isolate the content of the instruction.

Perhaps the greatest example of this is Evagrius Ponticus. The son of a chorepiscopus in Pontus, Evagrius was ordained lector by Basil and deacon by Gregory Nazianzen. He later travelled to Constantinople with Gregory, where he served as archdeacon.¹¹⁷ Sozomen wrote that Evagrius learned philosophy and sacred scripture under Gregory, and it was probably Gregory who introduced Evagrius to the work and theology of Origen.¹¹⁸ After Gregory's retirement, Evagrius remained in Constantinople. Palladius recorded that while at Constantinople Evagrius was a skill-

¹¹⁶Gould, Desert Fathers, 26. Cf. I. Hadot, "Spiritual Guide," 445, who wrote that "philosophical instruction was necessarily most efficient when it was based on a personal and friendly intercourse between student and teacher.".

¹¹⁷Palladius, Historia Lausiaca 38.2.

At prayer one evening, however, he had a vision that warned him away from his love of the wife of a high official, and within twenty-four hours he took leave of the capital. He eventually arrived at the monastic community at the Mount of Olives, which was governed by Melania the Elder and Rufinus of Aquileia. While there Evagrius became extremely ill. Melania nursed him back to health and convinced him to take monastic vows. Evagrius remained at the Mount for two years before departing for Egypt, and after arriving in Egypt maintained a correspondence with both Melania and Rufinus. Palladius would seem to have played a significant role in this, for he most likely served as Evagrius's messenger. Later in his career, Evagrius returned briefly to the Mount of Olives to seek refuge from Theophilus, who had threatened to ordain him bishop of Thmuis. Evagrius spent two years at Nitria and then fourteen at Kellia, dying on Epiphany, 399.

\[119\] Palladius, Historia Lausiaca 38.2.
\[120\] Palladius, Historia Lausiaca 38.3-7; Sozomenus, Historia ecclesiastica 6.30.9.
\[121\] Palladius, Historia Lausiaca 38.8-9.
\[122\] Bunge, "Origenismus," 35-39; Briefe, 331ff.
\[123\] O’Laughlin, "Origenism," 60-63.
\[124\] O’Laughlin, "Origenism," 64.
\[125\] Palladius, Historia Lausiaca 38.10,13.
While in Egypt Evagrius became associated with a group of monks known for their fondness for the theology of Origen. These monks were apparently led by Ammonius and the Tall Brothers, and their monastic teaching possessed a strong Stoic and Platonic flavor. Palladius later described Evagrius as among the leaders of this group. O’Laughlin has argued that "it was characteristic of this group that they maintained greater contact with the outside world, especially with Alexandria and Palestine." Basing himself on their apparent willingness to engage in theological speculation, Regnault proposed that these monks stood outside the tradition of the Desert Fathers that is revealed in the *Apophthegmata*. This claim is not tenable, however, for it is predicated upon an assumption that native Egyptian monks were strongly opposed to Hellenistic thought in general and to Origen in particular. Antony’s *Epistulae* and the *Apophthegmata* show that this assumption is not valid. The opposition to theological speculation that appears in the *Apophthegmata* may well be the result of later theological controversies and it likely does not reflect the situation in Egypt before 400.

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127 Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 24,35.
Evagrius provides the best insight into the teaching of this group of monks, for he composed several works which still survive. The majority of Evagrius' ascetic works are small collections of aphorisms or short sayings. Most are in prose but two, the Ad virginem and the Sententiae ad monachos, are in meter. These collections have often been characterized as without order; as possessing discernible themes but no discernible structure. Despite this characterization, many of Evagrius's works show signs of having been intricately constructed. In his extensive study of the Sententiae ad monachos, for example, Jeremy Driscoll has shown that Evagrius carefully linked aphorisms together to form a coherent summary of the spiritual life.\textsuperscript{130} He further argues that this is Evagrius's most complete ascetic work, for in it Evagrius surveys the spiritual life from an incipient fear of the Lord to the contemplation of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{131} Driscoll's approach is promising and deserves to be applied to other of Evagrius's works.

Although it is not as comprehensive as the Sententiae ad monachos, the De oratione shows similar signs of being structured in the form of a spiritual ascent. It begins with the need for compunction and purity and moves on to consider the various obstacles to prayer. It eventually

\textsuperscript{130}Driscoll, "Key," 361-392, for a summary of the research.

\textsuperscript{131}Driscoll, "Key," 361.
ascends to a discussion of the nature of pure prayer. There is inherent in the *De oratione* an assumption that the reader is progressing in his own spiritual life as he progresses through the text. Transitions from one topic to another are often marked, and it is assumed that the reader has mastered what has been read before going on. When he first introduced true prayer, for example, Evagrius cautioned that if the reader could not keep a focused mind during prayer, then he still prayed as one attached to the world rather than as a monk.\(^{132}\) When discussing the dangers that assail the mind at the height of prayer, he wrote as though the reader had already made significant progress toward this goal.\(^{133}\) He later expressed the hope that the reader had achieved the full gift of prayer and counselled patience if he had not.\(^{134}\)

Evagrius’s aphorisms encourage intensive study and rumination. The reader was not to go on to the next until he had mastered the last. The role which memorization was to play in reading Evagrius’s texts can be seen in the guarded and coded language that he frequently used. He often alluded to key elements of his thought through cryptic and even incomprehensible references to them. Only later,

\(^{132}\) Evagrius, *De oratione* 44.

\(^{133}\) Evagrius, *De oratione* 49.

\(^{134}\) Evagrius, *De oratione* 87.
or perhaps in a different work entirely, would the references be explained. As the reader progressed through the text, and eventually through Evagrius's entire corpus, he would return to key terms and concepts many times. He would thereby be forced to consider the terms in a new light. The depth and richness of the terms were expected to grow as the reader's capacity for understanding grew.

An example of this is Evagrius's description of the *logismoi*, or evil thoughts, as children. In the *Sententiae ad monachos* he wrote: "He who completely destroys evil thoughts in his heart, he is like the one who dashes his children against the rock."\(^{135}\) Evagrius also referred to children in his *Rerum monachalium rationes*. There, he cited Jeremiah 16.4, which prohibits Jeremiah from fathering children. Evagrius explained that the children whom Jeremiah mentioned signify not only human children but also the desires of the flesh, for they are the sons and daughters of the heart.\(^{136}\) In his *Scholia in psalmos* Evagrius shed more light on the matter. He reinforced the idea that children signify evil thoughts and also explained that the rock against which they are dashed is the doctrine

\(^{135}\)Evagrius, *Sententiae ad monachos* 45. Translations of the *Sententiae* are taken from Driscoll, *The 'Ad monachos'*, 45-70.

\(^{136}\)Evagrius, *Rerum* 1.
of Christ. A similar chain would explain the different dimensions of "rock" as a metaphor Christ.

Another example is Evagrius’s use of Paul’s description of faith quenching flaming arrows. In the Sententiae ad monachos Evagrius wrote: "A flaming arrow ignites the soul, but the man of praktiké will extinguish it." In the Kephalaia gnostica he explained that the arrows are evil thoughts which are formed in the passionate part of the soul. In the Practicus we read that praxis is the method of purifying the passionate part of the soul.

The reader was not expected to have all of Evagrius’s works at hand so that he might cross-reference these terms. Instead, the terms and the aphorisms were to be memorized over a long period of time. The meanings of the text, and hence the depth of Evagrius’s monastic teaching, would be revealed only slowly. A text that had been learned, or even memorized without being understood, would gradually be explained as the student progressed. The use of aphorisms allowed Evagrius to interweave introspection and practical advice in a spiralling manner in which the reader, as he

137 Evagrius, Scholia in psalmos 136.9.
138 Ephesians 6:16.
139 Evagrius, Sententiae ad monachos 70.
140 Evagrius, Kephalaia gnostica 6.53; Driscoll, The 'Ad monachos', 256-257.
141 Evagrius, Practicus 78.
moves to consider the purification of the next part of the soul, is already expected to have cleansed the former. Moreover, the aphorisms allow for the simultaneous discussion of several themes, which reflects the complex personality of a reader whose spiritual life cannot be compartmentalized in convenient linear categories. In a manner similar to the Hellenistic instruction described above, the reader is to explore every aspect of his emotional and spiritual life. The manner in which he was to read and memorize Evagrius's aphorisms led Driscoll to describe the Sententiae ad monachos as a model dialogue. He concludes that the text "can hold no interest for the reader who does not accept the proverbs as invitations to dialogue." 142

It is important to recognize that the terms Evagrius employed to express his monastic teaching were firmly grounded in the Bible. As one penetrated the mysteries of Evagrius's thought, one also penetrated the mysteries of the Bible. Learning that "rock" signified the doctrine of Christ was therefore a key to interpreting both Evagrius and the Bible, for both use "rock" as a symbol for Christ. The approach to Evagrius's corpus therefore did not differ greatly from the approach to the Bible, for the Bible also possessed many levels of meaning that could only be mastered after a long period of study. Evagrius's aphorisms helped

142 Driscoll, The 'Ad monachos', 368.
to illumine the deeper meaning of the Bible by drawing upon scriptural symbols and relating them to the monastic life. Moreover, both texts required the practical application of their principles for its meaning to be grasped. The Apophthegmata reveal that the goal of scriptural interpretation was to establish a unity between the principles in the text and the life of the reader. "It is through the fulfillment of the text in one's life that the text expresses its full transformative power." A monk therefore could not claim to have mastered a text, either biblical or Evagrian, until he had successfully applied it to his life. In each case, the text was to engage the reader and transform him; to lead him to a deeper awareness of himself and of God.

There is an inherent irony in Evagrius's corpus, however, in that the community which provided the basis for these writings in some ways would have been antithetical to them. I am not here relying upon the anti-intellectualism revealed in the Apophthegmata. This can easily be explained by the fact that the sayings were collected after the Origenist and other theological controversies. The various collections are evidence of a later wariness of theological speculation that was not such a force in the latter part of the fourth century. Nor do I wish to suggest that Evagrius

\[143\] Burton-Christie, Word, 217.
was not read in Egypt. O’Laughlin cites evidence that Evagrius was read in Scetis. The De oratione attacks the visualization of God during prayer, a practice common among some of the monks in the region. Guillaumont goes so far as to suggest that the De oratione was the flashpoint for the Origenist controversy. I am instead referring to the fundamentally oral nature of the desert communities. Study required a guide. It was not to be undertaken alone. The beginner did not possess the discernment necessary to assess his progress. He therefore could not have heeded Evagrius’s warnings not to proceed before mastering what had already been read. It was the abba’s task to evaluate the condition of his disciple and discern his needs. The abba would diagnose what ailed his disciple and provide the remedy.

Why, then, did Evagrius write? The works he composed required keys for their interpretation and the immediate possessors of these keys would have had little use for the books themselves. The community itself served as a repository of wisdom and experience that could be "read" and discussed and the abba could provide his disciple with what he needed to know. The answer to the question lies in the identity of Evagrius’s addressees. Considerable evidence points to an extensive correspondence between Evagrius and

144 O’Laughlin, "Origenism," 67.

the monastery on the Mount of Olives. Gabriel Bunge has shown that several of Evagrius's letters were addressed to Melania and to Rufinus, and also to John of Jerusalem, a patron of the community on the Mount. At least two of Evagrius's ascetic works were addressed to them, as well as an epistolary discourse on theology. The link between Evagrius and the Mount of Olives is made even clearer by Rufinus' translation of the Historia monachorum in Aegypto, which betrays an affinity for the Evagrian understanding of the ascetic life, and by Rufinus's translations of Evagrius himself.

The Mount of Olives would have been one of the few ascetic communities outside the Nile Delta that could have "unlocked" Evagrius's corpus. Melania had resided for some time among the monks of Nitria and had sheltered them at Diocaesarea during their exile from Egypt under Valens. At Jerusalem, she continued her immersion in the works of Origen, Didymus, and other writers who provided the intellectual foundation of Evagrian monasticism. Rufinus, too, had stayed among the Egyptians and claimed to

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147 Palladius, Historia Lausiaca 46.3-4.

148 Palladius, Historia Lausiaca 55.
have studied under Didymus the Blind for six years.\textsuperscript{149}

Thus, both leaders were familiar with monastic life at Nitria and attempted to emulate at least some aspects of it on the Mount of Olives. They also shared with the Nitrrians a common exegetical and speculative tradition based on Origen and developed by Didymus and the monks themselves. Melania and Rufinus therefore possessed the same interpretative keys as the Nitrian monks. The two, along with their more senior students, could have served as the ammas and abbas who interpreted the needs of the less advanced in their community and provided the gradual revelation that was necessary.

If this answer is accepted, yet other questions must be posed. If Evagrius's teaching could be grasped by only a closely knit and similarly trained group of ascetics, how could it be conveyed to those outside this group? How could one represent in a written text a method of instruction that was so dependent upon the personal relationship between a master and disciple? Moreover, how can Cassian be said to have based his own teaching on Evagrius when Evagrius's thought was grounded so thoroughly in the monastic life of Nitria and Kellia? As will be seen below, one method that Cassian used to overcome this enormous difficulty was to attempt to recreate as far as he could the dialogue between

\textsuperscript{149}Rufinus, \textit{Apologia} 2.12,15.
the *abba* and the disciple. Before this can be examined in more detail, however, we must first become familiar with the context in which he wrote.
Chapter 3

Faith Seeking Misunderstanding:
Western Perceptions of Egyptian Monasticism

The story of the origins of monasticism that began the previous chapter is essentially a western story. Although it begins in Egypt, and Egyptian practices are described as normative, the story nevertheless flowered most fully among Latin Christians. The story appealed to the West because it satisfied a strong need felt by many Christians to find roots within a continuing tradition. The gulf between the persecuted and the Imperial Church had come to be keenly felt, especially after the triumph of the Church under Theodosius.1 The Egyptian monks were often portrayed as successors to the martyrs, and so they provided a tangible link to the past. Some authors even argued that the monks had continued unblemished the purity of the apostolic church.2 The story also served the beleaguered cause of monasticism in the West, which had found its strongest Christian opponents in Gaul. By tracing the history of monasticism to the very beginning of the Christian tradition, proponents of the ascetic life could parry what was perhaps their critics' most powerful thrust: that monasticism was a recent aberration concocted by extreme and

1Markus, End, 90-92.

2Cassian himself took up this theme. Con. 18.5.
irrational zealots. Finally, the story offered solutions to many of the problems that had arisen as the monastic movement had blossomed and borne fruit in the West. It helped to classify and assess ascetic practices and ways of life, and it imposed order on the variety of rules and communities that had arisen. Narrating the past allowed monastic writers to control the present and, to a limited degree, even the future. By limiting the origins of monasticism to Egypt and describing Egyptian practices as normative, a division between orthodox and unorthodox practices could easily be established.

Athanasius's *Vita Antonii* played a significant role in this story. The *Vita* established Antony’s primacy as the first of the desert heroes and closely associated him with the orthodox Nicene Christians. Its description of Antony’s way of life and its accounts of his teaching helped to clarify the proper goals and practices of the ascetic life. Moreover, by focusing on Antony’s continuing quest for solitude, Athanasius successfully established physical withdrawal as a metaphor for interior purity.  

Athanasius represented Antony’s increasing withdrawal from society as

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1. Goehring, "Encroaching," 282. I do not deny that Antony and others actually withdrew from society into the desert. I merely follow Goehring's argument that the literary portrayal of this withdrawal exaggerated the role of physical separation. I will suggest below that some writers misunderstood the metaphorical character of this portrayal, and that this had a significant impact on how the West viewed the ascetic life.
corresponding to the stages of his spiritual development. When studying the practices of other hermits in different towns, Antony passed from being a novice to one capable of withstanding the assaults of Satan himself.\(^4\) His mastery over carnal desire in the tomb, as well as his survival of physical demonic attack, showed him worthy to be ordained by God as one who was truly holy.\(^5\) His flight into the desert and the extreme ascesis he practiced there were proof of the singularity of his holiness.\(^6\) Antony challenged the devil in his own abode and received an unsurpassed spiritual wisdom in return.

The *Vita Antonii* reflects Athanasius's attempt to recruit or win over the rapidly growing monastic movement in Egypt. His portrayal of Antony also struck a chord in the West, however, and the Latin translations of his *Vita* enjoyed wide popularity. This was partly because Athanasius had conscientiously developed the reputation of a tireless champion of orthodoxy. His periodic exiles during his campaign against Arianism had taken him to Rome in 339-341 and Trier in 342-43.\(^7\) There had been at least two monks in his entourage, and their disposition and way of life had


\(^5\)Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 8-10.


\(^7\)Barnes, *Athanasius*, xi.
made a significant impact on the leaders of the western Church. The *Vita* was also successful because it addressed many of the concerns that had arisen, or were about to arise, in the West. Difficult relations between monks and bishops were not unique to Egypt, and the orthodoxy of many ascetics became a concern in Gaul and northern Spain in the latter part of the fourth century. The *Vita Antonii*, on the other hand, describes Antony as obedient to episcopal authority and concerned with the orthodox theology of the Church. Moreover, the *Vita*’s association of withdrawal with interior purity captured the imaginations of many in the West and helped to prompt a fascination with extreme ascetic practices that would later border on voyeurism.

If Athanasius provided an exemplar of the ascetic life, it was Jerome who made his presence constantly felt. Jerome appropriated the reputation for personal sanctity that Athanasius had cultivated while in the West and incorporated it into his own history of monasticism. Much later, he wrote that Marcella, who had dedicated herself to holy widowhood, had been inspired by Athanasius during his stay in Rome. Asella had similarly been inspired to dedicate herself to a life of virginity. In this way Jerome provided a pedigree for the practices of these women and gave their

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5Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 68-71, 82.
conduct greater legitimacy. This was crucial: for, according to Jerome, all of Rome had held Marcella's conduct to be disgraceful.\textsuperscript{10} Jerome's claim about Marcella was not entirely altruistic, however, for it also allowed him to form a link, however tenuous, between Athanasius and himself. Shortly after arriving in Rome, Jerome had ingratiated himself into the group of widows and virgins who regularly gathered with Marcella to study the Bible.

It was argued above that Athanasius's account of Antony must give way to the view provided by Antony's own \textit{Epistulae}.\textsuperscript{11} This fact, coupled with a better understanding of ascetic life in Egypt, significantly undermines the understanding of monasticism as a continuing quest for utter solitude. Lorenz has demonstrated that the western half of the story, at least Jerome's version of it, lacks credibility as well. Jerome's claims cannot be reconciled with the known chronology of events. During Athanasius's visit in Rome, Marcella would have been only ten or eleven, an unlikely age to contemplate perpetual virginity. Her decision to remain a widow, on the other hand, was taken about 350; long after Athanasius had left and long before the appearance of his \textit{Vita Antonii}.\textsuperscript{12} Similarly, Asella had

\textsuperscript{10}Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 127.3.

\textsuperscript{11}Chapter 2, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{12}Lorenz, "Anfänge," 4-5.
been consecrated to virginity in 344. Her decision could not have been influenced by Athanasius, who first arrived in Rome five years later.¹³

The invalidation of Jerome's historical claims has allowed Lorenz to examine the early evidence for ascetic practices in the West. His study, although brief, is important in that it collects the various references to different forms of ascetic life that had existed in the West in the mid- to late-fourth century. The wide variety of ascetic practices and their apparent lack of immediate eastern predecessors goes far toward eroding the general view of eastern origins for western ascesis. While Lorenz does not make a complete break from the older paradigm, his collection of sources nevertheless paves the way.¹⁴

An awareness of Jerome's historical inaccuracies also adds weight to the claim that Jerome had constructed his account with the hope of establishing himself as an authority on the ascetic life. Mark Vessey has recently shown that Jerome used his first set of public letters to create a model of Christian literary activity.¹⁵ In essence, Jerome portrayed himself as a Latin Origen; a

¹³Lorenz, "Anfänge," 5.

¹⁴While he questions Athanasius's role in the spread of monasticism, for example, Lorenz still looks for other possible conduits from the East. "Anfänge," 30.

portrayal that would later come back to haunt him. Basing his model on descriptions of classical poets and Eusebius's description of Origen, Jerome created a Christian literary persona whose principal attributes were: a tireless commitment to reading and writing "in the service of religion"; a single-minded engagement with the Bible; and a high level of literary productivity. Vessey's argument is sound and provides an insight into both Jerome's literary activity and the inner workings of his mind. It is necessary, however, to add one more attribute to Jerome's cultivated persona: a dedicated and rigorous ascetic life.

Jerome put great stock in his experience as a hermit in the Syrian desert, writing that he would gladly have remained there if he had not been driven out by false and unorthodox monks. His sojourn in Syria had also allowed him to make the acquaintance of monks who had met Paul of Thebes. In Jerome's mind, it was Paul who actually deserved the crown of primacy that Athanasius had awarded to Antony. Moreover, Jerome's greatest patron while in Syria had been Evagrius of Antioch, who had produced a polished and widely read translation of the Vita Antonii. Jerome had actively

\[16\text{Vessey, "Jerome's," 141-143.}\]

\[17\text{Jerome, Ep. 7.2; 15; 17.}\]

\[18\text{Evagrius's joint role as patron and translator has led De Vogüé to describe him as the central figure in the literary history of monasticism. Monachisme, 85-87.}\]
pursued his literary activities while in Syria and had praised the ascetic life in a number of ways. Much of this was included in his first set of public letters. Consequently, Jerome's description of Marcella's inspiration was only a small part of his attempt to establish an exclusive claim to knowledge of the ascetic life. He claimed that his experience, his travels and his acquaintances had allowed him to tap into the major currents of the monastic tradition. This enabled him to represent himself as the principal source of knowledge about its origin, goals, and proper conduct. This unique familiarity with the ascetic life also allowed Jerome to attempt to shape its future.

In this early set of letters Jerome described the ascetic life in heroic terms. Ascesis was little short of mortal (or immortal) combat, in which the lone hero fought against both his own evil inclinations and the demonic enemies of God. Purity came through physical withdrawal and the confrontation with evil. The solitary in the desert gained a communion with God that was possible nowhere else. Jerome praised his friend Rufinus, who had gone to live among the solitaries of Nitria, as dwelling with a heavenly

19The following survey of Jerome's early views draws heavily from my "The Development of Jerome's Views on the Ascetic Life."
family on earth. He later described Rufinus as having been washed clean by his experience at Nitria and made as white as snow. Jerome's lifelong companion Bonosus had also abandoned the world and had ensconced himself on a small, uninhabited island in the Adriatic. He had demonstrated his absolute commitment to God through his abandonment of his social position, his familial obligations and even his dearest friend.

Jerome depicted Bonosus's experiences and the desolation of his isle in vivid detail, setting them against the heavenly reward which Bonosus would surely receive. He contrasted Bonosus's loneliness to his citizenship in the heavenly city; his isolation to the presence of Christ; his lack of drinking water to the plentiful water of life. "You will be able to praise the victory," Jerome wrote, "when you realize the effort of the combatant." He likened Bonosus to John the Evangelist on the island of Patmos, suggesting that Bonosus "might see a vision in the manner of John."

Alone on his island but for the presence of Christ, Bonosus

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20 Jerome, Ep. 3.1.
21 Jerome, Ep. 4.2.
22 Jerome, Ep. 3.4.
23 "tunc poteris laudare victoriam, cum laborem proeliantis agnoueris." Jerome, Ep. 3.4. For the literary antecedents of these contrasts, De Vogüé, Monachisme, 91-106.
24 "fortasse ad exemplum Iohannis aliquid uidet." Jerome, Ep. 3.4.
"saw the glory of God, which even the apostles did not see except in the desert."\(^{25}\) Later Jerome would describe Bonosus as a master over his desires.\(^{26}\)

This description is uncompromising. Bonosus’s renunciation and isolation were complete; his life entirely dedicated to a struggle against Satan and to communion with God. His efforts were of heroic proportions and called to mind the deeds of the apostles. Bonosus had best fulfilled the call to Christian perfection, for it was in the desert that evil could best be fought and there that the glory of God might be seen.

Jerome employed similar imagery in his letter to Heliodorus, who had earlier resigned from the army and, upon being baptized, had taken a vow of chastity.\(^{27}\) Heliodorus had chosen to remain in his native city of Altinum so that he might fulfill his responsibilities to his family and answer a call to the episcopacy. Jerome violently disagreed with this choice and strenuously argued that Heliodorus’s vow required his complete renunciation of the world.\(^{28}\) Christian perfection demanded chastity and mortification.

\(^{25}\) "uidet gloriam dei, quam etiam apostoli nisi in deserto non uiderant." Jerome, Ep. 3.4.

\(^{26}\) Jerome, Ep. 7.3.


It was not possible to seek perfection and yet remain among people. Complete dedication to God required complete withdrawal from the world. In contrast to his invective on the evils and temptations of the world, Jerome praised the sublime joy of desert life and described the wilderness as rejoicing in the presence of God.²⁹

Jerome reinforced his idealization of the desert in his Vita s. Pauli primi eremitae. Ostensibly, he wished to correct Athanasius' statement that Antony had been the first to enter the Egyptian desert. Jerome quickly moved beyond an assertion of Paul's temporal priority, however, to describe his priority in virtue. Confronted with the tremendous success of the Latin translations of the Vita Antonii, Jerome could not have hoped to dislodge Antony from the popular imagination. He therefore did not denigrate Antony, but instead praised him and showed that he shared with Paul many of the same virtues. Jerome thereby used Antony's reputation as a vehicle to reinforce the virtuous character of Paul, and eventually to represent the latter as the premier example of monastic virtue.

The Vita Pauli is framed around an encounter between Paul and Antony, which was the fulfillment of Antony's divine commission to seek one even more holy than himself. Because the work makes frequent allusions to the Vita

Antonii, it serves as a comparison of the two heroes. Paul is clearly the more perfect. He has gained a more complete isolation; his abstinence is more rigorous; he is more impoverished; he is acknowledged as superior by both Antony and God. During their encounter, Antony begs that he may accompany Paul on his journey to Heaven.

In his isolation and devotion, Paul differs from Antony only in degree. The ideal of the eremitic life is embodied by both. What is more significant for discerning Jerome's particular interests is how the two differ. In opposition to Antony's famous antipathy to study, Jerome represented Paul as being well-educated in both secular and Christian literature. This emphasis on literary studies echoes Bonosus's education, mentioned in Jerome's first description of him, and sheds light on Jerome's understanding of the proper vocation of a monk. Biblical study, which in Jerome's mind required both literary and linguistic skills, would play an increasingly large role in his understanding of the monastic vocation. As Vessey has shown, it would

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31 Jerome, Vita s. Pauli 12.

32 Jerome, Vita s. Pauli 4.

33 Leclerc, "Antoine", 764, discusses Jerome's depiction of Paul as a literate Roman.
also become a major facet of Jerome's self-conscious persona.

In his *Vita*, Jerome also betrayed a peculiar fascination with carnal desire. He described Paul's ascesis as consisting principally in minimal consumption of food, lack of concern for the body, and nearly continuous prayer.\(^{34}\) His meager diet, half a loaf a day, was provided through divine beneficence.\(^{35}\) Unlike Antony, he did not rely upon a small garden.\(^{36}\) Jerome took pains to make Paul's daily routine and degree of abstinence seem plausible. In order to lessen the reader's disbelief of Paul's diet, he recorded the dietary practices of two other hermits. One subsisted entirely on barley bread and muddy water, while the other consumed only five dried figs a day.\(^{37}\)

Jerome did not elaborate upon his reference to Paul's practice of continuous prayer, although it is noteworthy that Paul's body remained kneeling even after his soul had left it.\(^{38}\) Nor did Jerome develop his mention of Paul's education, or even state whether Paul had read while in his cave. Unlike the *Vita Antonii*, the *Vita Pauli* does not con-

\(^{34}\) Jerome, *Vita s. Pauli* 6,10,17.

\(^{35}\) Jerome, *Vita s. Pauli* 10.

\(^{36}\) Athanasius, *Vita s. Antonii* 50.


tain a sophisticated theology of the eremitic life or discourses with pagan philosophers. Nor does it relate stories of demonic possession or combat with Satan. Instead, it presents the exemplary conduct of Paul and other unnamed Christian heroes almost entirely in terms of their physical isolation and their mastery over carnal desire.

While in Rome Jerome continued to praise the desert. Writing to Eustochium, he even expressed regret that he had not remained in the Syrian waste; a regret made somewhat hollow by his failure ever again to attempt a similar vocation. In this same letter, however, Jerome also entertained the possibility of a communal form of monasticism. When describing the monastic life to Eustochium, he only briefly discussed the eremitic life, mentioning its biblical antecedents and the more recent examples of Paul and Antony. Deferring a more complete discussion to another time, Jerome said only that the hermits go out from the monasteries, taking nothing with them into the desert but bread and salt. A discussion of communal monasticism, as well as sniping at Syrian monks, absorbed most of Jerome's attention.

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40Jerome, *Ep. 22.7*.

41Jerome, *Ep. 22.36*. Although brief, this description is noteworthy, for it is one of the few historical claims of an evolution from the cenobitic to the eremitic life.
Jerome also eulogized two women while in Rome: Asella and Lea. Inspired by a prophetic dream, Asella's father had consecrated her to virginity as a girl of ten. At twelve, she dedicated herself as a virgin and thenceforth undertook a life of extreme self-denial. She went out rarely, and then only to visit secretly the shrines of the martyrs. With a diet consisting of bread, salt, and cold water, she fasted for days at a time. During Lent, these fasts would be extended to a week. Though she had not left Rome, Asella "sought delight in solitude and found in the turbulent city the desert of the monks." Although she lived in the midst of a city, Asella typified the vocation of a hermit.

Lea, on the other hand, was a Roman widow who had supervised a community of virgins until her death in December of 384. She had paid little attention to her appearance, eaten only coarse food, and maintained nightly vigils. Through her ascesis, Lea had trampled Satan

44 "ieiunium pro ludo habuit, inediam refectionem." Jerome, Ep. 24.3.
47 Jerome, Ep. 23.2.
underfoot, and won for herself a crown in Heaven.\textsuperscript{48} She had rejected her position as a matron and converted her household into a \textit{monasterium}.\textsuperscript{49} Her life was proof that one cannot serve two masters. One must choose between Christ and the world.\textsuperscript{50}

In these two eulogies and in his \textit{Epistula ad Eustochium}, Jerome set out the two forms of monastic life he deemed legitimate. The eremitic was more noted for its rigorous fasts and constant vigils. The communal life had its own perfection, but it was also described as a training ground for future hermits. This hierarchy was echoed in the West in monastic hagiography and other descriptions of ascetic life that praised the isolated hero and spoke of his utter abandonment of the world for the sake of Heaven.

While Jerome promulgated this view with exceptional vigor, one cannot discount the impact of Athanasius' portrayal of Antony emerging from his fort after years of isolation as an initiate into the sacred mysteries.\textsuperscript{51} Augustine recorded how profoundly the hermits of Trier and later the \textit{Vita Antonii} had influenced his own conversion.\textsuperscript{52}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{48}Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 23.2.
\textsuperscript{49}Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 23.2.
\textsuperscript{50}Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 23.4.
\textsuperscript{51}Athanasius, \textit{Vita s. Antonii} 14.
\textsuperscript{52}Augustine, \textit{Confessiones} 8.6; also his description of Christian monks, \textit{De moribus} 31.
\end{footnotes}
Severus described the career of Martin of Tours in terms that surpassed even the accounts of the Egyptian hermits.\textsuperscript{53} Hilarius wrote of Honoratus who, though no thaumaturge in the Martinian mold, still sought God in the solitude of the desert.\textsuperscript{54} In the second decade of the fifth century, the Gaul Rusticus believed the surest path toward intimacy with God was the desert and Cassian mentions the prevalence of a similar view even later.\textsuperscript{55} Eucherius, a younger contemporary of Cassian, called the desert the principal dwelling place of God.\textsuperscript{56}

It would be foolhardy to suggest that Jerome single-handedly inspired a fascination for the anchoretic life in the West, or that he alone formulated the dichotomy between the eremitical and the cenobitic vocations. Jerome often seems more a follower than a leader. Others had preceded him into the desert, the city and the \textit{coenobium}. Nevertheless, Jerome created, or at least elaborated upon, an image of the monastic life that was quite popular in the West. He had the support of a powerful network of friends in Rome, and later in his career he sought patrons in Gaul.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{53}Sulpicius, \textit{Dialogorum} 1.24-25.
\textsuperscript{54}Hilarius, \textit{Vita s. Honorati} 10.3, 20.2.
\textsuperscript{55}Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 125. Cassian, \textit{Con.} 1-10, praef. 3.
\textsuperscript{56}Eucherius, \textit{De laude heremi} 3-4.
\textsuperscript{57}For an analysis of this network, Clark, \textit{Origenist}, 11-42. For Jerome's interest in Gaul, Rousseau, \textit{Ascetics}, 119.
Jerome's correspondence was widely read and it often provoked debate. Sulpicius acknowledged Jerome's influence, and more than twenty years later Cassian did the same. There are also glimmers of Hieronymian influences in Eucherius's *De laude heremi*.

This brief work was written in 429 as a defense of Hilary's return to Lérins from Arles. Hilary had hoped, although in vain, that his flight from Arles would enable him to avoid ordination to the episcopacy. Eucherius justified Hilary's flight by praising the beauty and sacred character of the desert. He described the desert as the special residence of God, and evinced a long list of biblical examples to prove that God communicates more directly with people in the desert than anywhere else. Eucherius, like Jerome before him, emphasized the importance of physical separation. His understanding of solitude was remarkably literal, and he described the desert as almost magical. All who dwell in it were somehow inspired to...

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58 E.g., Augustine's *De bono coniugali* was in part a response to Jerome's unbalanced praise of virginity over marriage.

59 Sulpicius, *Dialogorum* 1.8-9; Cassian, *Inst.*, praef. 5-7.

60 For the date, Chadwick, "Euladius," 205.

61 Desert is understood somewhat loosely, for by this time Lérins had been occupied for more than two decades.

higher and better things.\textsuperscript{63} Even Christ's retreat into the
desert is understood in entirely physical terms.\textsuperscript{64} For
Eucherius, the desert cell was a "seat of faith, an arc of
virtue, a tabernacle of charity, a treasury of piety, a
storehouse of justice."\textsuperscript{65} It was the miraculous residence
of God.

Eucherius's portrayal bears a striking similarity to
the imagery of Jerome's early writings. For the most part,
however, a direct reliance cannot be proved. Such imagery
was not uncommon in Gaul at that time. Nevertheless, there
is one direct parallel between Jerome and Eucherius. A
theme running throughout Eucherius's work is the contrast
between the fertility of productive fields and the apparent
barrenness of the desert.\textsuperscript{66} In all its desolation, however,
the desert is most productive in virtue. Eucherius even
claimed that God had deliberately created barren wastes in
order to provide a future home for hermits.\textsuperscript{67} This contrast
recalls the imagery that Jerome used in his letter to

\textsuperscript{63}Eucherius, \textit{De laude} 35.
\textsuperscript{64}Eucherius, \textit{De laude} 25-26.
\textsuperscript{65}"Hoc igitur heremi habitaculum dicam non inmerito
quandam fidei sedem, uirtutis arcam, caritatis sacrarium,
pietatis thesaurum, iustitiae promptuarium." Eucherius, \textit{De
laude} 28.
\textsuperscript{66}Eucherius, \textit{De laude} 40.
\textsuperscript{67}Eucherius, \textit{De laude} 5.
Heliodorus, which praises the desert as *floribus vernans*. Bartelink has shown that Eucherius is the first surviving writer to have used this phrase.

This brief survey of the ways in which the ascetic life was described in the West is not meant to be exhaustive. Any attempt to make it so would greatly exceed the scope of this study. However, Jerome's early works and the *De laude heremi* do indicate some important aspects of how the monastic life was understood. It was believed by many that there were only two legitimate forms of monastic life. While each of these had its own perfection, a life of solitude was the more virtuous. There also existed a remarkable simplicity, or even ignorance, about the goals of ascetic practices. This was manifest in a fascination with miracle stories and bizarre forms of ascesis, such as are contained in the *Vita Martini*. The simplicity also appeared in descriptions of the solitary life that give little indication of how such a life was to be pursued. Jerome, for instance, praised Paul's continual prayer. He seemed unable to describe this activity, however, beyond commenting on the fact that Paul remained kneeling even


70 The *Vita s. Honorati* is noteworthy for the absence of such a fascination. Harper, "Cassian," 371-380, argues that this can be attributed to Cassian's influence.
after death. Similarly, in his early letters Jerome rarely addressed the need for instruction. He instead described the eremitic life as though it only tremendous determination and an indefatigable spirit.\textsuperscript{71}

Moreover, although several forms of ascetic life had arisen locally in the West, many still looked to the East for their inspiration. This allowed those who could claim knowledge of the East some measure of authority. Jerome's experience as a hermit, no matter how short-lived and unsuccessful this was, gave him a unique authority. This allowed him to shape western perceptions of eastern monasticism and, as a result, to shape monastic life itself. Jerome's authority also allowed him to muffle another source of knowledge of the East: Rufinus of Aquileia.

Jerome argued bitterly with Rufinus over whether and how to use Origen's biblical commentaries and other writings. The former friends' participation in the Origenist controversy had as much to do with a struggle for authority, however, as it did with theology.\textsuperscript{72} While the main battlegrounds were in the East, Jerome and Rufinus both had vigorous defenders in the West. The struggles between the two sides therefore had a wide-ranging impact. In his

\textsuperscript{71}Later in his life Jerome would be much more cautious and stress both the need for guidance and the dangers of prolonged isolation. E.g., Ep. 125.9,15-16; 130.11,17.

\textsuperscript{72}For the history of the controversy, Clark, Origenist.
Dialogorum libri II, for example, Sulpicius very carefully denied any possibility that Martin could have supported the notion that Satan might be saved. Only a few years earlier, Sulpicius had recorded this very suggestion in his Vita s. Martini and it does not seem to have raised an eyebrow. The debate over Origen that had erupted between the publication of these two works was felt even in western Gaul. The greatest impact of this debate, however, is much more intangible. The Origenist controversy took an unexpected turn late in Jerome’s life as it became entangled in the Pelagian debate. In this last stage of the debate, Jerome’s limited understanding of Origen’s and Evagrius’s monastic teaching would combine with his heavy-handed style of polemic to limit severely the ability to communicate the foundation of Graeco-Coptic monasticism to the West.

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In the last decade of Jerome’s life, Pelagius came to reside in Palestine. He was tolerated, if not welcomed by Jerome’s old enemy, the patriarch John. Soon, tension began to grow between the supporters of Pelagius and of Jerome. Ctesiphon, presumably one of Pelagius’s patrons, wrote to Jerome in the hope of establishing a dialogue between the two sides. Jerome had no desire to participate in such a

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73 Sulpicius, Dialogi 1.6-7.

dialogue. He instead responded harshly to Ctesiphon and attacked Pelagius in a number of ways. Most important for this study is that Jerome accused Pelagius of Origenism.

It has been suggested that Jerome was not the one to revive the Origenist controversy. Jerome himself recorded that Pelagius had revived Rufinus’s old criticism that Jerome, despite his later protestations, had relied heavily on Origen in his *Commentarium in Ephesios*. Jerome claimed that he had vindicated himself of the charge of heresy long before and that his ferocious attacks on the supporters of Origen since then were proof of his orthodoxy. Nevertheless, Jerome was vulnerable to this sort of attack. It would not have been to his benefit to raise the ghost of Origen, especially since his conflict with Pelagius was not unlike his earlier battles against Rufinus. Each man had cultivated the support of members of the western aristocracy. It would have been to Pelagius’s advantage to weaken Jerome’s western support, for Jerome enjoyed little popularity in Palestine.

Jerome’s reversal of Pelagius’s accusation, however, may have been more than a simple attempt to turn the tables on his persecutor. He may have seen the affinity between

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76 Jerome, *In Hieremiam*, prol. 3; also 4.41. For Rufinus’s earlier attack, *Apologia* 1.23-44.

the supporters of Pelagius and the earlier supporters of Rufinus and Melania the Elder, as well as a similarity in their tactics. He may also have believed that Pelagius had gained his understanding of sin from Origen, or at least from the later Origenists. Evans, basing his study on the efforts of A. J. Smith and Torgny Bohlin, noted that Pelagius was very much indebted to Rufinus’s translation of Origen’s commentaries on Paul.\(^7^8\) Clark has recently argued that Jerome perceived the root of Pelagius’s doctrine to be his understanding of the origin and nature of the soul.\(^7^9\) This of course looks back to earlier debates within the Origenist controversy and it stands in distinct contrast to the typically western emphasis on the relationship between grace and free will.\(^8^0\) If Jerome could have proven the existence of a link between Origen and Pelagius, his battle would have been over before it had begun in earnest.

In his reply to Ctesiphon Jerome followed a well-rehearsed pattern in that he did not limit himself to the theological issues at hand. While his arguments would be centered on Pelagius’s understanding of the soul, Jerome also took up several other avenues of attack. He began by

\(^{7^8}\) Evans, *Pelagius*, 18-20.

\(^{7^9}\) Clark, *Origenist*, 221-222.

\(^{8^0}\) Evans, *Pelagius*, 7, concluded that Jerome has been largely ignored by students of Pelagius because of his different orientation.
expressing scorn for Pelagius's associates, both intellectual and personal, real and imagined. Jerome challenged two propositions of Pelagius which he believed were antithetical to the Christian faith: that humans can be without sin and that their sinlessness makes them like God. Jerome also attacked what he perceived to be the intellectual tradition of the doctrine of sinlessness. Finally, in what may seem a bizarre twist, Jerome ridiculed Pelagius's association with wealthy female patrons.81

Jerome's assault on those whom he believed to be Pelagius's intellectual forebears is of tremendous significance to the understanding of apatheia by Latin speaking Christians. According to Jerome, the concept originated with Pythagoras and Zeno, who had compressed all heresy into a few words by claiming that humans might become equal to God. These ancient philosophers had taught that the passions (pathe) can be purged from the mind through meditation on and the diligent practice of virtue. When one has complete freedom from the passions, one has achieved equality with God.82 Jerome called upon Greek philosophy itself to

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81Jerome, Ep. 133.1-3.

82"quae enim potest alia maior esse temeritas quam dei sibi non dicam similitudinem sed aequalitatem uindicare et breui sententia omnium hereticorum uenena conplecti, quae de philosophorum et maxime Pythagorae et Zenonis, principis Stoicorum, fonte manarunt? illi enim, quae Graeci appellant πάθη, nos perturbationes possimus dicere, aegritudinem uidelicet et gaudium, spem et metum, quorum duo praesentia, duo futura sunt, adserunt extirpari posse de mentibus et nullam fibram radicemque uitiorum in homine omnino residere meditacione et adsidua exercitacione uirtutum." Jerome, Ep. 118
refute this doctrine. Through the mouths of both the Peripatetics and the Academicians, he argued that such a purgation of the passions is impossible, for humans are constituted of a body as well as a soul. This view, moreover, is confirmed by the apostle Paul.⁸³

Having demonstrated, at least to his own satisfaction, that such an eradication of emotions is philosophically unsound, Jerome continued his attempt to trace the genealogy of inpeccantia by listing others whom he thought had held a similar view. The first three, Mani, Priscillian and Basilides, receive only brief mention. According to Jerome, they have in common that each taught the possibility of human perfection by one means or another.⁸⁴ The next two in the list, however, deserve our careful attention, for they were older contemporaries of Pelagius and intellectually related to one another.

The first of these is Evagrius Ponticus. Again, Jerome’s first method of attack was to imply guilt through

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133.1.

⁸³ "aduersum quos et Peripateticī, qui de Aristotelis fonte descendunt, fortissīmē disputant et Academīci nouī, quos Tulliūs sequitur, et eorum non dico res - quae nulīae sunt - sed umbras et uota subuertunt. hoc est enim hominem ex hominem tollere et in corpore constitutum esse sine corpore et optare potius quam docere dicente apostolo: miser ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius?" Jerome, Ep. 133.1.

⁸⁴ Jerome, Ep. 133.3.
association. Evagrius had corresponded regularly with Melania the Elder, "whose name attests to the darkness of her perfidy". This correspondence alone is enough to show his guilt as a heretic. More importantly, Evagrius wrote tracts on apatheia. By implication, he therefore shared with Pythagoras and Zeno the heretical notion of human divinization. Evagrius used the same terms as the ancient philosophers and spoke of the possibility of impassibility. Such a condition, Jerome scoffed, would mean that one is either a rock, thereby denying one's humanity, or a god, thereby equating one with God.

The next "heretic" on the list is Rufinus of Aquileia, whom Jerome significantly introduced as a disciple of Evagrius. It was Rufinus's translation of Evagrius into Latin that had allowed this dangerous doctrine to permeate the West, and Rufinus had shown his own heretical leanings.
by praising Origenist monks in his history of the monks.\textsuperscript{88} Moreover, Rufinus was linked with the "Pythagoreans" through his translation of the Sententiae of Sextus.\textsuperscript{89} Only rashness or insanity had led Rufinus to suggest that Sextus had been pope Sixtus I. On no apparent evidence of his own, Jerome instead claimed that the author was an unknown Pythagorean philosopher. Of particular concern to Jerome was that the Sententiae contain the Pythagorean doctrine that humans can be of the same substance as God, thus referring back to the "vel deus" condemnation of Evagrius and the Stoics. Finally, Jerome resurrected the old Origenist debate by castigating Rufinus for commending Origen to the West through his translations of the De principiis and the first book of the Apologia of Eusebius Pamphilus.\textsuperscript{90}

Jerome's reply to Ctesiphon therefore forged three very important links. It established apatheia as part of a long tradition of heretical thought. It linked Evagrius to the

\textsuperscript{88}Jerome, Ep. 133.3.

\textsuperscript{89}"illam autem temeritatem, immo insaniam eius, quis possit digno explicare sermone, quod librum Sexti Pythagorei, hominum absque Christo atque ethnici, inmutato nomine Xysti, martyris et Romanae ecclesiae episcopi, praenotauit? in quo iuxta dogma Pythagoricum, qui hominem exaequant deo et de eius dicunt esse substantia, multa de perfectione dicuntur, ut, qui uolumen philosophi nesciunt, sub martyris nomine bibant de aureo calice Babylonis." Jerome, Ep. 133.3.

\textsuperscript{90}Jerome, Ep. 133.3.
doctrine of *apatheia*. Finally, it described Rufinus as a disciple of Evagrius.

Jerome continued his attack against Pelagius in his *Commentarium in Hieremiam*.\(^9\) He had postponed books four and five of this commentary in order to respond to Ctesiphon. In his prologue to book four, Jerome slightly altered the genealogy of *apatheia* he had presented in his letter. He retained Pythagoras and Zeno as its originators, but now added Origen as one of the continuators of the doctrine. Rufinus, childishly called the grunter, and Evagrius are now named as Origen's disciples. Jerome thereby directly attributed the doctrine of *apatheia* to Origen as well as to Evagrius and Rufinus. More important, Jerome introduced *inpeccantia* as a doctrine that is akin to *apatheia*. Jerome had already alluded to a connection between *anamartesia* and *apatheia* in his letter to Ctesiphon.\(^9\) Now, however, he placed Pelagius in a direct line of thinkers whom he held to be heretics because of

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\(^9\) "multis et de toto huc orbe confluuentium turbis et sanctorum fratrum monasteriiique curis occupatus commentarios in Hieremiam per interualla dictabam, ut, quod deerrat otio, superesset industria, cum subito heresis Pythagorae et Zononis ἀπαθεῖας et ἀναμαρτησίας, id est 'inpassibilitatis' et 'inpeccantiae', quae olim in Origene et dudum in discipulis eius Grunvio Euagrioque Pontico et Iouiniano iugulata est, coepit reuuescere et non solum in occidente, sed et in orientis partibus sibilare et in quibusdam insulis, praecipueque Siciliae et Rhodi, maculare plerosque et crescere per dies singulos, dum secreto docent et publice negant." Jerome, *In Hieremiam* 4.1.

\(^9\) Jerome, Ep. 133.3.
their belief in the possibility of sinlessness. Jerome also identified *inpeccantia* with *apatheia*, a doctrine which he had already proven to be invalid according to both Greek philosophy and Christian orthodoxy. Finally he introduced a new line of attack by linking *inpeccantia* with his old opponent Jovinian, who had proposed that any who have undergone baptism in full faith cannot be overthrown by the devil.\(^3\)

There are therefore three separate attacks being made in the passage. The first is to attempt once again to discredit *apatheia* through the tradition in which it arose. The second is to associate *apatheia* as much as possible with Origen and his disciples, so as to discredit both the term and its promulgators indirectly. The third is to conflate the term with Jovinian's understanding of post-baptismal grace, and later Pelagius's understanding of *inpeccantia*. Later in the same commentary, Jerome again attacked *apatheia*, this time associating it with Rufinus and his translations of Sextus. More importantly, in this attack

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\(^3\)Jerome first described Jovinian's position in the following way: "*nititur approbare eos, qui plena fide in baptismate renati sunt, a diabolo non posse subverti.*" *Aduersus Iouinianum* 1.3. Later in the same treatise, Jerome attempted to build a straw man by changing the action from overthrow to tempt. "*Secunda propositio est, eos qui fuerint baptizati, a diabolo non posse tentari.*" Jerome, *Aduersus Iouinianum* 2.1.
**apatheia and inpeccantia are finally equated.**

Jerome again took up the attack in his *Dialogus aduersus Pelagianos*. In the prologue he recommended his letter to Ctesiphon, where he had already refuted the subtleties of the teachers of *apatheia*. He then modified his previous description of the term and claimed that there are two schools of thought concerning *pathe or perturbationes*. Some argue that these emotions can be eradicated from the minds of men; others only that their power can be broken, ruled or moderated. Jerome also shifted ground with regard to his earlier claim concerning Greek philosophy. He now claimed that the Stoics, the Peripatetics and the Academicians all hold to one of these two positions. Jerome did not seem to be aware, however, that this new position

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94 "miserabilis Grunnius, qui ad calumniandos sanctos uiores aperuit os suum linguamque suam docuit mendacium, Sexti Pythagorei, hominis gentilissimi, unum librum interpretatus est in Latinum diuisitque eum in duo uolumna et sub nomine sancti martyris Xysti, Romanae urbis episcopi, ausus est edere, in quibus nulla christi, nulla spiritus sancti, nulla dei patris, nulla patriarcharum et prophetarum et apostolorum fit mentio, et hunc librum solita temeritate et insania 'Anulum' nominuit, qui per multas prouincias legitur, et maxime ab his, qui ἀπάθειαν et inpeccantiam praedicant." Jerome, *In Hieremiam* 4.41.

95 Jerome, *Dialogus aduersus Pelagianos*, pro1. 1.

96 "Nulli enim dubium, quin Stoicorum et Peripateticorum, hoc est ueteris Academiae, ista contentio sit, quod alii eorum assurunt ἀπάθην, quas nos perturbationes possumus dicere, aegritudinem, gaudium, spem, timorem, eradicari et extirpari posse de mentibus hominum, alii frangi, regi atque moderari, et quasi infrenes equos quibusdam lupatis coerceri." Jerome, *Dialogus aduersus Pelagianos*, pro1. 1.
obviated his previous argument that even the Peripatetics and Academics had found the concept of *apatheia* philosophically implausible.

Jerome remained constant, however, in his claim that Origen was responsible for introducing *apatheia* into Christian thought, which continued the genealogy set out in his *In Hieremiam*. Evagrius, however, now received only brief mention, having been lumped together with Mani, Priscillian and Jovinian. Basilides has been dropped altogether, but the Messalians appear in his place. \(^9^7\)

Again, Jerome wrote that these "heretics" shared a belief in the possibility of human perfection. Moreover, Jerome reiterated that this perfection means not simply a likeness to but an equality with God. \(^9^8\) The perfect are not even capable of sins of thought or ignorance.

Pelagius did not respond to these attacks directly. However, he did discuss the movements of the soul and how to control them. To Demetriada he wrote that one must keep constant watch over each thought and discern its origins immediately, so that the good can be nourished and the evil washed away. Moreover, Pelagius argued that there are three

\(^9^7\) Jerome, *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos*, prol. 1.

\(^9^8\) "quorum omnium <hereticorum> ista sententia est, posse ad perfectionem, et non dicam similitudinem, sed aequalitatem Dei humanam uirtutem et scientiam peruenire, ita ut se asserant ne in cogitatione quidem et ignorantia, cum ad consummationis culmen ascenderint, posse peccare." Jerome, *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos*, prol. 1.
kinds of thoughts: those which the will enhances affectionately, typoi which flit through the mind, and those which prompt an unwilling mind. He urged Demetriada to meditate on scripture constantly in order to prevent evil thoughts from arising. This is intriguing in two ways. First, Pelagius's understanding of the different kind of thoughts resembles Evagrius's own. Second, Pelagius emphasized scriptural study as a way to still the mind. Cassian would recommend a similar practice nearly a decade later.

Students of apatheia on the one hand and of Pelagius on the other are well-advised not to base their views solely on Jerome's writings. His grasp of theological subtleties was limited and he provided little information about the spread of Pelagianism in the West. His equation of apatheia with inpeccantia was not accurate, and therefore sheds little

99 Pelagius, Epistula ad Demetriadem 26-27. Evans, Pelagius, 23-24, argued that these discussions were inspired by Jerome's attacks. He claimed that Pelagius vindicated himself from the charge of apatheia by arguing that, while sin does arise from cogitatio, there is no sin attached to those thoughts which merely flit across the mind or are conquered by the will. Only the improper thought to which the mind gives consent is sinful. Kelly, Jerome, 215, n.35, follows Evans in this, writing that "Pelagius showed that there was nothing in common between his doctrine of 'sinlessness' and the eastern notion of apatheia, since no sin attaches to evil thoughts that arise in the mind so long as the will rejects them." However, while inpeccantia and apatheia are not identical, they cannot be differentiated on these grounds. Cf. Evagrius, Practicus, praef. 8: Τούτους πάντας παρενοχλεῖν μὲν τῇ ψυχῇ ἢ μὴ παρενοχλεῖν, τῶν οὐκ ἔφ' ἡμῖν ἠστὶ· τὸ δὲ κροῖσειν αὐτοῦ ἢ μὴ κροῖσειν, ἢ πάθη κινεῖν ἢ μὴ κινεῖν, τῶν ἔφ' ἡμῖν.
light either on Pelagius or on the concept of *apatheia*. However, Latin readers were not very familiar with Origen, Evagrius, or any other Greek author. Even Augustine wrote to ask Jerome about Origen's teachings. Pope Anastasius and the emperor Honorius each showed their ignorance of the debate when they condemned all of Origen's works without discrimination.

The debate between Jerome and Pelagius is therefore important for a number of reasons. The literature arising from the debate placed Evagrius within the Origenist tradition on a level other than that of his cosmological speculation in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. It shows that there was some attempt to identify Evagrius and Rufinus not only through their support of Origen's writings, but also through their doctrine of *apatheia*. The debate served as a major conduit for the introduction of *apatheia* into the West, for Jerome's letters were widely read in ascetic circles and his biblical commentaries received an even wider circulation. Finally, if Griffe's thesis is to be accepted and Cassian was in Palestine at the same time as Pelagius, and perhaps even at the Council of Diospolis, Jerome's assaults would have made a considerable impact. Cassian's reluctance to use the term *apatheia* may have been linked more closely to the anti-Pelagian campaign in the West than to the anti-Origenist fervor that had ebbed almost two decades before.
Chapter 4

A New Literary Model: Reading the *Institutes*

The principle that underlies all of Cassian’s monastic teaching is that experience is necessary for learning. The mere discussion of monastic ideals will be of no profit; they must be applied in one’s life. He therefore could not begin to offer instruction in the goals of the monastic life until his readers had begun to practice its basic principles. Conversely, Cassian also argued that undertaking an ascetic regime without guidance could do more harm than good. Immoderate attention to ascetic discipline can cause one to lose sight of the ultimate goal. Consequently, Cassian did not attempt to provide a list or simple description of Egyptian monastic practices. He instead devised a new literary model in which he attempted to recreate the experience itself. The crux of this model is a strong relationship between reading and the practical implementation of the principles espoused in the text. Cassian demanded that progress in reading be accompanied by progress in one’s life. Just as the foundation of the monastic life had to be laid before one could hope to attain its loftier goals, so the institutes of the Egyptians had to be mastered before one could be allowed to attend their conferences.

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1E.g., *Con.* 3.7; 12.16; 13.18; 14.2,6,9; 18.3.
2E.g., *Inst.* 3.8; *Con.* 2.16-17.
This is indicated at the very beginning of the *Institutes*. In an expression of humility, Cassian contended that he was not worthy to consider such holy and mysterious things and that he possessed insufficient skill to relate them. More importantly, he claimed that he had been away from Egypt for too long and had forgotten much of what he had earlier learned,

especially since the reason for these things can in no way be taught or understood or kept in the memory by idle meditation and verbal teaching. For it consists entirely in experience and practice alone and, as these things cannot be taught save by one who is experienced in them, so they cannot be perceived or understood except by one who has tried with equal exertion and toil to grasp them; however, if they are not frequently discussed and worn smooth by constant conversation with spiritual men, they will quickly fade again through carelessness of mind.

In this passage Cassian laid out the fundamental principle of instruction and learning in Nitria, Kellia, and Scetis. Doctrine was inseparable from *praxis*. While his sojourn among the monks had granted him a unique understanding of their spiritual life, it was his practice of their customs

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4 "praesertim cum harum rerum ratio nequaquam possit otiosa meditatio doctrinaque uerborum uel tradi uel intelligi uel memoria contineri. totum namque in sola experientia usuque consistit, et quemadmodum tradi nisi ab experto non queunt, ita ne percipi quidem uel intelligi nisi ab eo, qui ea pari studio ac sudore adprehendere elaborauerit, possunt: quae tamen si conlatione iugi spiritualium uirorum frequenter discussa non fuerint et polita, cito rursum mentis incuria dilabuntur." *Inst.*, *praef.* 4-5.
that allowed him to teach others. Cassian also implied that reading the *Institutes* was not to be simply an intellectual exercise. Just as experience was required to teach, so too it was required to learn. Strenuous effort and frequent conversation were to accompany the reading of the text. The *Institutes* could be understood only if their principles were both frequently examined and assiduously applied.6

This was not an easy command to follow, for Cassian initially cast his work "as though [writing] to an inexperienced monastery and to those who are in truth athirst."7 The practices described in the first four *Institutes* were for infants, unfamiliar with even the first letters or symbols of the spiritual life.8 This would have described very few of his readers, however. Most would have had some knowledge of other ascetic literature and possessed at least some ideals or expectations. Numerous monastic communities had been established in Gaul and Castor himself had already undertaken an ascetic life, assembling like-minded people around him. Cassian's audience was undoubtedly familiar with the wondrous tales of the Egyptian

5 See also Con. 11.4; 14.8.

6 See also Con. 1.14; 14.16; 21.34; 23.21.

7 "uelut rudi monasterio et in ueritate sitientibus." Inst., praef. 7. See also Inst. 2.2.

8 Inst. 4.9.
desert, for it was the reputation of these monks that had prompted Castor to establish their customs in his own province. Closer to home, the miracles of Martin of Tours were current. These, it was claimed, had surpassed even the feats of the Egyptians.⁹

By insisting on a reciprocal relationship between reading and praxis, Cassian required that his reader abandon any progress he had made in his spiritual life and once again become a novice. He called upon his reader to put out of his mind what he had previously learned and to rehearse his vocation from its very inception. His reader would receive a new formation, one according to the institutes of the Egyptians; a formation that provided the basis for a long, unwavering ascetic life and the attainment of the heights of perfection.¹⁰ The Institutes would not contain accounts of miracles "which for instruction in the perfect life bring to readers nothing more than wonder."¹¹ Nor would they repeat the efforts of other ascetic writers. Basil, Cassian noted, had written with eloquence and had included much from Scripture. Jerome, too, had produced much according to his own

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⁹ Sulpicius, Dialogorum 1.24; 2.5; 3.2.

¹⁰ Inst. 4.2. Cassian and Germanus had similarly abandoned their earlier formation, for they had been told to forget what they had learned in Palestine in order to more fully embrace the Egyptian ideal. Con. 18.3.

¹¹ "quae legentibus praeter admirationem nihil amplius ad instructionem perfectae vitae conferunt." Inst., praef. 7; also Con. 15.2; 18.1.
genius, as well as translating monastic literature from the Greek. Cassian claimed that they had erred, however, in that they had described what they had heard rather than what they had experienced.\footnote{Inst., praef. 5-7.}

Cassian instead offered a new model of Latin monastic literature. He called for a reciprocity between reading and praxis that went far beyond the demand, common at the time, to practice the principles espoused in the text. The Institutes begin where the ascetic life itself begins. The text condescends to the reader as if speaking to one who has just renounced the world and the reader is expected to assume this role. In this way the reader rehearsed his monastic vocation from its very beginning. He underwent a new formation, this time according to the institutes of the Origenist monks in Scetis, Nitria, and Kellia.

* * *

The first book of the Institutes reveals Cassian's plan for the entire collection: the presentation of a theme and the entwining around it of concepts fundamental to the monastic life. The book is centered upon a description of the habit, the most visible symbol of simplicity and separation from the world. According to Cassian, the habit was rooted in a tradition that spanned the centuries from the
Old Testament prophets to contemporary ascetics.\textsuperscript{13} It possessed a manifold significance, serving both practical and didactic ends. It helped both to regulate the character and to remind the monk of various aspects of his calling. Each of its constituent parts, such as the cowl or girdle, taught a lesson about the ascetic life and pointed the way to further growth by inspiring the memorization and repetition of biblical passages.\textsuperscript{14} Evagrius had also discussed the habit and, like Cassian, had described it as the foundation of monastic initiation. While they shared the belief that the habit's individual components were of biblical origin and called to mind scriptural passages, they did not agree which passages were intended or what lessons were taught.\textsuperscript{15} The Institute begins and ends with the two-fold girdle. In the first chapter, we see its biblical precedents; in the last, its deeper meaning within a biblical context.\textsuperscript{16} The reader is thereby led from the adoption of a custom owing to tradition, to the spiritual meaning of that tradition. Cassian here introduced the first of a series of fundamental truths about the monastic life: that customs based on biblical precedent and more recent tradition have deeper,

\textsuperscript{13} Inst. 1.1.

\textsuperscript{14} Inst. 1.3-9.

\textsuperscript{15} Evagrius, Practicus, prol. 8.

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. Owen Chadwick, John Cassian, 2nd. ed., 47-48, who argued that this last chapter has no place here.
spiritual meanings which will only be revealed according to the zeal with which one practices them in daily life.\textsuperscript{17}

The second \textit{Institute} begins with the assumption that the reader has mastered the first; that he has renounced the world and donned the habit.\textsuperscript{18} It is also assumed that the reader understands the garment's deeper significance. The ostensible purpose of the book was to lay out the Egyptian routine of nocturnal prayer and psalmody. Though he did not lose sight of his primary task, Cassian also laid out much of the discipline of the monastic community. Discussing the number of nocturnal psalms, he introduced the qualities of a good abbot.\textsuperscript{19} Describing the manner in which the Psalms should be sung, he also set out the proper behavior of the monk during the office.\textsuperscript{20} Depicting individual prayer in the cell, he recommended manual labor as a practice integrally related to private nocturnal prayer.\textsuperscript{21} In brief asides, he described how younger monks were to conduct themselves and how their private prayer life was to be

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{Inst.} 1.11.
\item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{Inst.} 2.1.
\item \textsuperscript{19} \textit{Inst.} 2.3. Cf. Chadwick, who argued that this digression is inappropriate here. \textit{John Cassian}, 2nd. ed., 48.
\item \textsuperscript{20} \textit{Inst.} 2.10.
\item \textsuperscript{21} \textit{Inst.} 2.12.
\end{itemize}

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organized. As in the first Institute, Cassian wove several themes around a central organizing principle.

After introducing the routine of nocturnal hours, Cassian quickly digressed to discuss the formation of an abbot and the basis of his authority. He wrote that some zealous but ignorant abbots had established routines of psalmody and prayer that were at variance with tradition. Of particular concern was a practice Cassian thought common to Gaul, whereby wealthy men without any ascetic training established monasteries and ruled over them. Such men used their secular stature to usurp spiritual authority and had no right to govern a community of monks. Cassian's prescription for the proper formation of an abbot was rigorous and humbling. Anyone who would be abbot was expected to begin as a novice. Like those he hoped to govern, he was first to acquire the virtues of humility and obedience. Only after he had proven himself to all would he be able to teach or to govern others. All must begin the spiritual life at its lowest stage. Echoing his preface, Cassian declared that one must learn before he can teach. Moreover, Cassian also recalled a major theme of the first Institute by stressing that the practices of the Egyptians were of biblical origin.

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\begin{align*}
\text{\textsuperscript{22}} & \quad \text{Inst. 2.14-15.} \\
\text{\textsuperscript{23}} & \quad \text{Inst. 2.3.} \\
\text{\textsuperscript{24}} & \quad \text{Inst. 2.3.}
\end{align*}
\]
Their routine of nocturnal hours extended back to Mark and the post-apostolic community in Alexandria. The zeal of these first monks had later been moderated by an angelic visitation, and a routine had been established that was possible for all.\textsuperscript{25}

Cassian's concern for tradition is continued into the third Institute, where he considered at length the biblical precedents for Prime and Matins. His principal concern was to prove that, unlike the Gallic abbots, those who had introduced these new offices had not strayed from the institutes of the fathers.\textsuperscript{26} At the same time, Cassian continued his introduction of the more basic spiritual and disciplinary aspects of monastic life. For example, he expanded his call for moderation, which was first seen in the limited number of Psalms, to include the proper regulation of diet and sleep. Too great a zeal in these things can result in a numbness of the mind. Excessive deprivation of the necessities of life must eventually be satisfied, "for a man will certainly give up everything to this flesh

\textsuperscript{25}Inst. 2.5. This is not Cassian's only view of the history of the monks. He will also trace their origins to the apostolic community in Jerusalem itself. Conf. 18.5. De Vogüé, "Monachisme et église," 221, describes these accounts as myths "prégnant d'une doctrine".

\textsuperscript{26}Inst. 3.4-6.
who tries, not rationally to withhold a part, but to refuse the whole so that, to speak more truly, he wants to cut off not what is superfluous but what is necessary."²⁷

In Institutes 2 and 3 the prayer life of the monastery is the central thread of Cassian's description of the various customs of the community. This was not a mere literary device by which a variety of topics could be organized. Prayer and psalmody provided unity and coherence to the life of the monk and were the cornerstone of the community itself. The interweaving of prayer with the rudiments of monastic discipline in the Institutes reflected the training of the novice himself. Supervised by an elder, he would have begun the routine of offices immediately and his life would have been arranged according to them. Other precepts of the monastic life would have been introduced more slowly according to his maturity and ability to comprehend them. The structure of Cassian's literary efforts therefore paralleled the life being attempted by the reader. A reciprocity was established between the experience of the reader and the reading of the text, and the reader developed both personally and communally as the fabric of the text was discussed and practiced in his own life.

²⁷"totum enim carni huic procul dubio reddet, quisquis ei non rationabiliter partem subtrahere, sed totum temptauerit denegare et ut uerius dixerim non superflua, sed necessaria uoluerit amputare." Inst. 3.8.
Having laid out a daily routine, Cassian next took up the training of the novice. He described a stern regimen. After remaining ten days before the gates of the monastery, the novice was admitted to the care of a single elder.\textsuperscript{28} 

Kept as far from others as was possible, the novice owed his elder complete obedience.\textsuperscript{29} Cassian described this obedience as the highest of all virtues and claimed that in Egypt the novices obeyed their elders' orders as though issued from God in Heaven.\textsuperscript{30} The Egyptians prefer it not only to manual work and reading and the silence and quiet of the cells, but also to all virtues, so that they consider everything to be postponed to it and are content to undergo all suffering so that they are not seen to have violated this virtue in any way."\textsuperscript{31}

The novice consulted his elder about even his most basic needs and at no time was he to act on his own wishes (\textit{voluntates}).\textsuperscript{32} Allowed neither discretion nor freedom of action, he was to reveal all his thoughts, even the most

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Inst.} 4.3,7.
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Inst.} 4.6.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Inst.} 4.10.
\textsuperscript{31}"\textit{quam non solum operi manuum seu lectioni uel silentio et quieti cellae, uerum etiam cunctis uirtutibus ita praeferunt, ut huic iudicent omnia postponenda et uniuersa dispensia subire contenti sint, dummodo hoc bonum in nullo uiolasse uideantur.} \textit{Inst.} 4.12.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Inst.} 4.8.
basic or trivial, to his elder so that their origins might be interpreted and explained.\textsuperscript{33}

While Cassian encouraged the novice to control his thoughts, these were described more properly as dangerous schemes and vicious designs (\textit{conspirationi noxiae uel consilii praui}).\textsuperscript{34} Cassian did not describe them in detail. They are mentioned only in passing along with idle talk and other activities. Cassian suggested two remedies for the thoughts: confession to an elder and the habituation of particular ascetic acts. Cassian understood confession more as a therapy for evil thoughts than as a petition for forgiveness and redemption. The probing questions of a discerning elder would help the offending monk to understand the origins of such thoughts and to avoid similar circumstances in the future. As a novice, however, the reader was more concerned with preventing evil thoughts than with examining them. He was to repeat psalms and work continuously in order to cultivate habits that would lead to a new disposition. Although largely external acts, these practices encouraged internal discipline.

A list of eastern practices that range from conduct at meals to the proper manner in which one carries out his tasks concludes Cassian's description of Egyptian customs.

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Inst.} 4.9.

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Inst.} 2.15.
It therefore completes that part of the first four Institutes which comprises a "rule". These practices were to be followed with the same spirit of obedience that the novice owed his elder. The institutes of the Egyptians were of divine origin and proven success. Like the two-fold girdle, the reason for these practices would become clear over time.\textsuperscript{35} For the present, Cassian provided a set of sayings to help illuminate them. He hoped that the words and deeds of the desert fathers would continue to teach when the details of his more lengthy expositions had been forgotten.\textsuperscript{36} They were also a signal to the reader to pause and to meditate upon what he had read. Only after the sayings and the institutes themselves had been understood and conscientiously applied was the reader to move on.

The Institute ends with an exhortation to humility by Pinufius, who is introduced in the last of these sayings. An abbot of a community at Panephysis, Pinufius had desperately sought the peace of a more humble station. He twice fled his responsibilities at Panephysis, each time to be found by his monks and brought home. His second flight took him to Palestine, where he came to reside with Cassian and Germanus.\textsuperscript{37} The two later sought Pinufius during their

\textsuperscript{35}See also Con. 14.2; 18.3.

\textsuperscript{36}Inst. 4.15,23.

\textsuperscript{37}Inst. 4.30-31; also Con. 20.1.
travels through the Delta and witnessed the induction of a brother into his monastery.

The consecration of the renunciant provides the setting for Pinufius’s speech. The renunciant had stood before the gates of the monastery for a long time (diutissime) before being admitted.\textsuperscript{38} Pinufius explained that he had been treated harshly in order to test his resolve. Such a test was necessary to protect both the renunciant and the community. It saved the former from beginning what he could not finish, for it is better not to vow than to fail to fulfill a vow. It saved the latter from the guilt of having irresponsibly allowed someone to incur an even harsher judgment.\textsuperscript{39}

The bulk of the exhortation consists of two distinct summaries of the spiritual life. The first, by far the longer, is interwoven with repeated cautions about the gravity of undertaking the monastic life and the consequences of failure.\textsuperscript{40} The summary begins with the act of renunciation, which Pinufius described as evidence (indicium) of the cross and of mortification. The cross borne by the monk is the fear of the Lord. Fear is the

\textsuperscript{38} Inst. 4.33. For the requirement that a renunciant remain outside the gates for at least ten days, see Inst. 4.3.

\textsuperscript{39} Inst. 4.33.

\textsuperscript{40} Inst. 4.34ff.
beginning of salvation, a precept drawn from Proverbs 9:10 and used frequently by Evagrius. Through fear of the Lord the process of conversion and purification is begun. Just as the cross limits physical movement, so we ought to limit our wishes and desires. Limiting our desires will help to induce a contempt for all worldly things and will be followed by the acquisition of humility. A monk’s behavior is evidence of his humility, and Pinufius lists ten manifestations of the virtue. True humility eventually leads to love, which is manifest in a delight in virtue.

This summary encapsulates the material discussed in the first four Institutes. In them, Cassian laid a foundation for monastic life in which renunciation, obedience and humility were paramount. They were the foundation of abbatial authority, of the disposition of the individual monk, and of the community itself. Obedience was the highest virtue. Mental and spiritual discipline were little more than the restriction of one’s wishes and the confession of all things to an elder. The novice possessed no discernment or judgment of his own and little introspection was required of him. While the first elements of self-evaluation were

\[\text{Inst. 4.35.}\]

\[\text{Inst. 4.39. This list later travelled on its own and even appeared in a Greek version under Evagrius’s name. De Vogüé, "Interpolation," 217-221, and "Morceau," 7-12.}\]

\[\text{Inst. 4.35.}\]
encouraged, this was limited to the analysis of external behavior. At most, the novice was to examine his thoughts in order to learn their origins. The elder, rather than the renunciant, was concerned with the movements of the soul.\textsuperscript{44} Spiritual progress ranged from compunction inspired by the fear of the Lord to delight in virtue. Only a nascent purification was mentioned, and this as a consequence of fear. Pinufius's summary, therefore, pertained primarily to the novice. It described the stages of the spiritual life through which the reader had progressed as he had progressed through the text itself.

The last chapter is again a summary. While it is briefer than its predecessor, it lays out the stages of the spiritual life in greater detail. Again, such a life begins with the fear of the Lord, which is succeeded in turn by compunction, renunciation and humility. Instead of following this with love of virtue, however, Pinufius next spoke of the mortification of desires which drives out all faults and allows for their replacement by virtues. This, in turn, leads to purity of heart and eventually to the perfection of apostolic love.\textsuperscript{45} This summary provided a more comprehensive view of the spiritual life than the previous

\textsuperscript{44}Pinufius reiterated Cassian's earlier call for a single mentor. The system Pinufius described was not as structured, however, and the novice seems to have had some choice in his superior. \textit{Inst.} 4.40-41.

\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Inst.} 4.43.
chapter. While the description encompassed the material already discussed, it also looked ahead to the replacement of vices by their reciprocal virtues. It therefore looked ahead to the remaining eight Institutes. The Conferences were foreshadowed as well, for the summary ended with reference to purity of heart, the topic of the first Conference.

Pinufius's speech marks a significant transition. Cassian had begun his Institutes by describing his own spiritual infantia. This also described the station of his readers, whom he addressed as untrained infants and who, inspired by other accounts of the ascetic life, hoped to achieve the heights of anchoretic perfection. When describing the foibles and difficulties of the novitiate, Cassian had often employed the inclusive "we". While the use of the plural took his companion Germanus into account, it also encouraged the empathy of the reader. Cassian described himself as sharing the infancy of his reader.46 Like his reader, he was prone to drowsiness during nocturnal prayers.47 He even shared with his contemporaries in Gaul an improper desire for possessions.48 Cassian had already established the link between reading and praxis. His use of

46 Inst. 3.4.
47 Inst. 2.7; also Inst. 5.35.
48 Inst. 4.15.
the first person plural encouraged an additional, crucial step. It prompted the reader to identify with Cassian and to adopt Cassian's experiences as his own.

The identification of author and reader, or the self in the text and the self of the reader, is evident in the record of Pinufius's speech. Cassian first described Pinufius's flight from abbatial responsibility and then their encounter at Bethlehem. Through Cassian, the reader lived vicariously with Pinufius in Palestine and later stood in the monastery at Panephysis, a privileged witness to the consecration of a brother. Pinufius's speech is recounted in the second, rather than the third person. Cassian himself withdrew from the reader's attention and became a spectator, allowing Pinufius to speak directly. Pinufius was rendered almost physically present. Silent, the reader sat next to Cassian at Pinufius's feet. With Cassian, he listened to the old man's words and was inspired to examine the depth of his own commitment.

The setting of Pinufius' speech is similar to that of the Conferences. Cassian described the physical environment; he related the elder's virtues; he allowed the elder to assess the needs of the one seeking advice; and the elder spoke in his own voice. As a novice, however, the reader was not yet able to participate in these conferences. The consecration provided a workable compromise. The setting was established, the needs of the initiate made known and
the speech recorded. Cassian and his reader, however, were witnesses, not participants.

This first exposure to a "conference" was as much physical as it was intellectual. The reader was to imagine himself in the Delta, a fellow pilgrim with Cassian. His attendance before Pinufius was permitted only because he had progressed as a novice and had attained a maturity that allowed for a clearer understanding of the spiritual life.

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Pinufius's speech brings to a close the early formation of the reader. Like Cassian before him, the reader had passed through his novitiate and been trained in the "institutes" of the Egyptian coenobia.\(^4\)\(^9\) He had acquired the virtue of obedience, the first stage of humility, and been judged fit to engage in spiritual combat. *Institute 5* takes up this combat and introduces both a new topic for consideration and a new level of discernment.\(^5\)\(^0\) The topic of this and the subsequent *Institutes* is the nature, origin and cure of the principal *vitia*, or disturbances (*perturbationes*) of the soul, which disturb the heart and prevent contemplation. The first of these is gluttony,

\(^4\)\(^9\) Cassian later would refer to these first four *Institutes* as *super instituendis renuntiantibus. Conf.* 20.1.

\(^5\)\(^0\) Leroy has argued that this *Institute* marks the beginning of a separate and independent work. "Les préfaces," 165-166.
which clouds the mind and makes it drowsy. Cassian first addressed the custom of lengthy fasts that had been established to combat the vitium and argued that these are not a cure. He instead suggested simple restraint.\textsuperscript{51} No one should be overburdened by fasts and there should be no rigid and uncompromising rule. While fasts can be salutary, one should abstain from food only insofar as age, health and physical disposition allow. Cassian ridiculed excessive fasts, claiming that abstinence is easier than moderation.\textsuperscript{52} Gluttony will be defeated only by restraint. Bodily weakness or an inability to fast rigorously is not a hindrance to purity of heart.\textsuperscript{53} Purity is built on a foundation of obedience, renunciation and humility.

More important than bodily abstinence is a "fast" of the soul in which careful attention is given to the virtues mastered in the preceding Institutes.\textsuperscript{54} The need for careful progress through a series of stages is expressed through the metaphor of an Olympic athlete. The competitor must first prove himself among youths before being allowed to compete with adults.\textsuperscript{55} As an adult, he must adopt a strict

\textsuperscript{51}Inst. 5.5.
\textsuperscript{52}Inst. 5.7.
\textsuperscript{53}Inst. 5.5-9.
\textsuperscript{54}Inst. 5.10-11; also 5.21.
\textsuperscript{55}Inst. 5.12-16.
regimen in order to attract the attention of the judge and compete successfully. When competing, the athlete must not lose sight of his goal. Only by casting aside every distraction and focussing solely on his mark will he be able to win the prize. Likewise, a spiritual athlete cannot conquer gluttony "unless his mind is fixed on the contemplation of the divine, or rather it is delighted by the love of virtue and the beauty of heaven." 

Cassian followed this with a more general consideration of the vitia. Success against one requires success against them all. Nevertheless, one cannot move on until gluttony has first been mastered. The metaphor of the games is again mentioned in order to invoke Paul as the exemplar of the Christian athlete. As in Institute 4 and elsewhere, Cassian here provided an example to signal the end of a discussion. The example of Paul looks ahead, as well, for it alludes to even more difficult struggles to come. The next section takes up this allusion and reverses it. It cautions that a monk who wishes to engage in greater battles must first win the smaller ones, reminding the reader once again

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56 Inst. 5.15.

57 "nisi mens contemplationi divinae defixa amore uirtutum potius et pulchritudine caelestium delectetur." Inst. 5.14.

58 Inst. 5.16.

59 The struggle against the vitia is therefore made a part of apostolic perfection.
of the need to master what has been already discussed before going on.\(^{60}\) Cassian concluded by repeating an earlier statement that the enemy is within us, not without.\(^{61}\) Spiritual as well as bodily fasting is necessary, and the former is much more important than the latter, for gluttony plagues our soul in a variety of ways.\(^{62}\) The conclusion is again marked by examples, this time drawn from both personal experience and from what Cassian had heard while in Egypt.

This last set of examples is difficult to interpret. Cassian had earlier established a pattern of first discussing the principles of the monastic life and then providing examples of them.\(^{63}\) Many in this last set of examples, however, seem unrelated to gluttony. Chadwick described them as "a collection of apophthegmata, or stories, not heaped together under any system whatever. There is no common theme."\(^{64}\) He argued that the apophthegmata were added later. Either Cassian's mention of the elders had encouraged later copyists to interpolate foreign material or

\(^{60}\) Inst. 5.20.

\(^{61}\) Inst. 5.20. Earlier, Cassian had discussed 1 Cor. 10.13, which reads temptatio uos non adprehendit nisi humana. Inst. 5.16-19.

\(^{62}\) Inst. 5.21-23.

\(^{63}\) Inst. 4.15.

\(^{64}\) Chadwick, John Cassian, 2nd ed., 44.
the original exemplar had become disorganized and been badly reconstructed.\textsuperscript{65}

The stories are not as disorganized as Chadwick would have us believe, however. They may easily be grouped into related themes and they fall into discernible patterns.\textsuperscript{66} To grasp their significance, one must look back to the beginning of the *Institute*. There, Cassian recounted a discourse by the hermit Antony on discretion. Chadwick argued that this, too, has no place in the *Institute* and that it would be more appropriate near the beginning of *Conference* 14.\textsuperscript{67} The argument is based on two premises: that the story has nothing to do with gluttony and that it is more appropriate for anchorites, and therefore belongs in the *Conferences*. Nevertheless, while it is valid to argue that the chapter has nothing to do with gluttony, at least explicitly, Chadwick was wrong to claim that it is misplaced.

The first four *Institutes* had established a rule by which to live and the principles upon which a monastery was to be founded and governed. They addressed the monk at a particular stage of development; that of the inexperienced

\textsuperscript{65}Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 43-44.

\textsuperscript{66}E.g., Guy, *Institutions*, 189, groups the stories thematically and interprets them as examples of spiritual, rather than bodily fasting.

\textsuperscript{67}Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 43.
novice who needed to acquire the rudiments of humility. Under the strict care of an elder, he had no understanding or judgment of his own. In Cassian's text, the authority of the Egyptians had also been universal. Their practices were divinely inspired and buttressed by biblical precedent. Except for the need for moderation, they were normative.

Antony's speech addresses a monk of a different kind: one who "is now able to stand on his own judgment, learned by an examination of discretion, and to arrive at the summit of anachoresis, <and who> ought in no way to seek all kinds of virtues from one man however great."68 The speech pertains to one who is no longer a novice under the domination of a single elder. The reader, who has proven himself as a novice, now moves freely about the community. Having developed sound judgment, he should seek to learn virtues from those who best exemplify them. The reader is to exercise his own judgment, both in discerning the different virtues of the brethren and in regulating his own activity. According to Cassian, the perfection of his reader's fast will not come from adhering to a single universal regime. It will instead arise from the judgment of his conscience (iudicium conscientiae).69

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68 "adprehenso discretionis examine propio iam potens est stare iudicio atque ad arcem anachoreseos peruenire, minime debere ab uno quamuis summo uniuersa genera uirtutum expetere." Inst. 5.4.

69 Inst. 5.9.
Cassian therefore maintained the reciprocity between progress in the monastic life and progress through the text that he had established earlier. Since the reader has passed through his novitiate and acquired the first elements of discretion, he no longer owes absolute obedience to a single mentor. Similarly, absolute obedience to a universal and over-arching authority in the text is no longer profitable. The institutes of the Egyptians have been mastered. Now individual monks speak to particular problems or virtues. Thus Antony's speech performs a necessary function at the beginning of a new phase of the discussion of the spiritual life. It removes restrictions that had been placed on the novice and opens a new path for a young monk. After using the story of Antony to explain briefly how to begin this process, Cassian provided a practical exercise in the interpretation of his *apophthegmata*. The first few stories are taken from Cassian's own experiences in Egypt and relate how the rules of fasting were abandoned in favor of hospitality.\(^7\) Since the temporary lapse from discipline was made up for after the guest had gone, the spirit of continence was maintained. These stories illustrate Cassian's repeated call for moderation and the discernment of bodily need as against extended and rigorous fasts.

\(^7\) *Inst.* 5.24-26.
The next two stories concern John, an abba of great age and virtue. When he heard abba Paesius claim that the sun had not seen him eat for forty years, John was able to reply that for an equal length of time the sun had not seen him angry.\textsuperscript{71} The next story explains how John had reached such heights of virtue. When asked on his deathbed to give his monks a word, he replied with what amounts to a succinct summary of the first four Institutes: "Never, he said, did I do my own will nor did I teach anything that I had not first done myself."\textsuperscript{72} The foundation laid by John's unquestioning obedience had withstood the test of time. He had maintained a humble spirit and also excelled in other virtues. He and Paesius each displayed great virtue. That each excelled in a different way is entirely in accord with the principles Antony had laid down in his speech.

Next to be considered is Machetes, who was blessed with the gift of being able to fall asleep during idle conversation and to remain awake during spiritual conferences.\textsuperscript{73} The two stories that follow reveal different aspects of this virtue. The first explains that on the three occasions that Machetes spoke against another monk, it was revealed to him...

\textsuperscript{71} Inst. 5.27.

\textsuperscript{72}"numquam, ait, meam feci uoluntatem nec quemquam docui quod prius ipse non feci." Inst. 5.28.

\textsuperscript{73} Inst. 5.29.
that he was entangled in this same sin. The second again relates Machetes’s miraculous ability to listen to spiritual conferences and reminds the reader to pay careful attention to the words of the elders. Cassian then told of a monk who had received letters from his family and burnt them unread. This recalled the need for complete renunciation and linked physical exile to the internal quiet of the soul.

This is followed with yet another cluster of tales, which focus on the gifted exegete Theodore. Theodore’s skill was gained from prayer and fasting rather than education, for he could barely read Greek. He explained that purity of heart rather than learning is necessary for scriptural exegesis. There are many differences and errors among the commentators because most care nothing for the purification of the mind and "rushing to interpret them <the Scriptures>, and forming ideas that, in proportion to the grossness and worldliness of their heart, are different from and contrary to the faith or to each other, cannot comprehend the light of truth." Theodore is then portrayed as

74 Inst. 5.30.
75 Inst. 5.31.
76 Inst. 5.32.
77 Inst. 5.33-35.
78 "prosilientes ad interpretandum eas, pro pinguetudine uel inmunditia sui cordis diversa atque contraria uel fidei uel sibimet sentientes veritatis lumen comprehendere nequieverunt." Inst. 5.34.

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reprimanding Cassian for sleeping after Vespers rather than continuing a vigil. As with the account of Machetes, the first story of the set establishes the elder's virtue and there follows some elaboration of it. The account of some anchorites living on an island in the Delta follows a similar pattern.\textsuperscript{79}

These stories were directed toward one who is just beginning spiritual combat. From John the reader learned of the fruits of obedience and humility he had so recently acquired himself. Machetes told him to pay close attention to conferences and to refrain from feeling superior to others. Theodore reminded him that the spiritual life requires many years of effort and one cannot enter it mid-stream. Vigils are the true source of biblical knowledge. Even though educated, Cassian would not have progressed if he had continued to sleep. The last story of the collection is poignant evidence of Cassian's intended audience. It tells of two novices who were ordered by John to deliver especially fine figs to an old and enfeebled monk. On their way the two became lost and starved to death, choosing to lose their life on earth rather than violate their abba's command.\textsuperscript{80} At first, this story would seem bizarre in light of Cassian's repeated calls for moderation. However, the

\textsuperscript{79} Inst. 5.36-39.

\textsuperscript{80} Inst. 5.40.
abba who gave the command was John, whose own humility and judgment was beyond question. The key to the story would seem to be that the monks were young. It serves as a caution to the reader, also a young monk, that obedience to the abbot is still necessary. Freedom of judgment cannot be invoked without it having been earned.

Cassian's encounters with the elders confirm Antony's view of discretion, for from each elder he and Germanus had learned a different virtue. The arrangement of the groups of stories allowed his audience to do the same. The reader first learned of an elder's special charism as though discerning it himself. The elder then provided instruction, either by word or by example, that was relevant to his particular virtue. Thus, both Antony's discourse and the collection of stories fit neatly into Cassian's larger scheme. There was a parallel relationship between what the reader performed as a literary exercise and what he was to perform within his own community.

The addition of these examples makes this by far the longest of the Institutes. This is appropriate, for it is one of the most important. The Institute is not simply concerned with gluttony. It serves as a transition from the regulation of communal and individual activity to the

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81 They also confirm Cassian's later claim that the authority of a monk's words is diminished if no account of his character is provided. Con. 20.1.
regulation of the disturbances of the soul. Cassian is no longer concerned with presenting the institutes of the Egyptians in order to govern a monastery. He here begins to discuss the elementary aspects of spiritual warfare. It would seem odd, then, if the stories that conclude the discussion were limited to the single theme of gluttony. The stories look back, both to remind the reader of what he had learned in the first four Institutes and to reinforce more recent lessons about gluttony. They also look forward, for in them Cassian alludes both to greater spiritual combat and to topics to be considered in the Conferences. Cassian thereby develops an intricate introduction both to gluttony and to spiritual warfare. He releases the monk from the restrictions of his earlier status as a novice and shows him the first steps to discretion. He explores gluttony, but within the context of a more well-rounded exploration of carnal desire. Finally, he hints at the perseverance and further growth that will be necessary before gluttony and the other vitia can be rooted out.

Cassian's discussion of fornication immediately follows that of gluttony. It furthers the transition to independent judgment inaugurated by Antony's speech, for here Cassian speaks of the need to confess all things to God rather than to an elder.82 The Institute also takes up the metaphor of

82 Inst. 6.21.
the Christian athlete. When discussing fornication, however, Cassian places a greater emphasis on interior preparation and moves quickly to the need for the Christian athlete to seek internal purity. Since the heart controls the senses and is the seat of desire, it must be pure to defeat fornication. Contrition, prayer, meditation on scripture, manual labor and, above all, humility are necessary. While purity of heart is more fully discussed than in the preceding Institute, however, Cassian remains principally concerned with the control of carnal desire. He speaks of purity as the suppression of desire and suggests several external signs that will help the monk to assess his progress. This differs significantly from Cassian's later discussion of anger, where he will describe purity of heart as prerequisite for the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

In his discussion of fornication Cassian states twice over that holiness can be sought either from fear or from love, the termini of Pinufius' second summary. Renunciation, or the beginning of the spiritual life, is spurred by fear of the Lord. The gradual expurgation of sin results in

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83 *Inst.* 6.1.
85 *Inst.* 8.22.
86 *Inst.* 6.5, 19.
the love of virtue. The combat against fornication is therefore at an intermediate stage. Its defeat is a necessary step toward true knowledge.

The discussion of covetousness concerns a vitium that is neither carnal nor concupiscible. Straddling fornication and anger, it is a Janus, looking both forward and back. Its three forms, each arising from a failure to make a complete renunciation, recall Institute 4.\textsuperscript{87} The distortion of Scripture to justify one's failure to renounce goods recalls Theodore's warning in Institute 5.\textsuperscript{88} Frequent conferences in Egypt between older and younger monks are also mentioned. Cassian, however, declines to discuss much that he had heard in these conferences.\textsuperscript{89} More work is required before he will recall their contents to his reader, for spiritual progress is to accompany the gradual revelation of the fullness of the spiritual life. The Institutes are a necessary preparation for the Conferences.

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The eighth Institute is similar to the fifth in that it also signals a new stage of the spiritual life. Its immediate concern is anger which, like all the vitia, obviates the attainment of perfection. To this point, Cas-

\textsuperscript{87} Inst. 7.14.

\textsuperscript{88} Inst. 7.16.

\textsuperscript{89} Inst. 7.13.
sian has discussed gluttony, fornication and covetousness, which are all of carnal or external origin. They belong to the concupiscible, or lowest part of the soul. With his discussion of anger, Cassian ventures into the irascible part of the soul. Consequently, just as in the fifth Institute, a new frame of reference is required.

While anger is not unique in the harm it can cause, the terms Cassian uses to describe its deleterious effects are more vivid and oriented toward the interior life. He writes that if anger remains in our heart and blinds the eye of our minds,

we can neither acquire the judgment of right discretion nor possess the insight of honest contemplation or ripeness of council, nor can we be partakers of life or steadfast in justice, nor indeed can we be repositories of spiritual and true light.\(^9^0\)

The effects of anger are again delineated at the end of the Institute. If anger is allowed to darken our soul, we shall lose the "light of discretion and surety of good counsel," the purity of our mind will be disturbed, and finally we will never think to pray to God.\(^9^1\) This language describes a stage of the spiritual life not previously addressed; one in which the vitia disturb the mind and inhibit the infusion

\(^9^0\) "nec iudicium rectae discretionis adquirere nec honestae contemplationis intuitum nec maturitatem consilii possidere nec uitae participes nec iustitiae tenaces, sed ne spiritualis quidem ac ueri luminis capaces poterimus exsistere." Inst. 8.1.

\(^9^1\) Inst. 8.22.
of "true light". The monk is no longer prodded by fear of God and compunction over carnal passions. He is instead inspired by the desire for a mind that is pure and free from disturbance. Only when his mind is freed from anger can the monk offer true and acceptable prayer. A mind must be pure to be a suitable dwelling-place for the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{92}

This \textit{Institute} also introduces a new understanding of Scripture. In a long digression, Cassian addresses the claim that God can be wrathful, which arose because of biblical language that often speaks of God's wrath, sorrow, jealousy, etc. Cassian firmly states that God, who is immutable, cannot be moved by the disturbance of anger.\textsuperscript{93}

Emotions are ascribed to God in the Bible only because of the limitations of human understanding. God is incomprehensible. His actions will always be judged according to the perceptions of their recipient. The sinner, for example, will describe as vengeful what is in fact God's dispassionate justice. In short, "when we read of the wrath and fury of God, we ought to understand <it> not \textit{\epsilon\nu\theta\rho\nu\rho\pi\omicron\omicron\sigma\vartheta\omicron\varsigma}, that is, according to the meanness of human disturbance, but in a way worthy of God, who is free from

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Inst.} 8.22.

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Inst.} 8.4.
all disturbance."  This problem extends beyond emotions to include the attribution of physical form. Cassian is again very firm in denying that physical attributes have any literal meaning. Such passages must be understood metaphorically (*figuraliter*). God's limbs, for example, signify His operation and boundless power. His eyes refer to divine, not human sight.  

Cassian here touches upon a major problem confronting the Egyptian monks: the nature of biblical exegesis and, more specifically, the Anthropomorphite controversy. He does not elaborate upon this dimension of the problem. Though he adamantly asserts that God does not experience disturbances, he does not use either ἀπάθεια or *impassibilitas*. Cassian thereby avoids the language of the earlier debates that would immediately align him with either camp.

This more developed exegetical method is extended beyond the consideration of divine attributes to include the various interpretations of Eph. 4.6, which admonishes against allowing the sun to set on one's anger. The sun is first interpreted as Christ, who is the sun of righteousness, and who will abandon, or allow to grow dark, the dis

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94 "de ira dei uel furore cum legimus, non ἀνθρωποσθενος, id est secundum humilitatem humanae perturbationis, sed digne deo, qui omni perturbatione alienus est, sentire debemus." *Inst.* 8.4.

95 *Inst.* 8.4.
The identification of Christ as the sun of righteousness then helps to unlock an enigmatic text in Malachi. Cassian next interprets the sun as the mind (νοῦς), calling this its tropological sense (secundum tropicum sensum). In this interpretation the action is reversed, for anger darkens the mind. In other words, judgment is eclipsed by wrath.

To this point, biblical exegesis has been of a largely moral nature. Now, the reader has progressed to where he may be exposed to a deeper understanding of the Bible as well as of God. The introduction of a sophisticated discussion of Scripture at this point recalls Theodore's assertion that discipline and purity of mind are necessary for the accurate interpretation of Scripture. It must be noted, however, that Cassian then moves on to discuss monks who harbor their anger until after evening falls. He argues that they cannot pray continuously, for biblical prohibition forbids them from offering their sacrifice of prayer while angry, or even while someone is angry with them. Unlike the earlier discussion of divine attributes, the literal meaning is also to be preserved.

96 Inst. 8.9.
97 Inst. 8.10.
98 Inst. 8.10.
99 Inst. 8.11-14.
Cassian's more sophisticated method of reading the Bible is continued into the subsequent Institutes. Institute 9 describes dejection in the terms of Prov. 25.20, which likens the dejected heart to a garment destroyed by moths or wood eaten by worms.\textsuperscript{100} The garment is interpreted first as a metaphor for the heart and then as signifying the priestly office. Just as Aaron's clothing received the oil of his anointing, so the heart must be fit to receive the Holy Spirit. If a moth-eaten garment cannot be worn by a priest, a dejected heart cannot receive the Spirit. The metaphor of the destroyed wood is also given a heightened meaning. As wormwood cannot be used to adorn an earthly temple, so the dejected heart is unfit for the building of a spiritual temple.

Institute 10 contains an extended analysis of Paul's views on work as a remedy for acedia, describing Paul's rules for governing relations between Christians as applying to the disposition of a monastic community. Paul's command to be quiet, for example, is interpreted as an injunction to remain in one's cell. The command to work with one's hands is understood to imply continual labor.\textsuperscript{101} Cassian also suggests a sophisticated understanding of Acts 20:35, which

\textsuperscript{100} Inst. 9.2-3.

\textsuperscript{101} Inst. 10.7. The use of Paul to link the struggle against the \textit{vitia} and the apostolic life was noted earlier. Now, the regulations of the apostolic Church are being interpreted as describing a monastic community.
states that it is more blessed to give than to receive. In his discourse on covetousness he explained this passage within the historical context of the Jerusalem community. He here adds the deeper meaning of the shared poverty of the true donor and the recipient.\textsuperscript{102} In Institute 12 he will write that it is those who have failed in their spiritual life who cannot understand the true meaning of this passage.\textsuperscript{103}

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The last two \textit{vitia}, vainglory and pride, again require a new frame of reference, for they differ in both origin and effect from the previous six.\textsuperscript{104} Neither \textit{vitium} is set in opposition to a reciprocal virtue. Vainglory is multifaceted, and is described as an onion that reveals a different aspect as each layer is peeled.\textsuperscript{105} Pride is of such force that it may only be opposed by God.\textsuperscript{106} The danger of each is two-fold. They arise in the experienced monk from the conquest of vice and the attainment of virtue, and in the immature monk from poor formation or limited

\textsuperscript{102} Inst. 10.18-19.
\textsuperscript{103} Inst. 12.25.
\textsuperscript{104} See Con. 5.10.
\textsuperscript{105} Inst. 11.5.
\textsuperscript{106} Inst. 12.7.
Therefore, each requires a consideration which goes beyond the limited level of the reader. Though he can perceive how the vitia might afflict one who is more advanced, he is not yet subject to those dangers himself.

The discussion of vainglory is straightforward and its nature, origin, and cure are clearly presented. Cassian first describes its perils for the adept who has successfully conquered the previous six vitia. He then returns to the level of the reader to treat of how vainglory threatens even the beginner. At this stage the principal danger is a presumption of great progress when in fact there has been little. Of particular concern is pretension to a higher calling, such as clerical office. To guard against this an analysis of one’s behavior is again suggested.

The third and second last chapters of the discussion are not so straightforward. In the former Cassian explains that he had undertaken his analysis of the vitia only to relate the teaching of the desert fathers. In the latter he revives an old proverb that monks should avoid both women and bishops. Chadwick has argued that these chapters are out of place. The former merely returns to the subject of holy orders taken up earlier in the discussion. The latter

\[107\] Inst. 11.2; 12.2.
\[108\] Inst. 11.13ff.
\[109\] Inst. 11.17-18.
would seem to have no relevant context and is probably misplaced. For lack of a better place to put it, however, Chadwick conceded that it may simply be a digression.  

Nevertheless, the two are not digressions and they combine to express a unified thought. Cassian has just condemned those seeking holy orders, ridiculing as vain those who had presumed to teach others. The ante- and penultimate chapters address an accusation that might easily have followed: that it was vainglory that has led Cassian himself to presume to teach. The first chapter reiterates that in his small or insignificant work (opusculum) Cassian is simply presenting in an ordered way what was commonly taught in Egypt. He does not teach by his own authority and his inadequacy as an instrument of instruction should not detract from his message. The second recalls the proverb and then promptly reveals that Cassian has failed both provisions. He has avoided neither women, in this case his sister, nor bishops, for he is ordained. These chapters stand as a self-deprecating confession and help to shield Cassian from the charge of vainglory. They therefore fit very neatly into his discussion.

Pride is also of two kinds. The first pertains more to spiritual men and attacks those who have almost attained the consummation of virtue. It has more to do with spiritual
beings than with carnal men and it is best exemplified by Lucifer. In his pride Lucifer began to arrogate his virtues to himself and to think he could sustain his own existence. He eventually began to liken himself to God and this culminated in his fall. In his fallen state Lucifer came to corrupt humanity.\textsuperscript{111}

God heals pride through the inculcation of humility, which is here defined as the acknowledgement of the need for divine aid.\textsuperscript{112} No one can attain perfection without divine assistance and no human activity is comparable to the eternity of future glory.\textsuperscript{113} This is supported by an appeal to the desert fathers, who contended that perfection is not possible unless the need for grace is recognized. Through the example of the Egyptians, Cassian urges his reader to seek counsel only from those who demonstrate this humility. It is the basis of purity of heart and only those who are truly humble have a right to teach.\textsuperscript{114} In Institute 5, the reader was asked to move beyond the tutelage of his mentor to seek those who exude particular virtues. Now, he is told to seek advice only from those with a pure heart.

\textsuperscript{111}Inst. 12.4.

\textsuperscript{112}Inst. 12.11.

\textsuperscript{113}Inst. 12.12.

\textsuperscript{114}Inst. 12.15. Cassian would take up this theme again. Con. 14.17-18.
The end of this section is once again signalled by examples, the first concerning an Egyptian monk and the second taken from the Old Testament. In the first instance, Cassian derives a universal rule from a particular incident among the elders. In the second, he reveals the allegorical significance behind the fall of Joash to the Syrians, interpreting the "Syrians of the soul" as spiritual wickedness. This extended Cassian’s instruction about the meaning of Scripture, for he here teases spiritual significance from historical narrative. More important, he applies a similar type of exegesis to the history of the desert fathers, implying a close relationship between reading the Bible and reading the *apophthegmata*.

Cassian then addresses the more carnal pride that attacks younger monks and beginners. He once again employs the first person plural, writing:

On the other hand, he <Satan> does not deem worthy to tempt us in this way, but overthrows us, who are still entangled in earthly passions, by a grosser and, I should say, a carnal pride. And so according to my promise I think it is also necessary to say something concerning that by which we or men of our measure, and especially the minds of youths and beginners, are usually imperiled.\footnote{Inst. 12.20-22.}

\footnote{"ceterum nos, qui adhuc terrenis sumus passionibus inuoluti, nequaquam hoc modo temptare dignatur, sed crassiore et ut ita dixerim carnali elatione subplantat. et idcirco de hac quoque, qua maxime nos seu nostrae mensurae homines ac praecipue iuniorum uel incipientium mentes periclitari solent, necessarium reor secundum promissionem nostram paucha depromere." Inst. 12.24.}
Cassian then recounts how this lower form of pride takes possession of the lukewarm monk and corrupts him. The description serves as a synopsis of the Institutes. The monk first makes a poor beginning and is unable to abandon his worldly haughtiness and possessions.\textsuperscript{117} He does not recognize that he must die in the body and conquer the carnal vitia. Failing to make a complete renunciation leads to avarice in each of its three forms.\textsuperscript{118} Gradually, the monk becomes wrathful and can no longer be taught anything of the spiritual life.

This tale looks both forward and back. It recalls the lessons of the Institutes, for the monk's descent into depravity followed the course of Cassian's analysis of the vitia. The decline is described in vivid detail and special attention is given to the monk's growing impatience with conversation and spiritual guidance. He resents instruction and deliberately twists its meaning, using it as a weapon against others. The conferences soon become harmful, and it would have been better for the one possessed by pride never to have begun them. The tale therefore serves as a warning to reflect upon one's condition before proceeding to the Conferences. It is not merely that they will be impenetrable; they may actually cause significant harm.

\textsuperscript{117}Inst. 12.25.

\textsuperscript{118}Inst. 12.26.
Nevertheless, Cassian still does not ask the monk to plumb the depths of his spirit. Instead, he briefly lists the ways in which pride can lead to a feeling of triumph early in the spiritual journey. "For, as we said before, the state of the inner man will be known from his outward behavior (motus). Therefore, that carnal pride which we mentioned earlier is shown by these signs." The beginner who falls prey to pride will be loud in speech, bitter in silence, quick to laugh, morose when serious, etc. The list is then extended to describe conduct with others. Even the most spiritually dense reader might easily learn that he has not eradicated pride from his heart.

The final chapter of the section is again a call to humility. In effect, Cassian has come full circle, for the principal virtue of the first Institutes was also humility. It has been raised to a new level, however, and given a more profound significance. Cassian moved beyond the humiliation of the renunciant and the need for absolute obedience to true humility before God. This is the culmination of Cassian’s examination of the vitia, and they are unified by the need for humility. The Institutes themselves

\[119\text{Inst. 12.29.}\]

\[120\text{"de exterioris namque sicut praediximus hominis motu status interioris agnoscitur. his igitur indiciis carnalis ista quam praefati sumus superbia declaratur." Inst. 12.29.}\]

\[121\text{Inst. 12.33.}\]
are also unified by humility as Cassian’s description of the virtue progressed from its lowest to its most profound form. It is the basis of monastic life, and the sine qua non of spiritual combat.

* * * *

Although composing a discursive treatise, Cassian successfully adapted an understanding of monastic reading drawn from the Origenist monks of Scetis, Nitria and Kellia and, more specifically, from Evagrius’s sententiae. While he was careful to avoid terms that had become tainted with "Origenism," as well as any reference to his mentor, Cassian led his readers through praxis and introspection to the purity of heart necessary for pure prayer. At first, this might not seem plausible. There is a great dissimilarity between the two authors, and their respective corpora do not readily invite comparison. Against Evagrius’s brief, independent studies of the monastic life, Cassian’s works consist of a series of connected discursive treatises. Evagrius often employed aphorisms and even meter, whereas Cassian seldom employed the former and the latter not at all. Evagrius’s aphorisms lend themselves to meditation and memorization in a way that Cassian’s discursive treatises could not. Moreover, Evagrius was writing within a developed tradition to which few Latin readers would have had access.
Cassian addressed each of these obstacles. While his works do not lend themselves to memorization in the same manner as Evagrius's, Cassian encouraged rumination through a careful use of mnemonic devices. Among these is a juxtaposition of the central themes of the discussion. The discussion of gluttony, for example, ends with a speech by Macarius that expresses the horns of the dilemma. A monk ought to practice moderation, preserving his health as though he might live for a hundred years; on the other hand, he ought to curb his passions as though he might die tomorrow.\textsuperscript{122} The discussion of fornication concludes with a similar juxtaposition of daily vigilance and nightly vigils.\textsuperscript{123} Even sections within Institutes are sometimes ended in a similar manner.\textsuperscript{124} This framing of the central tenets of the discussion was not simply a matter of style. The memorization and repetition of these formulae, a kind of rumination, would have called to mind other, more detailed aspects of the discussion. Cassian's repeated use of exempla served a similar purpose, for they also called to mind the import of what had just been said.\textsuperscript{125} While Cassian's consideration of exegesis is quite involved, for

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Inst.} 5.41.

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Inst.} 6.23. A similar juxtaposition occurs at the end of \textit{Inst.} 7.

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{E.g.}, \textit{Inst.} 2.14.

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{E.g.}, \textit{Inst.} 6.18-19; 10.20; 11.10.
example, the stories concerning Theodore express its most salient features in a simple, easily comprehended manner. Moreover, one must keep in mind the amount of time to be dedicated to these texts. Institutes 1-4, for instance, were to be mastered in the novitiate. Cassian described this as lasting for at least a year.\textsuperscript{126} Conference 10 culminates in pure prayer, an ability reserved to the elders. The ascetic journey described in these texts was to encompass a lifetime.

These devices also marked transitions in the text, giving the reader an opportunity to pause and to reflect on the preceding discussion. This pause was not to be momentary. The relationship between understanding and praxis is stressed throughout his works. From the very beginning Cassian wrote that reflection upon the written word entailed its practical implementation. Different sections of the works were addressed to readers at different stages of development.

Both Evagrius and Cassian revealed their material only gradually and in a spiralling path. Each warned of the danger of reading beyond one's ability. Only after a monk had read, understood and applied the text was he to move on. He was to struggle against new obstacles only after having overcome the last. In Egypt, the task of evaluating a

\textsuperscript{126}Inst. 4.7.
younger monk’s progress would have fallen on an elder. Though at times the elder was blessed with the charism of discernment, more often he was left with the more worldly task of observing his junior’s behavior and evaluating his needs according to external signs. Even the demons were restricted to this, for only God can penetrate the soul.

In the absence of an elder, Cassian provided for a kind of self-analysis. His description of the external manifestations of the virtues, such as Pinufius’s ten signs of humility or the physical signs of pride, provided the reader with tools similar to those of an elder. By examining his own conduct the reader could evaluate his progress and determine if he could effectively move on.

The demand for a reciprocity between reading and praxis allows Cassian to penetrate into every part of his reader’s life. His discourse is not based on abstract argument or even the particular application of general rules. Cassian demands instead a change in the very life of his reader. The reader is to correct his habits, calm the disturbances that stood in way of prayer, and cultivate purity. This requires the reader to become more and more concerned with his inner life and less concerned with his outward circumstances. It is the inner movements of the soul, or the dis-

\[127\] Gould, Desert, 42-52.

\[128\] Conf. 7.13.
position toward disturbance or calm, that is of real importance. The emphasis on the interior self is encouraged by the act of reading. "Reading necessarily isolates the reader from the public domain of the spoken word, alienates the familiar and promotes a perception of solitude which breeds interpretation and self-reflexion." Moreover, Cassian encourages the interiorization of the text itself by calling upon his reader to adopt the self of the text as his own.

The identity of the reader and of the youthful Cassian is based on their shared immaturity and lack of understanding. The underlying content is accommodated to the reader. As Cassian grows and matures, so does the reader. In recognition of the growing sophistication of the reader, the content of the text itself also grows in sophistication and depth. This reflects Origen’s understanding of scriptural interpretation, for a central tenet of Origen’s understanding of redemption is that the teaching Logos accommodates himself to the need and level of the hearer. For this reason the teachings which belong to the contemporary pedagogy of the Logos (the spiritual sense) are arranged according to stages of the soul’s progress toward perfection. Cassian describes this process of purification, of enlightenment, of growing adherence to God, in terms of a pilgrimage. He draws from the historical circumstances of


\[130\] Torjeson, Hermeneutical, 13.
his own purification and enlightenment in order to relate his understanding of the universal needs of Christians. This again recalls Origen, whose exegetical method presupposed that

the inspired writers of Scripture chose the material artifacts of their own experience with the Logos in order to convey the eternal teachings of the Logos to the contemporary hearer. The inspiration of the Scriptures has not achieved its goal until the doctrines presented in historical and material form have reached and taken form in the hearer.\textsuperscript{131}

In a similar way, Cassian's text has not achieved its goal until its principles have become manifest in the life of the reader.

Cassian's adoption of the imagery of a pilgrimage is not inspired solely by Evagrius and other eastern writers. Accounts of journeys to the East were popular among western readers and they added a new dimension to the reading of sacred scripture. They allowed the reader to travel vicariously among the sites of the Old Testament, seeing with his mind's eye the richly detailed terrain and participating, at least in his heart, in rituals and holy days. Accounts of the monks of Egypt also came to be popular, and for much the same reason. Egypt was rapidly becoming a pilgrimage site. Many in the West who could not travel still thirsted for knowledge of Egypt that they could not gain firsthand. One of the most popular of these

\textsuperscript{131}Torjeson, \textit{Hermeneutical}, 146.
accounts was Rufinus's translation of the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*. The work detailed the journey of seven pilgrims among the monks of Egypt. It described the route, the terrain, and the difficulties of the journey. Vivid descriptions rendered the monks and their habitat present to the reader. Their words were not a dry account, but rather one side of a conversation in which the reader, through the voices of the pilgrims, spoke with the desert fathers.

Cassian's narrative served a similar purpose, for in it he attempted to reproduce for his reader the conferences of the Delta. This was not simply a matter of describing the desert fathers and repeating their words. Instead, he carefully led the reader from an initial renunciation, at the gates of the community, to the feet of the elders themselves. The reader was introduced slowly to Egyptian monastic life and travelled Lower Egypt at Cassian's side. Like Cassian, he evaluated the virtues of the monks through the stories he heard about them. Through the voice of Germanus he asked the elders for a word and was rewarded with the *Conferences*. Cassian hoped "to place before <the reader> the men themselves embodied, in a fashion, in their own Institutes, and what is more, speaking in Latin."\(^{132}\)

\(^{132}\)"ipsos quodammodo suis institutis incorporatos et quod maius est Latino disputantes eloquio uobis exhibere" *Conf.* 1-10, *praef.* 6.
To accomplish this, Cassian continued into the first set of *Conferences* the relationship between reading and spiritual growth he had established in the *Institutes*. The last *Institute* had prepared the reader, and the first *Conference* had picked up the discussion of purity of heart as the immediate goal, or *skopos*, of the monastic life. In the *Conferences* Cassian created a receptive environment for the reader by anticipating his expectations and misconceptions of the eastern monastic tradition. He hoped that his readers were "receiving into their cells the authors of the *Conferences* themselves along with the very volumes of the *Conferences* and, in a fashion, speaking with them through daily questions and answers." The interlocutors of the text shared the reader's naive understanding of Egyptian monastic life. Frequent reproofs from the elders kept the reader on the path to deeper insight. Through a long and arduous journey both Germanus and the reader attained the discretion of an elder and the key to unceasing prayer.

\[\text{133}\]"ipsosque in cellulas suas auctores conlationum cum ipsis conlationum uoluminibus recipientes et cotidianis quodammodo cum eis interrogationibus ac respotionibus conloquentes." *Con. 18-24, praef. 3.*

\[\text{134}\]E.g., Germanus's quick and ill-considered responses to Moses. *Conf. 1 passim.*

\[\text{135}\]Isaac agreed to disclose the key to pure prayer because Germanus's subtle inquiry demonstrated that he had nearly attained the purity and discretion of an elder. *Conf. 10.9.*
The pilgrimage that Cassian described was not merely physical. His account is also a journey of the soul in which he and Germanus grew from spiritual infantia to the full possession of discernment. In the course of his journey through the text, the reader developed in a similar manner. Beginning at the lowest stage of the spiritual life, he grew in discernment as the companions themselves had grown. He slowly developed a capacity for humility and then purity of heart. At each stage of his journey, he shed previous misconceptions and gained clearer understanding. One of the most significant of these misconceptions was the West's understanding of the cenobitic and anchoretic lives as polar opposites. Cassian and Germanus began their journey by adopting this strict dichotomy and spent much of their early career penetrating deeper and deeper into the desert. As they matured, however, they seriously questioned such a dichotomy and instead spoke of the relation between the practical and the contemplative life.
Chapter 5
Implications for Praxis

Amid all the different views of the nature of monastic life current in southern Gaul in the first decades of the fifth century, there was at least one resounding theme: the polarity of solitary and communal life, or of anachoresis and coenobialis vita. There was little doubt that each was a separate vocation and that each possessed its distinct perfection. Nevertheless, in the hierarchy of merits so vigorously championed by many Latin writers, life as a hermit was clearly superior to life in a community. One might, or perhaps even should, begin the ascetic life in the company of others. The highest perfection, however, lay in withdrawal from the disturbances of human interaction. Only in isolation could one worship God without distraction and pray without ceasing.

Cassian's description of his early career as an evolution from the coenobium to the desert seemed to reinforce this notion. He and Germanus had abandoned their monastery at Bethlehem in order to become anchorites in Egypt. After a short stay in a monastic community near Diolcos, they sought more fruitful spiritual ground among hermits on a nearby island in the Nile delta.¹ The regime of these hermits was harsh. The soil of the island was infertile,

¹Con. 18.1,16.
drinking water extremely scarce, and the labors of the monks astonishing in their severity.² Life on the island offered all the isolation and physical discomfort of the greatest of the Egyptian hermitages. The sanctity of hermits who had endured such hardship could not be in doubt.

Cassian's monastic teaching also distinguished between cenobitism and anachoresis. Cassian agreed with his Gallic readers that each way of life had its own discipline and perfection, and he implied that anachoresis was to succeed communal life as part of a natural progression. Using the voice of Antony, for example, Cassian described anachoresis as leading to the heights of a more sublime perfection which comes after a communal way of life (post coenobiale propositum).³

Nevertheless, Cassian did not recommend the evolution from one vocation to another without reservation. Julien Leroy has convincingly argued that one must pay careful attention to the vocation of the interlocutor when examining this issue. Like other anchorites in Cassian's text, Antony reserved the highest praise for his own vocation. Cenobites, however, regarded their vocation as an end in itself. For them, life in the community was not simply a training ground for more stringent renunciations to come.

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² Inst. 5.36.

³ Inst. 5.4; also Inst. 2.9; Conf. 1-10, praef. 4.
It was a lifelong commitment in its own right.⁴ It is Leroy’s position that Germanus, rather than the Egyptians, reveals Cassian’s own view. By closely examining the ideas expressed by Germanus throughout the corpus, Leroy concludes that Cassian subscribed to the notion of a hierarchy of merits and believed *anachoresis* to be the superior mode of life.⁵ Cassian’s career provides further support for this, for it is marked by his attempt to penetrate deeper and deeper into the desert. While later in his career Cassian feared the consequences of having undertaken an eremitical life before being properly trained, this apparently did little to diminish his enthusiasm for *anachoresis* as the pinnacle of monastic life.

Leroy’s analysis is astute and his perception of different voices within Cassian’s text marks a watershed in the study of Cassian’s thought. Nevertheless, the analysis falls short on two counts. The first is that Leroy has failed to consider the presence of the reader in the text. It has been argued above that Cassian encouraged his reader to adopt Germanus’s voice as his own. In this way the reader could participate in the dialogues represented in the text, and be formed by them in a manner similar to the way in which Cassian and Germanus had been formed. However,

⁴ Leroy, "Les préfaces,"

⁵ Leroy, "Cénobitisme," 149-156.

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this argument stands in the way of Leroy's assertion that Germanus's views reflected those of Cassian himself. If Cassian attempted to cultivate the empathy of the reader through the voice of Germanus, then Germanus's words would be better analyzed as a source for Cassian's intended audience than for Cassian's own views. While it may be supposed that Germanus accurately reflects the youthful Cassian, this sheds little light on the view that Cassian held after he had matured.

The second area in which Leroy's argument falls short is in his acceptance without question of the equation of anachoresis with physical separation from the community. As a consequence, he did not adequately address the foundation of Cassian's thought. The dichotomy of the ascetic life that Cassian proposed was not rooted in a rigid distinction between the communal and the solitary life. Such a distinction would have been contrary to his own experience. There were not two distinct vocations among the Egyptian monks, but rather a wide variety of practices and differing degrees of seclusion.

Instead, Cassian proposed a fundamental distinction between the outer and inner man. The first acts of renunciation, the inculcation of monastic discipline, and the first stages of spiritual combat concern the outer man. The attainment of purity of heart, the undertaking of a more advanced contemplation, and pure and unceasing prayer
pertain to the inner man. While Cassian described these stages as concerning cenobitism and anachoresis respectively, the distinction between the two cannot simply be identified with the differences between life in a community and life as a hermit. One should instead use the broader and more inclusive categories of praktike and theoria. To understand better how Cassian addressed this problem, three questions must be asked: how did Cassian describe the solitary life in his consideration of the vitia; how did he compare solitude to communal life when he again took up the issue in Conferences 18 and 19; and what did he mean by anachoresis?

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As a young man Cassian had viewed the eremitical life as the most profound expression of love for God and dedication to Christian perfection. In this the youthful Cassian differed little from the reader of the Institutes. The reputation (praeconium) of the Egyptian monks, the common opinion of the brethren, and his own ardent desire had convinced both Cassian and his reader of this.6 Neither was familiar with Egyptian practices or the harsh demands of the eremitical life. Like his reader, and most unlike those whom he hoped to imitate, Cassian was still an "unformed anchorite" (rudis anachoreta), impelled more by youthful

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6 Inst. 5.36.
eagerness than spiritual knowledge. Cassian had resided at Diolcos only a short time, while his reader had only recently concluded his novitiate.\(^7\) Both were immature and untrained, ignorant of all but the first of the vitia. Neither was ready to enter the desert. Cassian encouraged his reader's empathy by sharing his zeal and representing to him the commonly held belief of the superiority of the eremitical life. The reader could therefore adopt Cassian's voice as his own.

Writing much later and with greater understanding, however, Cassian was far less enthralled with retirement from the community. It was common for him to describe the vitia in terms that would suggest withdrawal from the coenobium as a viable cure. In this he was in agreement with the bulk of Latin monastic literature and the popular view of solitude that it had helped to form. After playing to his readers' expectations, however, Cassian would pull sharply away from this line of thought and demand that the monk remain within the community. Isolation would only encourage the vitia. They must be conquered before leaving the coenobium.

Cassian's account of the hermits whose manner of life had lured him from the community near Diolcos is evidence of

\(^7\) Cassian's description of Diolcos occurs in Institute 5, which marks a transition from the novitiate described in Institutes 1-4 and the beginning of life within the community.
They had first lived for a very long time (diutissime) in the monastery. Only after they had diligently learned the discipline of discretion (regula discretionis) and been purified of all vitia did they undertake a solitary life. The difficulties Cassian faced and the praiseworthy lives of the hermits showed that such a life should not be undertaken rashly. One should leave the community when all the vitia have been conquered, not when one had only just learned of the first.

Cassian maintained his distinction between the immaturity of the reader and the purity necessary for solitude throughout his discussion of the vitia. Against the eagerness for the eremitical life that permeated Latin monastic literature, he consistently argued that disturbances of the soul could best be quelled in the company of others. The need for the protection of the coenobium is eloquently described in his discussion of covetousness. Resulting from an inadequate foundation and a lukewarm love of God, the vitium will eventually drive the monk from the company of his brethren. If unchecked, it will harden his heart and chase away all virtue, to the point that even in Hell he will remain unrepentant. If true poverty is the goal,

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8 Inst. 5.36.

9 Inst. 7.7-11.
we <Cassian and his reader> should seek out both the discipline and the institution of a monastery, so that we may in truth renounce this world, saving for ourselves nothing of those things we despised because of being held back by infidelity, and we should seek our daily food not from hoarded money, but from our own work.\(^\text{10}\)

Paradoxically, obsession with money and fear of poverty drives the monk from the security of the monastery in search of a very elusive wealth in the world. However, the failed monk will never be able to acquire wealth sufficient to dispel his fear or sate his thirst for more.\(^\text{11}\)

Cassian also took up the need for communal life in his discussion of anger. He admitted that human interaction can cause irritation and strife among the brethren, and that this may in turn lead to anger. However, he claimed that only our pride and impatience lead us to blame others for our faults.\(^\text{12}\)

And while we turn the causes of our error onto others, we will never be able to arrive at the goal of patience and perfection. Therefore the greatest part of our correction and peace must not be laid on the will of another, which is never in our power, but rather it should lie in our own authority.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^\text{10}\)"monasterii disciplinam institutionemque pariter expetamus, ut in ueritate renuntiemus huic mundo, nihil ex his quae contemptissimus infidelitate nos retrahente seruanties, cotidianum uictum non recondita pecunia, sed opere proprio conquiramus." Inst. 7.18.

\(^\text{11}\)Inst. 7.10-12.

\(^\text{12}\)Inst. 8.16.

\(^\text{13}\)"dumque in alios erroris nostri uergimus causas, numquam ad patientiae ac perfectionis calcem ualebimus peruenire. Summa igitur emendationis ac tranquillitatis nostrae non est in alterius arbitrio conlocanda, quod nequaquam nostrae subiacet potestati, sed in nostra potius
Merely changing our external circumstances will not help to eradicate our anger. Sin arises from within, not without. Anger is like a dangerous beast in its lair. It cannot be called harmless merely because it has no opportunity to strike.\textsuperscript{14} In the desert the monk will still experience wrath, either at visitors, at memories of past wrongs, or even at inanimate objects. Such anger will inhibit pure prayer and therefore obviate the true vocation of the anchorite.\textsuperscript{15}

The monk should undertake the eremitical life for the sake of divine contemplation and with a desire for more profound insight, not as a cowardly flight.\textsuperscript{16} An ill-considered retreat into the desert will cause more harm than good. Whatever \textit{vitia} a monk carries uncured into the desert will remain hidden within him. The desert will not cleanse him of sin.\textsuperscript{17} On the other hand, interaction with others can indicate a propensity to anger and their correction can help us to root out the \textit{vitia}. If we are pure of heart, our companions can do nothing to incite our wrath.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Inst.} 8.19. \\
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Inst.} 8.13. \\
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Inst.} 8.18. \\
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Inst.} 8.18.
In his discussion of covetousness Cassian warned against flight from the monastery to return to the world. When treating of anger, he cautioned against flight from the monastery into the desert. The reason for this change of emphasis lies in the progress of the reader. Cassian grouped covetousness with gluttony and fornication to make up the first set of vitia. Though of external rather than of carnal origin, it affects the lowest part of the soul. Anger, on the other hand, together with dejection and acedia, affect the irascible part of the soul. They therefore concern a new level of spiritual warfare and Cassian's discussion of them addresses a reader at a new stage of the spiritual life. Having quelled the vitia that disturb the lowest part of the soul, the reader is no longer likely to return to the world. Instead, the danger has become that impatience with his fellow monks might induce him to leave the monastery for the desert.

Cassian warned against this in the strongest possible terms in his discussion of dejection.

And so God, the creator of all things, recognizing before all else the care for his work, and because the roots and causes of our offenses lie not in others but in ourselves, commands that we should not abandon intercourse with our brethren, nor avoid those whom we think we have injured or by whom we have been offended, but he <God> orders that they be mollified, knowing that the perfection of the heart is to be sought not so

18 For Institute 8 introducing a new frame of reference, Chapter 4, p. 160.
much by separation from men as by the virtue of patience."

This is no longer the advice of Cassian or even the doctrine of the desert fathers. It is a divine command rooted in the fundamental order of creation. The argument is simple. If we are not perfect, we will never be at peace, either among people or separated from them. On the other hand, if we are free from our vitia, we will be at peace not only with men, but with wild and brutal animals (*feris ac beluis*). Either the monk is not ready to leave the monastery or there is no longer any reason to leave.

Cassian's argument is strengthened in the following *Institute*, where he described acedia as being especially dangerous to hermits. Like anger and dejection, acedia produces a contempt for communal life and urges the monk to regard his companions as the source of his spiritual stupor. As the soul is gradually worn out, the monk will seek what appear to be remedies, but which in fact cause more harm. Eventually, he will leave the community to begin

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19 "Ideoque creator omnium deus, opificii sui curationem prae omnibus noscens, et quia non in aliis, sed in nobismet ipsis offensionum radices causaeque consisterent, non deserenda praecepit fratrum consortia, nec uitari eos, quos laesos a nobis uel a quibus nos arbitramur offensos, sed deliniri iubet, sciens perfectionem cordis non tam separatione hominum quam patientiae uirtute conquiri." *Inst.* 9.7.


21 *Inst.* 10.2.
life as a solitary. Far from being a cure, this simply invites a redoubled attack. Acedia will not permit the monk to remain in his cell, and leads him to become entangled in secular affairs, "so that finally, as though bound by the coils of a serpent, he will never be able to free himself to return to the perfection of his first profession."\textsuperscript{22}

The monk should neither fall prey to the slumber of acedia nor leave the walls of the monastery (\textit{monasterii claustrum}).\textsuperscript{23} He should instead remain in his cell, work with his hands, and pray without ceasing. The need to work is a vital part of monastic discipline and isolation is not an escape from labor. The hermit Paul, for example, had no need to work and he still gathered palm leaves as though they formed his livelihood. Since he had no practical market for the leaves, he burned them once a year and began afresh.\textsuperscript{24}

The further the reader progresses in virtue and comes to regard the eremitical life as an attainable goal, the more strenuously Cassian undermines its foundation. Vainglory is like a phoenix that arises from its ashes when conquered, for it can occur only when some degree of virtue

\textsuperscript{22}"ut tamquam serpentinis spiris obstrictus numquam deinceps ad perfectionem professionis antiquae se ualeat enodare." \textit{Inst.} 10.6.

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Inst.} 10.5.

\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Inst.} 10.24.
has been acquired. It also requires an audience, for one cannot become vain without the approval and acclamation of others. While this might suggest that flight from others would be a viable cure, Cassian nevertheless repeated his earlier argument that no vitium that penetrates the desert along with the one fleeing can be purged, even though its external circumstances be removed. "In solitude also it <vainglory> does not cease from pursuing the fugitive from intercourse with all mortals for the sake of glory, and the more fully he has shunned the entire world, so the more vehemently does it pursue him." Monastic hagiography gives ample witness to the fact that withdrawal did not necessarily entail disappearance from the popular imagination. Alone in his cell the saint might wield more influence than if he had remained among people. Such influence could be real, as Cassian’s account of John of Lycopolis suggested. It could also be illusory, for Cassian also recorded the story of a hermit who preached to

25 Inst. 11.2-3.

26 Inst. 11.8.

27 "In solitudine quoque cunctorum mortalium consortia gloriae causa fugientem persequi non desistit, quantoque amplius uniuersum quis uitauerit mundum, tanto eum acrius insectatur." Inst. 11.6.

28 Cassian recorded that Theodosius I had consulted John before engaging the usurper Eugenius in battle. Inst. 4.23.
imaginary multitudes in his cell.\textsuperscript{29}

Pride is of a similar nature. Once it has taken hold of the monk and he has fallen from virtue, he shudders at the discipline of the coenobium and, as if he were held back from perfection by intercourse with the brethren and were called from the good of patience and humility by the vitium and impediment of others, he desires life in a solitary cell.\textsuperscript{30}

The desire for the desert is again prompted by a disturbance of the soul rather than purity of heart. The immature monk who seeks to be isolated from all others will deprive himself of the instruction necessary for the ascetic life.\textsuperscript{31}

He will also lose the opportunity to cultivate the supreme virtues of humility and simplicity of heart, "without which neither piety before God, nor the purgation of the vitia, nor the correction of habits, nor the consummation of virtue can be attained."\textsuperscript{32} Humility cannot be found in the desert; instead, it lies in conversation with the brethren.\textsuperscript{33}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{29} Inst. 11.16.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{30}"ipsam disciplinam coenobii perhorrescit, ac ueluti qui fratrum consortio de perfectione retrahatur ac de bono patientiae atque humilitatis aliorum uitio et impedimento reuocetur, habitationem solitariae cellae desiderat." Inst. 12.30.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{31} Inst. 12.15.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{32}"sine qua nec pietas in deum nec uiritiorum purgatio nec emendatio morum nec uirtutum consummatio poterit adprehendi." Inst. 12.19. See also Inst. 12.23.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{33} Inst. 12.23.
\end{quote}
This is the culmination of Cassian's doctrine concerning the eremitical life in the Institutes. His challenge is two-pronged. The first has been discussed at length. One seeks the desert in a spirit of anger, vainglory or pride. This is not the effort of a humble or pure man.\textsuperscript{34} Life as a hermit leads either to pride or to failure.\textsuperscript{35} It is not possible for him to walk the royal road of moderation.

The second prong is expressed principally in the last Institute, where Cassian claimed that pride can lead a man to think that he can earn his own salvation through extreme ascetic. While it is impossible to encapsulate in a brief summary Cassian's overall view on the relationship between grace and works, he here stated that no human deed can of itself merit salvation.\textsuperscript{36} The kingdom of God cannot be gained through suffering in the desert. Purity of heart and perfect charity are gifts from God and no human effort will suffice to attain them. Therefore, the monk should behave as though he were the least of his group. To resist pride he should be eager for "fasts, vigils, prayers, contrition of heart and bodily works."\textsuperscript{37} He should obey his superior's commands as though they were from God Himself. As the least

\textsuperscript{34} Inst. 12.30.

\textsuperscript{35} Inst. 11.6.

\textsuperscript{36} Inst. 12.16,23.

\textsuperscript{37} Inst. 12.16. Note that these were all possible within the community.
in his community, he should endure every insult, for no pain can compare to the passion of the Lord. Finally, he should remember that he can do nothing without the succor and grace of God.  

As the reader both progressed through the text and matured in his vocation, Cassian argued more and more firmly against withdrawal from the community. Entering the desert before all of the vitia have been conquered can only result in disaster. Nevertheless, one could argue that this still does not preclude the possibility that Cassian may have favored the eremitical life. At no point did he deny that the solitary life is a valid vocation. He merely argued that it invites special dangers and that there are many more impure than pure motives for seeking it. Moreover, if the Institutes are addressed only to the cenobite, it would not be surprising to find in them that Cassian discouraged the solitary life. This would also agree with the survey of the Institutes made above. If Cassian had intended a reciprocity between the ascent of the reader and progress through the text, then it would have been reasonable for him to discourage retreat to the desert until all of the vitia had been explained and conquered. It

38 Inst. 12.32-33.

39 Cassian later revealed that he had left the community too early. This caused him to fear that he would never be free from sin. Con. 19.11 ff.
would also largely conform to Leroy's thesis, which suggests that the first four *Institutes* are intended for cenobites and that the last eight are at best ambiguous about their intended audience. In short, Leroy's thesis would be satisfied, the arguments made above would not be contradicted, and the *Conferences* would still be addressed to the solitary.

Such a view, however, would fail to take into account three very important clues that Cassian provided to the reader to measure his progress. The first of these lies in his treatment of vainglory and pride, which he divided into two kinds. It will be recalled that the more advanced manifestations of these *vitia* did not directly affect the reader. Instead, he was subject to the attack of their more base and carnal forms. Consequently, the reciprocity between the reader and the text at least partly broke down in these discussions, for the reader had progressed only to where he might understand, but not experience, the *vitia*'s more sophisticated attacks. This would preclude any assumption that the reader has gained purity of heart.

The second clue is provided in the third *Conference*. In the voice of Paphnutius, Cassian related that there are three kinds of renunciations: of the world, of the *vitia* and that "by which we, calling our minds from all present

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40 See Chapter 4, pp. 167-170.
and visible things, contemplate only things to come and desire those things that are invisible." ⁴¹ Reflecting on Paphnutius' words at the end of the *Conference*, Cassian and Germanus mused that while they had made the first renunciation, they had learned little (*parum*) about the second and had not even dreamed about the third. ⁴²

The last clue is provided in *Conference* 10, which marks the end of the ascent of the reader to the heights of pure prayer. Germanus complained to Isaac, the interlocutor of *Conferences* 9 and 10, that Isaac had not fairly answered Germanus's earlier question about how to pray ceaselessly. ⁴³ Isaac responded that the subtlety of Germanus’s questions revealed that he was approaching the discernment of an abba and was therefore worthy to learn this most holy mystery. ⁴⁴

The ascent of the reader through the text therefore does not cease with the conclusion of *Institute* 12. It continues until he has gained the zenith of the ascetic life, which is pure and unceasing prayer. Only in *Conference* 10 is the reader assumed to have attained the purity of heart that is necessary for taking up the life of the anchorite. Con-

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⁴¹ "qua mentem nostram de praesentibus uniueris acuisibililibus euocantes futura tantummodo contemplamur et ea quae sunt inuisibilia concupiscimus."  *Conf.* 3.6.

⁴² *Conf.* 3.22.

⁴³ *Con.* 10.8.

⁴⁴ *Con.* 10.9.

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sequently, well into the Conferences neither Cassian and Germanus nor the reader was yet prepared for the anchoretic life. The reader of the Conferences, like the reader of the Institutes, was not thought to possess the purity of heart that anachoresis requires.

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The Institutes and the first ten Conferences describe the life of a monk from his donning of the habit to the attainment of pure prayer. In as much as ceaseless prayer is the goal of the monastic life, these works comprise a coherent and complete corpus which describes the spiritual ascent of a monk from beginning to end. Cassian went on, however, to compose fourteen more Conferences. In these later works he clarified issues raised in his original corpus and sometimes offered a different perspective entirely. An example of this is Conference 13, which considers the relationship between grace and human effort and clarifies issues that had been raised earlier in Institute 12. Just as these later Conferences return to earlier issues, they also return to a time prior to the companions' conferences with Isaac (Conferences 9 and 10). The latter Conferences do not continue the journey through Egypt. They instead return to a period very early in the companions' travels. This is significant, for while the Conferences may not accurately represent Cassian's actual itinerary, they do indicate how he regarded his reader.
Cassian did not abandon his practice of casting the Conferences in the form of a dialogue. He therefore did not abandon his desire for the reader to adopt as his own the voice in the text. In his preface to the last set of Conferences, for example, Cassian wrote that he hoped his readers were "receiving into their cells the authors of the Conferences themselves along with the very volumes of the Conferences and, in a fashion, speaking with them through daily questions and answers." This would not have been possible, or at least the effect would have been greatly diminished, if Cassian's readers had not been able to appropriate the voice in the text. The Germanus and Cassian of the latter Conferences are therefore not the monks who had sat at Isaac's feet. They are younger, and they resemble more the rudes anachoretae mentioned in Institute 5 than the discerning monks of Conferences 9 and 10. This return from the sublime heights of contemplation signals that Cassian believed his readers had not grasped the intent of his original corpus. The final fourteen Conferences must therefore be read with care. While they are not part of his

45"ipsosque in cellulas suas auctores conlationum cum ipsis conlationum uolumnibus recipientes et cotidianis quodammodo cum eis interrogationibus ac responsionibus colloquentes." Con. 18-24, praef. 3.

46The last set of Conferences actually go back to the time of Inst. 5, for the interlocutors are the monks near Diolcos. Later, Cassian and Germanus are still described as ignorant. Con. 20.4.
original description of the ascent of the soul, they nevertheless shed light on what Cassian had meant by this ascent.

In his last set of Conferences Cassian once again took up the relationship between anachoresis and cenobitism. The tenor of Cassian's works suggests that there was a pressing need. Conference 18 describes the goals and virtues of the different kinds of monastic life. In a manner similar to that of Jerome, Cassian divided the monastic life between two valid vocations: anachoresis and cenobitism. The cenobites arose from the apostolic community in Jerusalem. As the first Christians began to accommodate gentile converts by relaxing the requirements of the Law, the community as a whole became lukewarm in its commitment. Those who were still dedicated to sharing everything in common and to living according to the precepts of their elders soon separated from these tepid Christians and lived apart. Renunciation of worldly goods and obedience to tradition have been the foundation of the cenobitic life ever since. The flowers and fruit of the cenobites are the anchorites

47 Con. 18.4. Jerome, Epistula 22.34.

48 Con. 18.5. This is Cassian's second history of monasticism. In the first he traced the tradition to Mark's converts in Alexandria (Inst. 2.5). For a full discussion of the implications of these histories, De Vogüé, "Monachisme," 213-240.

49 Con. 18.5.
who later left the community not from the "disease of impatience" but from the "desire for a loftier progress and divine contemplation".\textsuperscript{50}

Cassian also described two other kinds of monastic life which he held to be abominations. The first of these he termed Sarabaites. Descended from Ananias and Sapphira, these monks had no respect for the authority of the fathers. They possessed no discipline, were not subject to an elder, and remained their own masters. While they called themselves cenobites, the Sarabaites stood as a hollow mockery of the true tradition of the fathers. They failed to surrender their worldly goods, possessed no stability and lived an unsupervised life.\textsuperscript{51}

The second kind of false monk stood as a mockery of the hermits. These monks rejected the \textit{coenobium} in favor of living alone, but their desire for solitude was borne from an impatience with the brethren rather than desire for union with God. Their fervor was consequently short-lived and they were quickly trapped by the snares that endangered even the most seasoned hermits. Like the Sarabaites, these monks began badly and quickly became worse. At no time did they come close to the purity necessary for the solitary life.

\textsuperscript{50}"inpatientiae morbo" and "desiderio sublimioris profectus contemplationisque divinae." \textit{Con.} 18.6.

\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Con.} 18.7.
Untrained and undisciplined, their ardor quickly faded to
the lukewarmness that is most hated by God.  

Cassian's description of the monks he had seen
resembled Jerome's in that he described cenobitism and
anachoresis as the only two valid vocations. It also resem-
bles Jerome's in that Cassian's description of the evil
types of monks had more to do with his present circumstances
than with what he had seen in his travels.  

As mentioned above, there were not two separate and easily identifiable
vocations in Egypt. There was rather a wide variety of
ascetic practices which included both urban monks and
worldly cenobites. These monks cannot be dismissed as
Sarabaites any more than as Remnuoth. Instead, one must
consider the possibility that Cassian was much more con-
cerned with berating his readers in Gaul than with providing
an accurate picture of what he had seen while in Egypt.

Cassian's principal complaint about the Sarabaites was
their failure to follow the traditions of the fathers. He
frequently made the same complaint about Gallic monks. Long
before, Cassian had bemoaned abbots who had introduced
traditions contrary to those of the fathers either from

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52 Con. 18.8.

53 Jerome criticized the Remnuoth for their fascination
with external display. Only a few paragraphs before he had
ridiculed "false monks" living in Rome for the same thing.
Epistula 22.28,34.
ignorance or from pride.\textsuperscript{54} Earlier in this same Conference Piamun had called upon Germanus and Cassian to forget what they had learned in Syria and adopt the institutes of the Egyptians.\textsuperscript{55} Cassian had done much the same thing in the Institutes. The description of the Sarabaite does not introduce a new complaint. From the beginning Cassian had emphasized the need for cenobitic discipline founded on humility and on obedience to the tradition of the Fathers. Cassian's portrayal of the false anchorites also revives an old complaint. In the later Institutes he had frequently warned against leaving the community because of anger, impatience or pride.\textsuperscript{56} In Conference 19 he brought this warning home to Gaul. Once again using the first person plural, Cassian wrote that "we cannot stand the discipline of the \textit{coenobium}, I will not say until old age, but for scarcely two years are content to endure the yoke of submission."\textsuperscript{57} Cassian's descriptions of the corrupt monks therefore had more to do with his experiences in Gaul than with his travels in Egypt.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Inst.} 2.3.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Con.} 18.3.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Inst.} 8.18-19; 9.7; 11.6; 12.30.
\textsuperscript{57} "\textit{non dicam usque ad senectam in coenobii permanere non possumus disciplina, sed uix biennio subiectionis iugum sustinere contenti.}" \textit{Con.} 19.2.
In Conference 19 Cassian again examined what he described as the two legitimate forms of monastic life. To do this he chose an elder who had gained vast experience both as a cenobite and as a hermit. John had lived in a coenobium for thirty years before setting out on his own. After twenty years as a hermit he returned to live among the brethren. The number of years he had dedicated to each vocation attest that John was not fickle. He had in fact succeeded at both vocations. As a cenobite he had excelled all the saints in humility, and as a hermit he had transcended his bodily condition and achieved the heights of pure prayer. His "soul was so filled with divine meditations and spiritual contemplations" that at times he lost all awareness of his body and its needs. He had even needed to establish a rationing system to ensure that he had eaten on any given day.

Despite the heights of prayer that he had reached as a hermit, John nevertheless felt it necessary to return to the coenobium. As a hermit, he had been unable to escape carnal concerns. This had caused the fire of his contemplation to grow cold. In a manner similar to the decline of the apostolic community in Jerusalem, the desire of the first

\[58\text{For his humility, Con. 19.2.}

\[59\text{"ita diuinis meditationibus ac spirtualibus theoriis animus replebatur." Con. 19.4.}

\[60\text{Con. 19.4.}

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anchorites to welcome others had led to their decline.\(^{61}\) John claimed that he had rejected his hermitage because it had imposed upon him too many concerns. He returned to the coenobium to find freedom from these distractions, and he challenged Cassian and Germanus to decide whether he had been induced to return "by an aversion to or by a desire for that purity of the solitary life."\(^{62}\)

John's decision would have been completely at odds with the reader's expectations, for it overturned the popular equation of solitude with freedom from worldly care. John instead argued that such freedom could be found only within the confines of the coenobium.\(^{63}\) Paradoxically, it is only among the brethren that one can find the purity of the solitary life. Robert Markus recently noted this juxtaposition and argued that "in the course of these two Conferences (XVIII and XIX) Cassian has come to abandon, subtly but decisively, the equation of the communal with the ascetic and the solitary with the contemplative life."\(^{64}\) This is a valid assessment of Cassian's argument, for in these Conferences he emphasized how the world impinged upon the hermitage and how the coenobium provided freedom from dis-

\(^{61}\) Con. 19.5.

\(^{62}\) "fastidio an desiderio solitariae illius puritatis." Con. 19.6.

\(^{63}\) Con. 19.6.

\(^{64}\) Markus, End, 184.
traction. I would suggest, however, that this idea is not new to Cassian's last set of Conferences. It is instead a theme that recurs throughout his ascetic literature.

Cassian's demand that the discipline of the coenobium be mastered before aspiring to the desert left such an aspiration virtually out of reach. It also introduced a circular argument that practically ensured that the desert was an unattainable goal. John firmly stated that if it were not for a very few exceptions he would deny the possibility of perfection in both vocations. At another point he claimed that a vocation should not be pursued if its goals could not be perfectly achieved. These two statements, taken together, effectively disallow the possibility of the eremitical life. Cenobitic perfection is nearly impossible. If one achieves this and aspires to the solitary life, he is virtually assured of failing in the latter. One should therefore remain in the coenobium. This is not the first time that Cassian had raised such an argument. In Institute 9 he had suggested that impatience is

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65 Cassian also pursued this line of thought by describing Gallic monks as inferior to the Egyptians. Inst. 3.2; 4.10.

66 Con. 19.9.

67 Con. 19.5.
not a valid reason to leave the monastery and that perfect patience eliminates any need to leave.\textsuperscript{68} 

The virtual impossibility of the eremitical life requires us to reexamine the traditional association of cenobitism with \textit{praxis} and \textit{anachoresis} with \textit{theoria}. If one accepts that Cassian questioned the possibility of the solitary life, then one must deny that the solitary equals the contemplative. Otherwise, one would have to argue that Cassian put contemplation out of the reach of the monk. We must therefore return to John's challenge to Cassian and Germanus to decide whether he had left the hermitage because of disdain or a desire for solitude. Since their praise of John would argue against the former, we must accept the latter as being the case.

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What, then, did Cassian mean by \textit{anachoresis} and how was it distinct from cenobitism? According to John, "the goal of the cenobite is to mortify and crucify all his desires and, according to the salutary command of evangelical perfection, to think nothing of tomorrow."\textsuperscript{69} On the other hand, "the perfection of the hermit is to have a mind freed from all earthly things and in this way to unite it, as far

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Inst.} 9.7-8.

\textsuperscript{69} "\textit{finis quidem cenobiotae est omnes suas mortificare et crucigere voluptates ac secundum evangeliæ perfectionis salutare mandatum nihil de crastino cogitare.}" \textit{Con.} 19.8.
as human weakness is able, with Christ." Cassian frequently described the former as preparation for the latter. This description is valid in that purity is necessary for spiritual knowledge. It is not certain, however, that Cassian understood these two dimensions of the spiritual life as sequential or mutually exclusive.

While John bemoaned the fact that the hermit cannot be free from earthly concerns, Cassian had raised the problem with provisions long before. In Conference 23 he addressed the carnal nature of man more generally. All humans, including the saints, must address their carnal needs. This limits our ability to do as we wish. Such a limitation is not necessarily bad, for it means that we cannot act immediately upon our evil desires. The concern in this Conference, however, is that our carnal state prohibits union with God. No matter how hard we strive, we cannot return to the pure contemplation of God that we possessed before the fall. In this life our union with God can never be complete. We will always be pulled back from the heights of contemplation to attend to our carnal needs.

70 "heremitae uero perfectio est exutam mentem a cunctis habere terrenis eamque, quantum humana inbecillitas ualet, sic unire cum Christo." Con. 19.8.

71 Con. 5.19.

72 Con. 4.12-14.

73 Con. 23.13.
Contemplation is a continuous effort toward a union with God that cannot be fully attained. The mind must be disciplined in order to preserve its purity and freedom from distraction as long as possible. This purity, however, will inevitably be diminished because of the need to attend to earthly concerns. The contemplative state is tenuous, for purity may be lost through a single thought or action. Contemplation therefore requires continuous praxis in which the mind is freed from disturbance. It does not transcend cenobitic discipline, for purity of heart, if it is ever to be attained, must be jealously and ceaselessly guarded. Anachoresis, understood as the contemplative life, does not exclude praxis.

Similarly, life in the coenobium does not exclude contemplation. The mutual support of the brethren provides freedom from care. Their presence also assists in the detection and purgation of the vitia. Cenobitic discipline, rooted in humility and obedience, leads to purity of heart. Without the purity that can only be gained in the coenobium, contemplation would not be possible.

Moreover, solitude and the communal life are not mutually exclusive. The only vitium that Cassian suggested can be alleviated by avoiding human commerce is fornication. When troubled, one should withdraw from others "so that the

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74 Rousseau, "Cassian," 114. For the impossibility of this union, Con. 1.13.
mind, in no way sick from the occurrence of diverse images, and arriving at a purer insight of contemplation, can more easily and completely root out the pernicious tinder of concupiscence." The problem here is that human interaction prompts the intrusion of unwanted images that disturb the mind during prayer. This interaction could be limited within the community, however, and solitude did not necessitate the abandonment of the coenobium itself.

Communal life did not preclude solitude. Cassian had earlier recommended the quiet of the cell even for novices. The daily routine set out in Institutes 1-4, which he twice described as pertaining to the coenobium, allowed for human contact only during meals and the hours of prayer. Work and prayer in one’s cell are frequently described as the best course. Moreover, the supposedly "anchoretic" disciplines of fasts, vigils, prayers and the like were recommended to those still in the community. Conference 2, which Leroy has argued is directed toward hermits, speaks of the need for continued supervision.

Conference 5 explains how interaction with brethren can aid

75 "ut mens aegra minime diversis figuris interpellata ad puriorem perueniens contemplationis intuitum facilius pestiferum concupiscientiae fomitem radicitus possit eruere." Inst. 6.3.
76 Inst. 4.10.
77 Inst. 3.2; 10.2-3.
the purification of the soul.\textsuperscript{79} The solitude of the cell was to be sought by all, and it was to be sought within the cloister.\textsuperscript{80} The communal and the solitary lives need not be separate.

Although he at first seemed to offer support for the popular division of the monastic life into anachoresis and cenobitism, Cassian in fact radically undermined that view. The goals of the communal and solitary lives are not mutually exclusive; they are interdependent. They must be practiced simultaneously as two poles of a balanced life. One does not move from praxis to theoria. They are instead two aspects of a unified ascent to pure and ceaseless prayer. In the introduction to his discussion of prayer, Cassian emphasized its relationship to virtue.\textsuperscript{81} He also affirmed that anyone, even one who has just begun his spiritual journey, might at any time achieve that highest form of ineffable prayer.\textsuperscript{82}

For Cassian, anachoresis into the desert was a metaphor for withdrawal into the interior life of the individual.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{79} Con. 5.4.
\textsuperscript{80} E.g., Con. 24.3-4.
\textsuperscript{81} Con. 9.2-4.
\textsuperscript{82} Con. 9.15.
\textsuperscript{83} For the desert as a metaphor for purity in monastic literature, Guillaumont, "Conception," 3-21; Goehring, "Encroaching," 281-296.
In order to use this metaphor with any success, however, it was necessary to undermine what the metaphor had become: a belief that there were two separate monastic vocations, each having its own perfection but unequal in merit. To accomplish this, Cassian repeatedly questioned the motives of those who dreamed of physical withdrawal. When this proved insufficient, he argued that the eremitical life is an unattainable goal.

Cassian used the metaphor of physical withdrawal to highlight his true concern, which was the relationship between the outer and the inner life of the individual. He introduced this theme at the very beginning of his corpus. In his discussion of the habit Cassian treated of both the outer and the inner man. He argued that even the habit, which is worn for the sake of the outer man, had inner significance. It inspired discipline, aided the memorization of Scripture, and helped to inculcate virtue. At no time were the outer and inner man mutually distinct. From the outset Cassian made his reader aware of the relationship between outer practice and inner condition, between patterns of behavior (mores) and the movements of the soul (vitia).

This relationship recurs throughout Cassian's corpus. It is a frequent topic of discussion and is applied to many

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84 Inst. 1.1.
85 Inst. 1.11.
aspects of the monastic life. The routine of canonical hours, for example, a custom of the outer man, helped to cultivate the ceaseless prayer of the inner man. 

The external fast, which is the regulation of diet, must be joined with an internal fast, or the quelling of the disturbances of the soul. One should not seek chastity of the body alone. Inner chastity, an almost angelic separation of the soul from the body, is the true goal. While the carnal vitia have both external and internal aspects, some, such as anger and dejection, pertain almost entirely to the inner life. The list could go on.

Cassian did not waver from ranking the interior life as the more important. The internal fast is more important than the external. Outer gestures are useless without the cultivation of the inner man, for they lead only to the lukewarmness of soul that is most offensive to God. Nevertheless, while the inner life is more important, the outer life cannot be ignored. One must eat, for example, for excessive fasting can inhibit prayer and even cause madness. One must sleep at regular intervals or be overcome

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86 Inst. 2.9; Con. 1-10, praef. 5.
87 Inst. 5.21; Con. 22.6.
88 Inst. 6.6; 12.11; Con. 12.13-14.
89 Inst. 8.17; 9.5-6; Con. 5.3-4.
90 Inst. 5.9.
by drowsiness. A balanced, daily routine is required for an undisturbed life. The correction of habits (emendatio morum) is necessary to the peace and equanimity of the soul.

It is this equanimity, or impassibility, of the soul that lies at the heart of Cassian's understanding of the monastic life. Most often called purity of heart, it is the goal of praxis and the requirement for contemplation. It is, moreover, the result of three separate and critical renunciations. The first two have to do with cultivating a growing detachment from worldly things and an enhanced awareness of the inner self. The last is a renunciation of the present and visible for the sake of the future and invisible. Movement from the outer to the inner self necessarily entails a movement from what is visible to what is invisible. Cassian's third renunciation, however, is of a much wider scope. Here, the monk has gone beyond knowledge of himself, to strive for knowledge of the invisible mysteries of God.

\[91\ Con. 3.6.\]
Chapter 6
Implications for Theoria

In his Conferences Cassian analyzed the nature of contemplation from two different perspectives. He first described it as a form of prayer during which the monk loses any awareness of his body and focuses the full attention of his soul upon the light of the divine mysteries. Both the object of the vision and the activity itself are ineffable. Cassian did suggest, however, that the attachment of the soul to carnal things is at least temporarily transcended and that the soul itself is in some way transformed. Cassian later described contemplation as a form of spiritual knowledge rooted in biblical exegesis. Markus has taken this to mean that Cassian had backed away from the pure, anchoretic contemplation of his mentor Evagrius. By doing this, Cassian placed the act of contemplation within the bounds of the community and restored it as a possibility held out to all monks. Moreover, Cassian's emphasis on instruction when describing exegesis placed contemplation even within the grasp of one who was burdened by pastoral duties.

While Markus has admirably demonstrated that this was the way that Cassian was read in the West, it is the goal of

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1 Markus, *End*, 185-188.

this chapter to show that this was not what Cassian had intended. For Cassian, spiritual knowledge established in exegesis is not different from pure prayer. The same preparation is involved, the experiences are described in the same way, and the objects of knowledge are identical. Underlying both pure prayer and anagogical exegesis is Cassian's concern with the contemplation of God. Pure prayer is grounded firmly in Scripture, both as a device for meditation and as a source of revelation. Similarly, anagogical interpretation is based on the ineffable contemplation of the sacred mysteries underlying the text. While exegesis is an activity that can be performed within the bounds of the community, this is so only because pure prayer is also possible within the community. Moreover, Cassian's frequent references to teaching refer not to preaching, but to the activity of the gnostic as revealed in Evagrius's Gnosticus.

Cassian had already considered the nature of prayer in a very limited way in his second Institute. At the beginning of the Institute he had written that he would postpone a discussion of how to pray ceaselessly until the Conferences, and dealt instead with the proper arrangement of the canonical hours. How one was to behave before, during

3Markus, End, 189-192.
and after the divine office also received brief mention.\textsuperscript{4} In this and the following Institute Cassian was concerned with the regulation of the community and of personal conduct rather than with the nature of prayer itself.\textsuperscript{5} His only allusion to continuous prayer lay in his admonition to pray privately after returning from the office. Even here his focus was on proper behavior, however, for the thrust of his admonition was to work continuously during extended vigils.\textsuperscript{6}

In the preface to his first set of Conferences Cassian recalled his earlier promise to discuss ceaseless prayer. He drew a stark parallel between an ascent from the canonical hours to ceaseless prayer on the one hand, and a movement "from the exterior and visible life of the monk, which we considered in the former books <the Institutes>, to the invisible habit of the inner man" on the other.\textsuperscript{7} It was not until the end of his first set of Conferences, however, that Cassian would discuss the nature of prayer in any depth.

At the beginning of Conference 9 Cassian announced that at long last he would fulfill his earlier promise.\textsuperscript{8} As

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{4}For proper conduct, \textit{Inst.} 2.10-12,15; 3.7-11.
  \item \textsuperscript{5}See Chapter 4, pp. 136-138.
  \item \textsuperscript{6}\textit{Inst.} 2.14; 3.2.
  \item \textsuperscript{7}"ab exterioire ac uisibili monachorum cultu, quem prioribus digessimus libris, ad inuisibilem interioris hominis habitum." \textit{Con.} 1-10, \textit{praef.} 5.
  \item \textsuperscript{8}\textit{Con.} 9.1.
\end{itemize}
Rousseau has noted, this Conference also marks a return to the discussion of monastic praxis. Just as Cassian moved from an exterior to an interior form of prayer, he moved inwardly from an exterior praxis to the purification of the mind. He argued that the thoughts that occupy our mind before prayer will return to disturb us as we pray. We must therefore rid ourselves not only of carnal desire, but of any thoughts that can distract us from our ultimate goal, "so that <our mind> may begin to be raised little by little to the contemplation of God and to spiritual insights."\textsuperscript{10} Paulatim is a key term in this passage. Cassian had all along insisted that we must ascend to perfection by carefully measured stages.\textsuperscript{11} Here he directly associated a clearer or more profound sight with greater purity. Each increases little by little (paulatim). Progress in contemplation does not await the complete purification of the soul.

The reciprocity between purification and prayerful ascent forces us to look more closely at what Cassian meant by movement from outer to inner. The progress that he proposed cannot be described simply as a movement from a practical to a contemplative life, and the Institutes and

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\textsuperscript{9}Rousseau, "Contemplation," 114.
\textsuperscript{10}"ut ita paulatim ad contemplationem dei ac spiritales intuitus incipiat sublimari." Con. 9.3.
\textsuperscript{11}E.g., Con. 2.4.
\end{flushright}
Conferences cannot be said to address only the one or the other. Cassian instead proposed an evolution toward a greater awareness of the interior self, in which praxis and prayer mutually support each other in a reciprocal and ever-deepening relationship. Through the mouth of Isaac, Cassian wrote:

The aim of every monk and the perfection of his heart tends toward continual and unbroken perseverance in prayer and, as far as is allowed to human frailty, strives toward an immovable tranquility and perpetual purity of the mind, for the sake of which we seek unweariedly and practice constantly every labor of the body as well as contrition of the spirit. And there is between one and the other a kind of reciprocal and inseparable union.¹²

Prayer cannot be achieved without inner tranquility, and the latter cannot be gained without prayer.

Inner tranquility cannot be sustained indefinitely, however. There are snares awaiting the monk at every stage of his ascent and they become more dangerous as he nears his goal.¹³ Even if some form of undisturbed contemplation is achieved, bodily necessity will drag the monk down from the

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¹²"omnis monachi finis cordisque perfectio ad iugem atque indisruptam orationis perseverantiam tendit, et quantum humanae fragilitati conceditur, ad inmobilem tranquillitatem mentis ac perpetuam nititur puritatem, ob quam omnem tam laborem corporis quam contritionem spiritus indefesse quaerimus et iugiter exercemus. et est inter alterutrum reciproca quaedam inseparabilisque coniunctio." Con. 9.2.

¹³Con. 9.4-5.
heights he has gained.\textsuperscript{14} The soul is bound by its attachment to the flesh and this cannot be changed in this life.\textsuperscript{15}

When Germanus complained of the difficulty of maintaining a pure and focussed mind, however, Isaac avoided the question and instead described other, lower forms of prayer.\textsuperscript{16} Following 1 Timothy 2:1, he divided prayer into four categories: supplications (\textit{obsecrationes}), prayers (\textit{orationes}), intercessions (\textit{postulationes}), and thanksgivings (\textit{gratiarum actiones}).\textsuperscript{17} The different circumstances in which a monk might find himself could inspire any one of these kinds of prayer, either individually or in combination. Nevertheless, Isaac argued that an ascent seems to be implied, for supplications pertain more to the beginner, whereas thanksgivings pertain more to the those who have gained freedom from care and can with a pure mind contemplate "the generosity and compassion of the Lord."\textsuperscript{18}

This reaffirms Cassian's earlier statement that \textit{praxis} and prayer mutually support each other.

Cassian also described a form of prayer that transcends those described in 1 Timothy. It is an ineffable prayer of

\textsuperscript{14} Con. 1.13; 23.8,13.
\textsuperscript{15} Con. 23.13.
\textsuperscript{16} Con. 9.7-8.
\textsuperscript{17} Con. 9.9-14.
\textsuperscript{18} "\textit{munificentias domini ac miserationes.}" Con. 9.15.
the purest force, inspired by the Holy Spirit and beyond human comprehension. It is a form of prayer that can occur at any time in a monk's career, sometimes being inspired by the slightest success of a novice. As with the other categories of prayer, the human mind and the divine will do not permit a simple linear ascent. Pure prayer cannot be attained by the beginner through any act of his own will, however, and an ascending or spiralling relationship between praxis and prayer can be discerned. In his second conference on prayer Isaac again spoke of the need for a balanced and measured ascent. One must purge the mind of carnal desire and direct it toward spiritual things. Striving toward ceaseless prayer is in itself a never-ending activity.

In Conference 9 Cassian described prayer as the ultimate goal of the monk. In Conference 10 he described the goal of prayer as the contemplation of the divinity of Christ. This would seem to conflict with his claim at the beginning of the Conferences, where Cassian wrote that the

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19 Con. 9.15, 25.
20 Con. 9.15.
21 Con. 10.6. For the relationship between Conferences 9 and 10, Stewart, "Cassian," 159-177.
22 Con. 10.7.
23 Con. 10.6.
ultimate goal of a monk is the kingdom of Heaven. A closer reading, however, shows that there is not a conflict. When elaborating upon the goal of monks in Conference 1, Cassian argued that monks should persevere with a resolute heart "in order that the mind always cling to divine things and to God." Later in the same passage he wrote that the monk should seek knowledge of God alone (dei solius intuitum). The kingdom of Heaven is therefore knowledge of God. In Conference 10 Cassian explained that knowledge of God is gained through pure prayer. It is therefore the means by which the kingdom of God is achieved.

In this life knowledge of God can be neither permanent nor complete. Our carnal nature will always call us back from our spiritual ascent. We may contemplate the image of Christ's glory. We may cling (inhaerere) to God. We may even tend (tendere) toward unbroken and ceaseless prayer. We will not attain perfection, however, so long

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24 Con. 1.3-4.

25 "ut diuinis rebus ac deo mens semper inhaereat." Con. 1.8.

26 Cf. Evagrius, Practicus 2.

27 Con. 10.7.

28 Con. 10.6.

29 Con. 1.8.

30 Con. 9.2.
as we are clothed in carnal bodies.\textsuperscript{31} The proper goal of the monk is therefore to obtain the kingdom of Heaven as far as our human frailty will allow.\textsuperscript{32} In this way we will gain a foretaste of our salvation, and we will obey the natural yearning of our soul to be restored to its original condition.\textsuperscript{33}

The monk must therefore give greater attention to his interior life. While he must satisfy his carnal needs, he should avoid carnal desire. In this way he can lessen the weight of the flesh upon his soul and ascend more easily to God.\textsuperscript{34} Cultivation of the interior life requires the subjection of the will in the spirit of true humility. It also requires the attainment of a peace or impassibility in which carnal desire and wandering thoughts no longer disturb the mind. The cleansing of the soul does not leave it bare, however, for when the \textit{vitia} are purged they are replaced with their opposing virtues.\textsuperscript{35} Finally, the monk must learn to discern good from bad and to judge the best path by which one should pursue greater knowledge of God. In \textit{Conference}\textsuperscript{33}Cassian described the soul as a feather which will naturally ascend in flight if it is not impeded by the weight of earthly concerns. \textit{Con.} 9.4.

\textsuperscript{31}Con. 23.13.
\textsuperscript{32}Con. 9.2.
\textsuperscript{33}Cassian described the soul as a feather which will naturally ascend in flight if it is not impeded by the weight of earthly concerns. \textit{Con.} 9.4.
\textsuperscript{34}Con. 9.3-4.
\textsuperscript{35}Con. 5.23.
Isaac agreed to continue his discussion only because Germanus had shown progress in this regard. Through the subtlety of his questions, Germanus had demonstrated that he had grown significantly in both purity and discernment.36

In his second conference Isaac reaffirmed the ineffable character of pure prayer by conflating his two earlier descriptions.37 He also provided the key to attaining this kind of prayer. Germanus had asked by what meditation God could be grasped and contemplated, and by what means we might sustain unbroken contemplation.38 Isaac replied with a verse from Psalms: "God come to my aid; Lord, hasten to save me."39 By continually meditating upon this verse, Germanus would be able to pray ceaselessly.

This verse was not intended as a mantra, nor as a ritualistic formula whose content is less important than its function as a focus for meditation. To the contrary, this single verse "takes all the affections which can be attributed to human nature and can be sufficiently and confidently adapted to any state and to all assaults."40 Isaac

36 Con. 10.9.
37 Con. 10.11; 9.15,25; Stewart, "Cassian," 170, 173.
38 "qua meditatione teneatur uel cogitetur deus." Con. 10.8.
39 "Deus in adiutorium meum intende: domine ad adiuuandum mihi festina." Con. 10.10; Psalm 69.2.
40 "recipit enim omnes affectus quicumque inferri humanae possunt naturae et ad omnem statum atque universos incursus proprie satis et competenter aptatur." Con. 10.10.
surveyed the *vitia* from gluttony to pride to show how each could be addressed by the repetition of this single verse.\(^1\) Through constant meditation the mind will eventually cast off all other thoughts. The monk will then be truly poor in spirit, for he will recognize in the deepest recesses of his soul that his very life and substance depend on divine aid. Having been stripped of all worldly concern and wandering thoughts, he will ascend slowly through the sacred mysteries to the contemplation of God.\(^2\)

Just as in *Conference 9*, Cassian returned to the Bible as the foundation for a life of prayer.\(^3\) Greater attention to the innumerable ways in which this small verse could be applied cultivates greater attention to Scripture as a whole. After assiduously applying this one verse to all the facets of his life the monk will be able to take into himself all the affections of the Psalms (*adfectus in psalmis*). He will sing them as if he, rather than the Psalmist, had composed them. He will eventually recognize that not only the words but the situation of the Psalmist are his own and will become like the Psalmist himself, anticipating the meaning of the words rather than following it. The monk's

\(^{1}\textit{Con. 10.10.}\)

\(^{2}\textit{Con. 10.11.}\)

\(^{3}\textit{Con. 9.18-23} \textit{explains how the Lord's prayer provides an exemplar for all prayer; Stewart, "Cassian," 167.}\)
prayer will finally transcend not only the words of the Psalm but all sense experience and be lifted up "with indescribable groans and sighs." 44

Toward the end of Conference 9 Cassian recommended that the monk pray briefly and frequently. He described these prayers as occurring within a monastic community. Silent prayer not only aided the monk, but it also kept him from disturbing his nearby brethren with mutterings and shouts (susurris uel clamoribus). 45 Unceasing prayer was therefore every monk’s obligation. 46 One required a quiet, not an isolated cell to pray. In Conference 10 Cassian provided the content of this prayer. However, he also described pure prayer as the goal of the solitary. The apostles saw Jesus more clearly in solitude. God appeared to Moses and Elias when they were alone. Jesus Himself showed the need for solitude when he retired to a mountain to pray. In his purity Jesus could in no way be disturbed by crowds or by wandering thoughts. His retreat can only be seen as an example to us all. 47

In this passage, however, Cassian was concerned with withdrawal from cities, towns and villages rather than from

44 "gemitibus inenarrabilibus atque suspiriis." Con. 10.11.

45 Con. 9.35.

46 Stewart, "Cassian," 162.

47 Con. 10.6.
the monastic community. The problem was the distraction of the *turbæ*, not the brothers. Cassian's mountain of solitude is used entirely metaphorically.

But they alone look upon his divinity with the purest eyes who, ascending from lowly and earthly deeds and thoughts, go apart with him <Jesus> into the high mountain of solitude, which is free from the tumult of all earthly thoughts and disturbances and hidden from the confusion of all the *vitia*, and exulted by the purest faith and the prominence of the virtues, <Jesus> reveals the glory of his face and the image of his splendor to those who are able to see him with the pure sight of the soul.\(^4\)

For Cassian solitude is withdrawal from the affairs of the world. Climbing the mountain of solitude is not hiking to Antony's fort or Paul's cave; it is an ascent of the soul to God where with pure eyes one may view the transfigured Christ.

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It was mentioned above that the last two sets of *Conferences* return to issues raised in Cassian's initial corpus and to an intermediate stage in the spiritual ascent of the reader.\(^4\) Understanding the nature of spiritual knowledge required at least some spiritual maturity, and Cassian

\(^4\)"*sed illi soli purissimis oculis diuinitatem ipsius speculantur, qui de humilibus ac terrenis operibus et cogitationibus ascendentes cum illo secedunt in excelso solitudinis monte, qui liber ab omnium terrenarum cogitationum ac perturbationum tumultu et a cunctorum uitiorum permixtione secretus, fide purissima ac uirtutum eminentia sublimatus, gloriam uultus eius et claritatis reuelat imaginem his qui merentur eum mundis animae obtutibus intueri.*" *Con.* 10.6.

\(^4\)Chapter 5, pp. 200-201.
expressly stated this in Conference 14.\textsuperscript{50} He also indicated it through his description of Cassian and Germanus, for Nesteros, the interlocutor who describes spiritual knowledge, acknowledged the progress the companions had made in the memorization of Scripture.\textsuperscript{51} Cassian also dwelt on the susceptibility of a teacher to vainglory, a \textit{vitium} that cannot arise until after some virtue has been acquired.\textsuperscript{52} Given that the reader was to take Cassian's and Germanus's part in the dialogue, he could have been expected to have made similar progress. Otherwise, the \textit{Conference} would not have addressed his needs and perhaps not have been understood.

Cassian described the contemplation of the "secrets of invisible mysteries" as two-fold.\textsuperscript{53} First there is practical knowledge, "which is perfected by the correction of habits and the purgation of the \textit{vitia}".\textsuperscript{54} The second is theoretical knowledge, "which consists in the contemplation of divine things and the knowledge of the most sacred

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Con.} 14.14.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Con.} 14.1.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Con.} 14.9-10,17; \textit{Chapter 4}, pp. 166-168.
\textsuperscript{53} "\textit{inuisibilium sacramentorum arcana.}" \textit{Con.} 14.1.
\textsuperscript{54} "\textit{quae emendatione morum et uitiorum purgatione perficitur.}" \textit{Con.} 14.1.
thoughts."\textsuperscript{55} At first glance, this division would seem to correspond to the traditional division between the cenobitic and eremitical lives. Cassian went on, however, to claim that the practical life can include many professions ranging from communal monasticism to care of the poor. What is remarkable about this list is that it includes anachoresis.\textsuperscript{56} The acquisition of spiritual knowledge therefore cannot be viewed as a movement from the practical to the contemplative life, or from the community to the hermitage. They are two aspects of a single knowledge and a single ascent. As in his earlier discussion of pure prayer, Cassian began his consideration of spiritual knowledge by emphasizing the role of praxis.

Practical knowledge must come first. While this knowledge may be gained without its theoretical counterpart, there can be no contemplation without adequate preparation.\textsuperscript{57} The nature of this preparation is very much tied up with the nature of theoretical knowledge itself. Having first described theoria as the contemplation of divine things, Cassian went on to identify it with biblical exegesis. He then divided exegesis into two kinds: historical knowledge, which is a "perception of past and

\textsuperscript{55}"quae in contemplatione divinarum rerum et sacratissimorum sensuum cognitione." Con. 14.1.

\textsuperscript{56} Con. 14.4.

\textsuperscript{57} Con. 14.2.
visible things," and the spiritual sense. He divided the spiritual sense still further into the tropological, allegorical and anagogical senses. With theoretical knowledge so deeply rooted in biblical exegesis, it is no wonder that memorization and meditation play a key role in its acquisition. It is striking, however, that memorization and meditation are also essential to the purgation of the vitia.

The first step toward purity of heart is to learn and to obey the precepts of the elders without question. Having secured humility one must be rid of all worry and worldly thoughts. Continual reading and meditation can assist this. The mind cannot be stripped of all thoughts. The best that one can do is gain some control over what thoughts enter the mind. Meditation on scriptural texts will occupy the mind and help to prevent other thoughts from disturbing it. Texts should be memorized even when they

58 "praeteritarum ac uisibilium agnitionem ... rerum." Con. 14.8.
60 Con. 14.9. This recalls the first four Institutes. Cassian's comment on the need to receive commands dumbly may be an allusion to Pinufius's earlier description of obedience as being deaf, dumb, and blind. Inst. 4.41.
61 Con. 14.10.
are not understood, for their deeper meanings will be revealed later. Meditation therefore helps to purify the mind and lead it to its true object of knowledge: God alone.

Scriptural study is both part of praxis and supported by it. Meditation aids the purgation of the vitia and the resulting purity allows for a deeper penetration into the text. Scripture condescends to its readers. "It will appear earthly to the carnal and divine to the spiritual." As we grow in purity and knowledge the meaning of a text will change. It will become more profound. Cassian wrote that "with the renewal of our mind increasing through study, the face of Scripture also begins to be renewed and the beauty of more holy understanding will advance according to the measure of <our> advancing." Praxis and scriptural study nurture each other. There is a strong and reciprocal relationship between the two which mirrors the relationship that Cassian had earlier established between praxis and pure prayer.

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64 Con. 14.10.

65 "uel terrena carnalibus uel divina spiritalibus adparebit." Con. 14.11.

66 "crescente autem per hoc studium innovatione mentis nostrae etiam scripturarum facies incipiet innovari, et sacratioris intelligentiae pulchritudo quodammodo cum proficiens proficiet." Con. 14.11.
Pure prayer and anagogical exegesis also share the same object of knowledge. Cassian first described the anagogical sense as that which rises "from the spiritual mysteries <of the allegorical sense> to the even more sublime and sacred mysteries of Heaven."67 He offered the example of Jerusalem which, when understood anagogically, denotes the "heavenly city of God."68 In a later example Cassian described fornication as denoting any thought which distracts the mind from God.69 He also wrote that the ultimate goal of exegesis is "to enter into the veins and marrow of the heavenly sayings and contemplate with the most pure eye of the heart the profound and hidden mysteries."70 In language very similar to his description of pure and ceaseless prayer, Cassian described spiritual knowledge as a "holy and unceasing ruminatio of the divine law."71

Exegesis is not an academic exercise and secular learning is of little or no use to the explication of the bibli-


68 Con. 14.8.

69 Con. 14.11.

70"uenas ac medullas caelestium intrare dictorum ac profunda et abscondita sacramenta purissimo cordis oculo contemplari." Con. 14.9.

71"divinae legis sancta et incessabilis ruminatio." Con. 14.13. Contra Markus, End, 187, who argues that "contemplation, understood as some kind of experience or vision in this life, is in fact absent from his discussion here."
cal text. It is instead the pure and ceaseless contemplation of the sacred mysteries underlying the text. At its highest stage it transcends the words of the text and becomes a contemplation of the mysteries of God. The reader has thus returned to the example of Theodore mentioned so long ago. When Theodore was confronted with a difficult exegetical problem, he turned not toward his learning, for he had none, but rather toward the quiet of his cell.

In his discussion of spiritual knowledge Cassian spent much more time discussing the correct manner of instruction than its content. He emphasized that the monk should seek spiritual knowledge in the hope of being able to live according to its principles rather than in the hope of conveying those principles to others. Cassian worried that some sought spiritual knowledge for their own aggrandizement and warned that vainglory is a particular threat to those who wish to teach. Moreover, Cassian warned that no one can teach effectively who has not applied the knowledge to his own life. Effort inspired by a desire for praise will not yield true knowledge. Moreover, the monk should not presume to teach too early, even if he is sincere. A novice can

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72 Con. 14.16.
73 Inst. 5.33.
74 Con. 14.9.
75 Con. 14.9, 17.
neither understand the sacred mysteries nor teach them.\textsuperscript{76} Nor does he possess the discernment necessary to assess the needs of others. Therefore the monk should be wary of what and whom he teaches.\textsuperscript{77}

Cassian's emphasis on the virtue and proper conduct of the teacher is reminiscent of Evagrius's \textit{Gnosticus}. The \textit{Gnosticus} is part of a trilogy which includes the \textit{Practicus} and the \textit{Kephalaia gnostica}. The \textit{Practicus} addresses the purgation of the \textit{vitia} and the attainment of \textit{apatheia}, while the \textit{Kephalaia gnostica} is Evagrius's longest speculative work. Standing between the two, the \textit{Gnosticus} addresses how the gnostic is to live a virtuous life and the ways in which he is to interact with others.\textsuperscript{78} In this work Evagrius argued that the one who has attained true knowledge has an obligation to others. He must remain accessible to people who need him and he must learn how to discern their needs.\textsuperscript{79} While the gnostic must be wary of what and whom he teaches, he nevertheless has an obligation to instruct others in the knowledge that he has gained.\textsuperscript{80} He therefore has an obligation to serve as an elder, or as a spiritual director. It

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Con.} 14.14.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Con.} 14.18.
\textsuperscript{79} O'Loughlin, "Origenism," 199.
\textsuperscript{79} Evagrius, \textit{Gnosticus} 15, 22.
\textsuperscript{80} Evagrius, \textit{Gnosticus}, 3, 7, 10.
is this form of instruction that Cassian described in Conference 14. Although he was later interpreted to the contrary, he was little concerned with preaching or with pastoral care in the broader sense.

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There is no doubt that Cassian was influenced by Evagrius. In some instances, such as the one above, the influence can be clearly seen. It is nevertheless extremely difficult to measure precisely the extent of Cassian's borrowing. Cassian never mentions his predecessor and does not quote him at length. Moreover, although he claimed that it was an acceptable practice, Cassian was much more reticent than Evagrius to speculate openly about the content of spiritual knowledge.\(^{81}\) The Origenist Controversy and Jerome's attacks against Evagrius and Rufinus would have been sufficient reason for Cassian to be cautious. That is most likely why Cassian struggled with so many different expressions for what is in effect Evagrius's concept of apatheia. It is possible, however, that Cassian's apparent caution arose from his misunderstanding of or disagreement with Evagrius's ideas.

Marsili demonstrated long ago that Cassian had proposed a form of monastic life that was very similar to Evagrius's

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\(^{81}\) Con. 8.4-5.
own. Although his study is now dated, for many of Evagrius's texts have only recently been critically edited, Marsili's fundamental claim still holds true. In his description of the nature and role of ascetic practices, in his description of the eight vitia that afflict the soul, and in his understanding of contemplation and prayer, Cassian looked back to Evagrius.

Cassian's division of monastic life into a series of three renunciations is an example of this. The first renunciation is of worldly goods and the second is of former affections and the vitia. Cassian described the third as the movement from present and visible things to future and invisible ones. In his Kephalaia gnostica Evagrius also described three renunciations. They are of worldly goods, evil and ignorance. The first two renunciations are parallel. Since both authors described true knowledge as knowledge of the invisible mysteries and of God, their third renunciations are also alike.

Another example is Cassian's concentration on outer and inner praxis (emendatio morum and purgatio vitium), which strongly resembles Evagrius's goals of hesychia and apatheia. Like Evagrius, Cassian argued that the waking

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52 Marsili, Giovanni.
53 Con. 3.6.
54 Evagrius, Kephalaia 1.78-80.
mind can never be idle and that thoughts will always flit through it. The goal of each was therefore the control of thoughts more than their utter destruction. Neither author argued that apatheia or impassibilitas left the soul devoid of emotion. The vitia were to be replaced with their opposing virtues. Jerome's attack against apatheia was therefore facile. Apatheia renders the monk neither a stone nor a God. It neither crushes emotion nor leads to sinlessness.

At times, however, their disagreement is quite apparent. Both authors, for instance, stressed the role of love in the ascent of the soul to God. Cassian even wrote of the hope that a monk united in prayer with God might in some way share in the love that formed the union between the Father and the Son. He was nevertheless quite reserved when speaking of love for his fellow monks. He praised the community as a place to purify the soul, but he often described this in a rather harsh way. At times he suggested that the community helps the monk to become aware of his vitia by serving as a constant irritant. By patiently enduring these trials, the monk will gain the humility that is the foundation of purity. Evagrius, on the other hand,

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85 Con. 7.3; Evagrius, Practicus 8.
86 Chapter 3, pp. 116ff.
87 Both described it as the goal of praxis. Con. 1.6-7; 3.7,10; Evagrius, Ad monachos 31.
88 Con. 10.7; 11.12.
stressed the need for gentleness when dealing with others.\textsuperscript{89} Whereas Cassian limited genuine affection to only a few, Evagrius spoke of a loving duty to all.\textsuperscript{90}

To take another example, Evagrius described sin largely as a mechanism of deceit. Demons assail the soul and keep it from true knowledge. Matter thickens the soul and makes it obtuse. Freedom from sin entails the attainment of knowledge. Cassian, on the other hand, tended to show a greater concern for human frailty. He more explicitly argued that we are bound by the law of sin and that we can in no way overcome this in our present form.\textsuperscript{91} While Cassian agreed that our restoration involves the acquisition of the knowledge of God, there is no evidence that he had adopted Evagrius's understanding of the preexistence of souls. This may be because Cassian hesitated to revive an old debate or because he didn't think the matter important. However, it may also be because he disagreed with his predecessor.

Nevertheless, while the authors disagreed on some things, they shared much in common. A poignant example of this lies in the heart of how to read both Evagrius and Cassian. In chapter 2 it was argued that Evagrius had con-

\textsuperscript{89}Driscoll, "Gentleness," 297-321, examines this at length.

\textsuperscript{90}Con. 16.14.

\textsuperscript{91}Con. 23.11.
structured his ascetic texts in a way that encouraged a particular method of reading. This method involved the memorization and the rumination of the text, as well as a careful and measured progress through the corpus as a whole. It was also argued that this method of reading was closely related to Evagrius's method of biblical study. Many of the images that he used were drawn from the Bible. Many of his aphorisms recalled biblical passages and encouraged the latter's memorization as well. Evagrius encouraged a progressively more profound reading of the Bible and the application of its principles in a manner similar to the use of his own texts. Guillaumont has argued that Evagrius understood the allegorical exegesis of the Bible as a part of contemplation.

In Chapter 4 it was argued that Cassian attempted much the same thing. He constructed his ascetic corpus in order to encourage a slow and careful reading. While writing in a discursive style, he nevertheless encouraged the memorization and rumination of his text. He demanded that his reader not go beyond what he had fully understood and successfully applied in his life. Through the use of Germanus and his younger self, he attempted to gauge the

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92 Chapter 2, pp. 85-90.
93 A. Guillaumont, "Philosophe," 45.
94 Chapter 4, pp. 173-177.
reader's progress and to allow him to participate in the conferences themselves. Moreover, Cassian frequently returned to ideas he had raised earlier to consider them in a new and often more profound light. In Conference 1, for example, he described fornication as a momentary wavering from gazing upon Christ.\textsuperscript{95} In Conference 14 he took up the idea once again. This time he explained that this understanding is the highest, or most spiritual understanding of the term.\textsuperscript{96} The reader had been offered many descriptions of the \textit{vitium} and presumably had eradicated it from his heart. Now he is brought to its last and most profound meaning: fornication is distraction from the contemplation of God. This is the highest, or anagogical, meaning of the term. It is discussed within the context of biblical exegesis and concerns the ceaseless contemplation of God. Pure prayer and biblical exegesis are inextricably linked.

Although he delineated the four senses of Scripture that would later become standard, Cassian was in fact concerned with the different ways in which Scripture could satisfy the different needs and capacities of its readers. Condescension to the needs of the reader is a theme that runs throughout Cassian's ascetic corpus, and it is not

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Con.} 1.13.

\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Con.} 14.11.
limited to the Bible. The principles of the ascetic life are revealed only gradually and, if the corpus is read properly, only according to the capacity of the reader.

The capacity of the reader to grasp the deeper meaning of Scripture is also measured. It was argued above that Institute 8 introduces a new level of understanding; one that pertains more to the inner than to the outer life.\textsuperscript{97} It is in this Institute that Cassian also introduced a more sophisticated interpretation of the Bible. He first argued that the anthropomorphic attributes ascribed to God in the Bible must be understood figuratively.\textsuperscript{98} More important, he developed what he termed the tropological sense of Ephesians 4:6.\textsuperscript{99} This discussion is brief and Cassian quickly resumes his more straightforward discussion of anger. It is important to recognize, however, that Cassian opened the door to a more sophisticated understanding of Scripture only when he judged that his reader had gained a sufficient capacity for understanding. Although he quickly moved on, Cassian did not close this door behind him. He continued to return to the Bible in order to reveal its deeper meaning according to the growing capacity of his readers.\textsuperscript{100} In

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{97}Chapter 4, pp. 161-163.
\item \textsuperscript{98}\textit{Inst.} 8.4.
\item \textsuperscript{99}\textit{Inst.} 8.10.
\item \textsuperscript{100}Chapter 4, pp. 169-170.
\end{itemize}

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Institute 12 we learn that the principles of exegesis that apply to historical narrative are not limited to Scripture. The accounts of the Desert Fathers, and by implication Cassian's text, can be read the same way.\footnote{Inst. 12.20-22.}

Exegesis is not an academic explication of a text. Cassian instead called for an attentive, or even contemplative, reading of a text and the application of the mysteries that underlie it. As the reader progressed through the text, his capacity for understanding, and therefore his purity, also grew. Understanding and purity support each other in a balanced ascent. This is true of the Bible, of Evagrius's ascetic writings, and of Cassian's own text.

It is here, one might argue, that Evagrius's influence on Cassian is most profound. Cassian's understanding of the relationship between praxis and theoria draws heavily on Evagrius. So also does his understanding of exegesis and contemplation. Both writers believed that the spiritual meaning of a text concerns not only what is written but the way one reads. A remark made of Philo can equally be applied to Cassian and Evagrius. "Allegory is not a method of interpretation; it is not any sort of formal approach to the text. It is a form of mental or spiritual life, or a way of practicing contemplation."\footnote{Bruns, "Problem," 151.} Cassian and Evagrius

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were not unique in this. Torjeson has argued that Origen's goal in his commentary on the Psalms was "to locate the hearer or reader within the situation of the speaker and to place the words of the text in the mouth of the listener so that he can appropriate them as his own."\textsuperscript{103} This reflects Cassian's understanding of psalmody at the height of pure prayer. It also describes the role of Cassian and Germanus in his text. The reader was to appropriate their voices as his own. He was to grow as they grew. He was to have his expectations overturned just as theirs had been overturned. This fundamental principle must be grasped if an understanding of Cassian's ascetic literature is to be gained.

\textsuperscript{103} Torjeson, \textit{Hermeneutical}, 50.
Conclusion

Reading Cassian is a difficult task, and a basic understanding of Evagrius's thought is necessary if Cassian is to be read with any competency. A quick glance at the second half of Conference 1 can provide sufficient proof of this. Nevertheless, a familiarity with the framework of Evagrius's thought alone will not suffice to unlock Cassian's long and complicated text. One must go beyond how Evagrius influenced the content of Cassian's monastic teaching to consider how Cassian's texts were meant to be read. This requires familiarity with several peripheral issues, among which are the nature of Cassian's formation and the identity of his intended audience.

The few facts that are known about Cassian's life are not sufficient to indicate the location and nature of his formation. The content of his teaching, however, betrays a dependence on Evagrius. The arrangement of Cassian's text would indicate that his acquaintance with Evagrius, or at least with the Origenist monks at Nitria and Kellia, was not merely literary. His systematic attempt to reproduce the method of teaching found among these monks would argue against this. It is possible that Cassian gained this knowledge while in Palestine after the expulsion of the Origenist monks. The fact that Origenist monks were driven from Egypt does not mean that they were unable to regain
some semblance of their previous methods of instruction after the controversy had ebbed. One might wonder, however, to what extent Evagrius would still have been read in the first decades of the fifth century, especially if his De oratione had initiated the events that had led to the Origenists' expulsion.

Since Cassian encouraged a particular relationship between his reader and the text, one must also consider his intended audience. It has been shown that in his earlier correspondence Jerome played a large role in developing the western understanding of Egyptian monasticism. This early view is almost a caricature of what was actually going on in Egypt. Jerome's emphasis on physical withdrawal, bizarre forms of ascetics, and heroic combat presented a distorted view of Egyptian monasticism to his readers. His ignorance of the nature of pure prayer, his failure to consider the need for instruction, and his later characterization of apatheia as inpeccantia went far toward preventing Egyptian monastic teaching from entering the West. To be fair, Jerome matured as he wrote and later stressed the need for instruction and a balanced life. His earlier writings had enjoyed wide currency, however, and had influenced the thought of many.

It would be tempting to portray Cassian as writing against Jerome, rather than against a more general western, or Gallic, understanding of Egyptian monasticism. That Cas-
sian was manipulating the expectations of his readers is beyond doubt. It would be difficult or even impossible to demonstrate, however, that there was a single, unified view of Egyptian monasticism in the West, or even in southern Gaul. Would it make more sense to suggest that Cassian was reacting against a single, influential author? Cassian undercut Jerome as a monastic writer in claiming that Jerome had written about what he had seen but not experienced. Cassian also described the monastic practices of Syria and Palestine as inferior to those of Egypt. He reported being told as a young monk to forget what he had learned in Syria and to begin his formation anew. Jerome, on the other hand, based his authority as a monastic writer on his life as a hermit in Syria and later as a cenobite in Palestine. Jerome bragged of having travelled through Egypt, but through the mouth of Piamun Cassian complained of monastic tourists from Syria who had no interest in actually practicing what they saw. Cassian described his original monastic community in Bethlehem as being near the cave of the nativity. This community had proved unsatisfactory and Cassian feared harm to his spiritual life if he returned. Elsewhere, he was directly told by his elders to abandon what he had learned while there.

The reader was to adopt Cassian's voice as his own. The reader, therefore, was also told to abandon what he had learned from Bethlehem and Syria. This may be understood as
a general reference to abandoning a poor beginning like the one that Cassian himself had received. Might is also be a reference to Jerome? Could Cassian have subtly encouraged his reader to abandon the caricature of monastic life he had learned from Jerome's early letters and begin a new formation based on real experience? We will probably never know for sure, at least partly because Cassian was so careful not to participate directly in disputes. It is, nevertheless, a tantalizing possibility.

Part of Cassian's reaction against this view can be seen in his return of anachoresis to its proper place in the monastic life. While he admitted the possibility of complete physical withdrawal, he was more concerned to describe anachoresis as a withdrawal into the inner life of the soul. The immediate goal of the monk was the tranquility necessary for prayer, not solitude. The contemplation of God is possible within a community. Tranquility needs neither the cell nor the desert. It does, however, require reading and meditation on the Bible. At one level, these exercises serve to help purify the soul for prayer. At another level, they are part of prayer. In Cassian's thought reading and prayer are inextricably mixed.
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