

JOHN CASSIAN AND THE CARE OF SOULS

by

Russell Giesbrecht

A thesis  
presented to the University of Manitoba  
in fulfillment of the  
thesis requirement for the degree of  
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in  
History

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
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## CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE LEGACY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD . . . . .	6
III. EARLY CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY . . . . .	26
IV. JOHN CASSIAN AND THE CARE OF SOULS . . . . .	55
moderation . . . . .	67
self-knowledge . . . . .	70
the outer man and the inner man . . . . .	82
the natural and the unnatural will . . . . .	87
soul, heart and mind . . . . .	91
flesh and spirit . . . . .	100
purity of heart . . . . .	103
V. CONCLUSION . . . . .	122
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	130

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

John Cassian was a monk. He was born about 360, whether in Provence or Dobrudja is uncertain. He had a liberal education and entered a monastery in Bethlehem at an early age with a friend, Germanus. They soon left to visit the hermits of the Egyptian desert and study their stricter form of asceticism. Political rivalry between the indigenous, illiterate Coptic monks and the parvenu literate, mostly Greek, monks, students of Origen, ended with the Origenist party, Cassian and Germanus included, being expelled in 399 by order of the patriarch of Alexandria. Most settled in Syria, but Cassian and a few others went to Constantinople, where they were sheltered by the patriarch John Chrysostom. When Chrysostom was exiled in 404 by the empress Pulcheria Cassian went to Rome with an envoy to plead for him. He left before the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410 and settled in Marseille, where he established a monastery. About 420 he wrote in Latin The Institutes of the Coenobites and the Remedies of the Eight Principal Faults at the request of Castor, bishop of Apta Julia (40 miles north of Marseille), who wanted to establish a monastery in his diocese but had nothing to guide him. In this book Cassian provided an overview of monastic customs in the East and then described

the fight with the passions which is the first task of the novice monk. Between 425 and 429 he produced a larger work called The Conferences, which purports to relate twenty-four conferences he and Germanus had held with the heroes of the Egyptian desert. It presents more detailed and advanced teachings for the more advanced monk. It came out in three parts, which are dedicated to various personages: Leontius, probable bishop of Frejus, and a monk named Helladius; Honoratus and Eucherius from the nearby monastery of Lerins, destined to become bishops of Arles and Lyons respectively; and four monks, Jovinian, Minervius, Leontius and Theodore. In 430 at the request of Pope Leo the Great he wrote On the Incarnation to contradict the teachings of the heretical patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius. Cassian died around 435.

There is not much autobiographical material in Cassian's works. An external source is Gennadius of Marseille's late fifth-century catalogue of authors, chapter 62 being devoted to Cassian. The oldest manuscripts of Cassian's works date from the tenth century for On the Incarnation and from the ninth for complete codices of the Institutes and Conferences, although parts of each date from the seventh or eighth century. The critical editions were done in the late nineteenth century by Michael Petschenig and are published in the Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.

The inspiration for this study comes from Cassian's keen psychological insight. He appears to use terms such as



"soul", "heart" and "mind" with technical precision. We will see whether this is actually the case. We will review the history of what we would now call psychology prior to Cassian's time, focusing on the use of these terms and a few others, to see whether he stands in contrast to or in continuity with his antecedents. The English translation done in the late nineteenth century by Rev. C. S. Gibson has been used for the basic research, although the more I read it, the greater are my misgivings. The style of the translation is clumsy and artificial, even by the standards of its time. I have resisted the temptation to retranslate passages quoted in the text of this thesis except when key terms--soul, heart, mind, spirit--were involved, in which case they were checked and standardized if necessary. Whether Cassian used these terms consistently is a question we must address; whether Gibson did is not. The French translation of the Institutes and Conferences, by J. C. Guy and E. Pichery respectively, were of assistance in reading the parts of Cassian's oeuvre left untranslated by Gibson (chapter 6 of the Institutes and conferences 12 and 22), for reasons of propriety, a move that is not only prudish but academically reprehensible. It is an insult to this earnest and unassuming author to have his work censored.

The only works in English devoted extensively to Cassian are Owen Chadwick's John Cassian, an introduction to Cassian's life and the problems inherent in studying him, and Philip Rousseau's Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the

Age of Jerome and Cassian. This is a provocative book and has influenced this study more than any other, although there are points at which I disagree with Rousseau and these will appear in the text below. The main work on Cassian has been done in French. The most important contributions appeared in the 1930's, when Michel Olphe-Galliard, H.I. Marrou, E. Pichery and A. Menager published several series of articles on him. At about the same time there appeared a study in Italian of Cassian's relation to one of his foremost influences, father of the 'eight principal faults', Evagrius, by Giovanni Marsili.

An excellent source for the period in general and our psychological anthropology in particular has been the Dicti-onnaire de spiritualite ascetique et de mystique. Finally, Peter Brown's gripping speculations on developments in the late antique world have helped give direction to this undertaking.

I have tried not to be myopic. Cassian justifies more research than has been done, but he is important as a facilitator rather than as an innovator. His discomfort with creative license may be demonstrated by his constant introduction of metaphors and similes with the phrase ut ita dixerim, ("as one might say"). Whereas men like Ambrose, Augustine, the Cappadocian Fathers and Jerome held the rudder, Cassian represents many more who pulled the oars. We will see Cassian's importance relative not only to the bright lights of his time, but to the landmarks that appear

on the horizons behind and before him. Because he represents a subtle, though final, shift away from the ancient world, considerable space has been given to the periods preceding Cassian's, in order to indicate as clearly as possible the often long lines of continuity and divergence.

Cassian's time was one of a turning from collectivism to individualism in some important areas. It was the end of a great period of history, and as things crumbled around them, people turned inwards and looked to themselves, or, when outward, to reflections of themselves, for strength and answers. Similar occurrences took place after the decline of classical Athens and again at the end of the feudal hegemony of the middle ages. Since then, individualism has developed into the ruling category of the cultures and civilizations which trace their ancestry back to the medieval, Roman and Greek cultures and civilizations.

## Chapter II

### THE LEGACY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

Individualism began to replace earlier traditions in the seventh century B.C., when the opening up of the Black Sea to Greek trade exposed our preclassical forebears to the individualism of shamanic culture, a development that filled a timely need, as communal home-grown Dionysiac religion was losing its hold on the peoples of the balkan peninsula.<sup>1</sup> A result was what E.R. Dodds calls "the transference of the notion of purity from the magical to the moral sphere", a development he places in the closing years of the fifth century,<sup>2</sup> composed of increasing reliance on secular law, with its recognition of the importance of motive. This was a result of the development of Athenian democracy, with its concomitant of rationalism, which saw the liberation of the individual from "the bonds of clan and family".

Unfortunately, this move towards an open society lay the newly liberated individual open to the temptation of new bonds, chains freely chosen in the marketplace of philosophy. The internalising of conscience, the shift from a culture of shame, in which wrongdoing is seen as a public matter, to be dealt with according to the dictates of the

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<sup>1</sup> E.R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational, (University of California Press, 1951), 142.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pp. 36-37.

community and its need of cohesion and conformity, to a culture of guilt, in which the onus is on the individual to deal with his own actions as he will, with secular law and religious dogma to guide him, led many searching for a safe harbor in the written word, a commonly pointed at characteristic of the medieval period which is also prevalent during the hellenistic period.<sup>3</sup>

The nation or race had the same place in Hebrew thought as the polis had in Greek. Moses effected the connection of the moral and religious life about 1230 B.C. in his presentation of the Ten Commandments. The events of history led Jeremiah (c. 626) to a new covenant, not between Yahweh and the nation as in Moses' time, but between Yahweh and the individual.<sup>4</sup> During the exile that began in 597 the sense of nationhood was diminished further and the congregation developed as a gathering of individuals.<sup>5</sup> A concurrent development was universalism, and the replacement of parochialism with individualism and universalism also took place in the Hellenic world, through the teachings of the Stoics in particular.<sup>6</sup>

The Pythagoreans pioneered the examination of conscience in the archaic age, a practice which passed through Socrates to the Stoics. As a result of this, a common element of

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<sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 252.

<sup>4</sup> W.G. de Burgh, The Legacy of the Ancient World, (Pelican, 1967), p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> ibid., p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> ibid., p. 77.

these schools was their strong assertion of personality. This culminated in the teachings of the Stoics, in whom a vision of the unity and integrity of the individual and a strong consciousness of the inviolability and universality of law forged the individual into a well-honed instrument of action, the edge being his free will. These men left behind the parochial laws of their original city-states to claim their citizenship in the universe. (The cosmopolis: city--polis--of the universe--cosmos.) This required a thorough knowledge of the laws of the universe and one's place in it, which required a thorough knowledge of one's self. This, of course, requires a conception of "self".

Such conceptions are usually contained within such concepts as "soul". For now, we can define this word as it has been used throughout history as the essential part of a person, what differentiates him from other humans and from the non-human. This concept is not always operative. The archaic Greeks who appear in and behind Homer's works lack it. The psyche, what is usually taken as the Greek equivalent of the English word "soul", is mentioned only when it leaves the individual upon his death, and this seems to be its only function. During his life he converses with the thumos, "spirit", but it is not specifically his spirit, being more an independent voice that lives inside him, in his chest or midriff, with whom he can speak as man to man.<sup>7</sup> The mind was the source of images and ideas.<sup>8</sup> This was the

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<sup>7</sup> Dodds, Greeks and the Irrational, pp. 15-16.

result of a practice of projecting emotions and treating them as being essentially outside the individual. This is why the archaic Greek lacked a sense of sin: to him, events we would classify as part of the domain of morality were external, although they could touch him, in the same way as an illness. As with an illness, the solution was also to be sought in external measures.

It was a step up from this then when the pre-Socratic philosophers, who were mostly of what we would call a materialistic bent, came to the realisation that there was some special principle that defined the human being. For Democritus, this was a material principle like all things, but one composed of a special type of atom. For Pythagoras, it was not material, but a principle of proportion and harmony, best expressed through mathematics. During this time the word psyche is used in a more precise way to refer to the emotional self.<sup>9</sup> It is the link to the divine, which it approaches in fits of madness or in sleep, during which time it approximates the state it will enjoy after the death of the body, according to Xenophon.<sup>10</sup> It was Anaxagoras who clearly separated mind, or nous, from matter and made the former primary. Nous is usually translated as "mind", which in later times would be subsumed to the soul, although at this time it is still a concept in development and resembles

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<sup>8</sup> C.A. Mace, R.S. Peters, Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "Psychology", p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Dodds, p. 139.

<sup>10</sup> ibid., p. 135.

pneuma or spirit more than the cartesian tool we see it as. The importance of this appearance of the term is that it is already associated with a dualistic attitude. For the Stoics, the soul would remain material, and they would stand in contrast to the Platonic school, which followed Plato in testing the implications of the developing conception of duality for humankind. Greatly influenced by the Pythagoreans, Plato came to see the body and soul as separate entities, essentially opposed to each other, joined in an unfortunate marriage, which it was nevertheless necessary to maintain for the soul's health.

In Greek society, then, we see two strains of philosophical thought developing, one religious and mildly dualistic, the other materialistic (although not in any anti-religious sense) and voluntaristic, humanistic. Both of these strains would have tremendous influence on later developments, and in many ways their ultimate importance was established during the time of Cassian's own life.

The other major influence Cassian's generation inherited from the ancient world was of course the Hebrew philosophy as transmitted through the Old and New Testaments. Here we see a philosophical anthropology markedly different from any arising from the classical world. While Greek anthropology culminated in doctrines of dualism and materialism, the anthropology of the Old Testament makes use of terms such as body (gewayah), soul (nephesh), and spirit (ruah), but makes



no clear distinction between them.<sup>11</sup> Any one of these terms can and is used to stand for the whole man. Nephesh, which is translated as psyche most often in the New Testament, is applied to animals as well as humans, and often has the sense in the Old Testament as the Greek word thumos, spirit or "life-principle".<sup>12</sup> In the New Testament English it appears variously as "human being" "person", "living being", "self", "life", "mind", "heart". Of 755 Old Testament occurrences, 600 are rendered by the word psyche in the Septuagint. These we would tend to equate with the concept of "soul". But the others indicate that its usage was not consistent with this, and, in fact, Hans Walter Wolff states that "we are coming to the conclusion that it is only in a very few passages that the translation 'soul' corresponds to the meaning of nepes"<sup>13</sup>

References to its departure, return and resurrection--the sorts of things we expect a soul to be able to do--are metaphorical. The faculties that we expect of it--and which Aristotle attributed to it--are attributed metaphorically to the physical organs most closely associated with them. This inability or refusal to differentiate what we would expect to be differentiated is more than just a lack of intellectual rigor, if it is even that. It is the result of a differ-

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<sup>11</sup> Stanton Jones, ed., Psychology and the Christian Faith, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), p. 134.

<sup>12</sup> ibid., p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Walter Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1974), p. 10.

ent method, and one of its results was the ability to conceive of a closer relation between body and spirit than would otherwise have been possible. While this may hamper the study of the soul by tying its actions to physical metaphors, it allows the body to be imbued with some of the virtues of spirit. This more positive view of the body, which also appears in Orphic religion, makes possible the idea of apotheosis, or assumption into the godhead, a feat that is ascribed to Romulus as well as to certain biblical figures. It is encapsulated in the Stoic doctrine of cyclical death and rebirth, although it is weighted down by the Stoic inability to exceed material conceptions.

The doctrine of personal retribution developed among the Hebrews as a means of connecting the moral and religious spheres. It came under scrutiny and was found wanting by the Hebrews in exile, who saw similar fortunes befalling good and bad men. Retribution and vindication were transferred to the afterlife, a concept bequeathed to the Hebrews by their Babylonian captors. The resurrection of the body was necessary to any idea of personal immortality for the Hebrews. The resurrection of the body was an innovation for them, as was Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul for the Greeks.<sup>14</sup> The two--Hebrew resurrection and Greek immortality--combined in the the Christian teaching. It reaches its highest development in the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body in a final and perfect form.

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<sup>14</sup> De Burgh, Legacy of the Ancient World, p. 84.

This doctrine can be, and has been, seen both as the height of sophistication and of ignorance. Plutarch, writing in the second century A.D., presents this as an example of the workings of the "primitive mind".<sup>15</sup> In many ways we can understand how this view might be taken of the mindset apparent in the Old Testament, for its language gave many thoughtful early Christians difficulty. However, we are dealing with notions of health, and teleology can shed a lot of light on what was expected and desired in this life. We will have to answer the question of what this poetic and unscientific notion has to say about approaches to spiritual and physical health in the early centuries of the Christian era. For now, it is most important to realize that it is more than this, that it must not be judged on the basis of the tenets of Greek rationalism and that when we come to trace its importance we will see that it contributes an essential ingredient to the thought of our subject.

Teleology implies a destination. This requires a means of reaching this destination. When talking about a moral destination, whether some definition of health or the after-life or whatever, we isolate will as the mover: either the moral will of the individual or the arbitrary will of the gods or God. For the Homeric Greeks, extraordinary deeds were said to be achieved through a state of divine madness called ate. This state could be brought about by one of three agencies: Zeus; the Erinys; and the individual's own

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Brown, The Cult of Saints (University of Chicago Press, 1981) p. 2.

moira or destiny. Any action that did not arise out of one's own conscious intention was deemed to originate outside of the individual, and this source could be either an objectified "destiny" or a god, according to whether one took an objective or subjective point of view. According to E.R. Dodds, this is "the inevitable result of the absence of the concept of the will".<sup>16</sup>

We have already seen that the late fifth century saw the development of a doctrine of the will among the pre-socratics. It was Socrates who joined this with the individual psyche, or soul, and gave it the moral overtones with which we still associate it. Socrates wished to be iatros tes psyches, a healer of the soul, and these very words have been recast to form the word "psychiatrist". However, it was not a "scientific" psychiatry, in that it did not exclude religion and philosophy from its method. Previously, willful action had simply been a matter of receiving, like a radio antenna, the signals that came from without. Socrates forced men to look within themselves for answers and to face the ambiguity of trying to live a moral life in the world based on doctrines that came not from the world but from the individual. As John McNeill says, Socrates "appears as a relentless examiner of men's states of mind, a surgeon who probes before he heals. Often he seems primarily concerned to disturb and confuse those who rely on ill-considered opinions, forcing them into untenable positions

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<sup>16</sup> Dodds, p. 171.

and convicting them of self-contradiction."<sup>17</sup> McNeill likens the resulting state of perplexity and distrust, or aporia, to the Christian "conviction of sin".

Classical morality was still characterized by a lack of inwardness. The word hamartia, used for sin in the New Testament, had the original meaning of "error" or "missing the mark".<sup>18</sup> And yet the Greeks' doctrine of virtue was one of innateness, in that they held virtue to be knowledge, which every man was born knowing and only forgot. There was, in Socrates' view, no necessary disjunction between the exterior and interior worlds, and perhaps this is why the morality espoused by him is not so deep or thorough-going--but more precise and rational--than those of later, less certain times. The classical Greeks lived public lives and their conceptions of the person were invariably tied up with public and communal concerns. The word idiotes, ancestor of "idiot", refers to a man who only concerns himself with private affairs. Socrates' emphasis on the care of the individual soul was an innovation. This was a sort of dualism, whereas in Homer the internal and external realms, although quite separate, operate according to the same laws.

The development of the study of the soul, or psychology, was taken up by Socrates' pupil, Plato. The way was prepared for him by others who began reading moral and psycho-

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<sup>17</sup> John T. McNeill, A History of the Cure of Souls, (New York: Harper & Row, 1951) p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Herschel Baker, The Image of Man (New York: Harper & Row, 1961; 1947) p. 24.

logical meanings into the old Orphic and Dionysiac myths about the fate of the soul, but it was Plato who took these stories and translated their import definitively into the language of rational argument.<sup>19</sup> He combined the Orphic belief in immortality with the Pythagorean emphasis on reason and mathematics as the key to knowledge and his preoccupation with epistemology led him to make a sharp cleavage between the rational and irrational parts of the soul.<sup>20</sup> He divided the soul into three parts: psyche, thumos, and epithumia, corresponding to mind, spirit and body, or reason, passion and appetite. The lower two man shared with the animals and was called "the animal soul". He located reason in the brain, passion in the thorax and appetite in the bowels. The relation between the three was that spirit was to be a mediator between the irreconcilable opposites, reason and desire, mind and matter. The society of the Republic reflected this in its three functions--labourers, soldiers and philosophers (who would also be kings). These correspond to the three types of life enumerated by the Pythagoreans: sensual; active; contemplative.<sup>21</sup> The virtues proper to each part were temperance, courage and wisdom, with justice being the general principle of harmony in the economy of the soul.

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<sup>19</sup> Dodds, p. 209.

<sup>20</sup> Mace, Peters, "Psychology", p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> De Burgh, p. 131.

Plato used a passage of Homer to illustrate the soul's dialogue with the desires of the body in his Phaedo, but in the Republic he uses the same passage to illustrate the same dialogue internalized and taking place between two "parts" of the soul.<sup>22</sup> We have here a system strikingly similar to Freud's, which places the conscious ego between the unconscious libido, the source of energy for good or bad, and the tradition-bound superego, the source (for good or bad) of direction. Just as Freud brought about a revolution in "psychologizing" the workings of the mind, giving mental symptoms mental causes, Plato made the life of the mind self-sufficient. He also suggested that dreams express repressed desires. Inner conflict, rather than external interference, became the cause of mental instability, cowardice, intemperance, injustice etc. Although he compares the disruption of the internal equilibrium to the result of injury or illness, it is with final reference to the state of the soul itself that he addresses this issue. This view is more comprehensive and satisfying than the socratic doctrine that evil is the result of ignorance.

Aristotle's stance was biological rather than epistemological; to be alive was to possess a self-originating tendency toward an end, and this end could be vegetable, animal or rational, corresponding to Plato's division of the soul. For Aristotle, the soul had faculties rather than parts, i.e., if the eye were an animal, eyesight would be its

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<sup>22</sup> Dodds, p. 213.

soul.<sup>23</sup> This was a return to the base of the pre-Socratics, who defined a living being as empsychon soma --"body with a soul".<sup>24</sup> For Aristotle, the most important distinction to be made about the composition of anything was between matter, hyle, and form, eidos, and since he recognized this as an artificial distinction, he sought them in the particular instance.<sup>25</sup> The distinction could also be traced in the presence of activity or passivity: matter represented passivity and potential which requires form to give it life and actuality. This put practical wisdom ahead of theoretical wisdom in importance for humans, although Aristotle believed with Plato that the contemplative life was the highest and that the eternal truths were objects of thought and not sense.<sup>26</sup>

The prevailing notion of disease of the soul was still analogous to that of bodily disease.<sup>27</sup> It was in general a disequilibrium between the parts of the soul, just as bodily disease was seen by Hippocrates as a disequilibrium between the humors. For Plato and Aristotle, it was the middle part of the soul, thumos, that was specifically human, because it mediated between the higher and lower functions.<sup>28</sup> In the

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<sup>23</sup> Mace, Peters, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> ibid., p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> De Burgh, p. 205.

<sup>26</sup> ibid., p. 207.

<sup>27</sup> McNeill, History of the Cure of Souls, p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> Baker, Image of Man, pp. 47-48.



language of modern psychology, the locus of control was an internal one. This was most developed by the Stoics, whose ideal was the man who could keep his head while all those around him were losing theirs. "Even more than Aristotle, the Stoics gave a unity and integrity to the individual soul (over its temporary states and functions) that could result only in a strong assertion of personality. . . . For the governing faculty of the soul is the organ of assent; through it one controls or surrenders to passion, and thus the individual is made solely responsible for the state of his soul."<sup>29</sup> This development was in part the result of a widening world in which communal standards of virtue could no longer be relied upon as they could for the men of Socrates', Plato's and Aristotle's time. This led to an increasing interest in the will and the emotions, which came to bear more directly on conceptions of sin.<sup>30</sup> The application by the Stoics of Aristotle's categories of activity and passivity to the mind fed into their emphasis on the will.<sup>31</sup> Epicurus (341-270) returned to the atomism of Democritus; although his materialism made it difficult to find a basis for ethical judgements he did express his ideal as being the state of atarazia or freedom from disturbance, and this would become an important part of Christian philosophy, especially that of the desert. Zeno (336-265), the founder

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<sup>29</sup> ibid., p. 79.

<sup>30</sup> Mace, Peters, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> ibid., p. 4.

of Stoicism, was a Semite from Cyprus, and his 'thus spake Reason' echoes the 'thus spake Yahweh' of the prophets. In fact, Stoicism was the intellectual first fruit of Alexander's policy of cultural fusion.<sup>32</sup> Tarsus was a center Tarsus was a center of Stoic studies and Paul both quotes Cleanthes and echoes Stoic teaching.<sup>33</sup>

The Greek philosophers attained a spiritual monotheism starting from a scientific base, but it remained the belief of an individual or a school. The achievement and attraction of Stoicism was the self-sufficiency that it bestowed on the individual. "Stoicism thrived, because, like Christianity, it is a philosophy of suffering"; however, 'it fell because, unlike Christianity, it is a philosophy of despair'.<sup>34</sup> Christianity offered a personal saviour and a community in which salvation could be found-- the earthly community of the church and the heavenly one of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In this community there was compassion and forgiveness, which could not be expected from the natural law of the Stoics.

The last great Stoic was Marcus Aurelius. But much of the spirit and teaching of Stoicism lived on in the next Hellenistic school, neo-Platonism, a mix of classical philosophy with religion. However, 'the ideal of the self-sufficiency (autarkeia) of the wise man haunted Hellenism to

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<sup>32</sup> De Burgh, p. 220.

<sup>33</sup> ibid., p. 221.

<sup>34</sup> Bigg, Christian Platonists, quoted in De Burgh, p. 342.

its close'.<sup>35</sup> This meant that the individual's perfection must correspond to an increase in isolation. Here Christianity and Hellenism part, for in Christianity man is fundamentally flawed and his salvation or perfection depends on another, the person of Jesus. The importance of this historical person and his death and resurrection is characteristic of the Semitic mind. While historic crises were for the Romans a stimulus to action and to the Greeks a stimulus to reflection, they were ethically and religiously significant for the Hebrews.<sup>36</sup> However, the fact that this ultimately significant event was a person is an indication of the temper of the times that resulted from the loosening of communal ties.

Socrates' part in the process was recognized by the elders who condemned him to death. Where group authority is strong, the subjection of the individual for the sake of group interest is more important than the interior recovery of the individual. More attention is paid to individual acts than to the state of the individual as a whole, 'sins' become more important than 'sin', legal restraint than inner motivation. While the great Greek philosophers opened up the individual in importance, moral disease remained for the classical Greek something essentially external, like a disease. The notion of sin entered with the cults from Egypt and Asia Minor.

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<sup>35</sup> ibid., p. 351.

<sup>36</sup> ibid., p. 380.

The conception of wrongdoing in the Old Testament certainly carries the connotations of personal culpability that we associate with sin. This applied even to disease, while we have seen that with the Greeks it was the other way around, wrongdoing being seen as a function of disease. While for the Greeks it was for the most part the thumos, and not the psyche, that made human activity possible, for the Hebrews it seems to have been the heart, leb, rather than the soul, nepshesh. Leb is the source of the raw material of human thought and action as well as the source of the most vital decisions. It is "the most important word in the vocabulary of Old Testament anthropology".<sup>37</sup> It appears 858 times, making it the most common anthropological term, and--in contrast to the other important terms--it is applied almost exclusively to man. It refers only on ten occasions to the physical organ itself.<sup>38</sup> This is an interesting contrast with the Greek, where the term kardia does not even figure in the study of psychological terms.

This does not mean, however, that the Hebrews were emotional where the Greeks were rational. In by far the greatest number of cases it is the intellectual, rational functions that are ascribed to the heart, and, in fact, the term appears most frequently in the wisdom literature--namely Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Deuteronomy.<sup>39</sup> The heart is asso-

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<sup>37</sup> Wolff, p. 40.

<sup>38</sup> Antoine Guillaumont, DS, s.v. "Cor et Cordis Affectus", col. 2279.

<sup>39</sup> Wolff, pp. 46-47.

ciated with emotion in one fifth of its Old Testament usages; in the New Testament less.<sup>40</sup> In the Septuagint it is actually translated twenty times by psyche, but more often by nous, mind, and dianoia. In the domain of the emotions the soul is content to submit to experience, the heart reacts and forseees the intervention of the will. The soul is the seat of the emotions, and plays no role at all in the higher functions.

Leb is most often associated with ruah, or spirit. It is the same spirit that is attributed to the Lord. The two words are often used in the same way, but there is one general distinction: leb is properly human, while ruah can be attributed more widely. Ruah is not quite evenly divided in its use between God (136 times), man, animals and false gods (129 times) and natural forces like the wind (113 times). In contrast to this 35%, nephesh is applied to God only 3% of the time.<sup>41</sup> Like the Homeric thumos, ruah can appear as an independent entity, a mediator between God and man, but under the direction of God. The human ruah can be related either to the nephesh as an attitude of mind or movement of feeling or to leb as the enlivening spirit of Yahweh and the medium of purposeful action. A further use of the term is to stand in contrast to basar, or flesh. More than a third of the occurrences of this word apply to animals, the rest to man and none to Yahweh. Thus, although the heart is the

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<sup>40</sup> Guillaumont, "Cor", col. 2279.

<sup>41</sup> Wolff, p. 32.

seat of the highest functions in man, it is connected to God by spirit, which also mediates between the higher and the lower within man himself as in the Greek usage.

The fact remains that in the Old Testament there is no sharp distinction made between these terms. Although the two constituents of man as given in Genesis are the dust of the ground and the breath of life, the emphasis throughout the Bible is on the resulting unity. It is therefore characteristic of the biblical presentation "to assert the solidarity of man's constitution,--that human individuality is of one piece, and is not composed of separate or independent parts."<sup>42</sup> The most common distinction seems to be not into parts but into higher or lower natures when not referring to the whole man.

The difficulty in interpreting the terms used in the Old Testament goes back to the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the second century B.C.. The use of Greek terms inspired the use of Greek method. The resulting anthropologies were either dichotomic or trichotomic, and while the controversies of the early Christian centuries show how important this sort of thing was to the hellenistic mind, it does not reflect that of the Hebrews. W.G. de Burgh characterizes Hebrew thought as contingent,<sup>43</sup> rising out of the historical experience of the nation, its content and arrangement having little reference to any objective ideal or systematic out-

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<sup>42</sup> Jones, p. 133.

<sup>43</sup> De Burgh, p. 89.

line. Rather than being analytic it is synthetic, what Wolff calls "stereometric thinking." This approach does not distinguish between the member and its function. "With a relatively small vocabulary, through which he names things and particularly the parts of the human body, the Hebrew can and must express a multiplicity of fine nuances by extracting from the context of the sentence the possibilities, activities, qualities or experiences of what is named."<sup>44</sup>

We have seen that in both the Greek and Hebrew worlds, there was a gradual change from communal, conventional and objective standards of morality to standards that were more individual, personal and subjective. The increasing differentiation between the individual and his group brought to light various perceived conflicts--between the individual and society, or between the interior and exterior life of the individual, between the spirit and the flesh, and, perhaps most importantly, between one's own will and that of another.

By tying together religion and morality, Moses and Socrates prepared for the future equation of morality and the individual will by Jeremiah and Plato in their respective worlds, whose insights would be developed in the Hellenistic world by the Stoics and St. Paul, who came to some comparable conclusions, though working from in many ways dissimilar traditions.

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<sup>44</sup> Wolff, p. 8.

Chapter III  
EARLY CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

The synthetic approach of the Old Testament extends into the New Testament, where it becomes more closely entwined with the Greek idiom through the writings of Paul. While he sees man as dichotomous in nature, Paul never loses sight of his ultimate unity. However, he commonly uses a trichotomous anthropology: soma; psyche; pneuma (1 Thess. 5:23; cf. 1 Cor. 2:6). Pneuma could be associated or distinguished from nous (1 Cor 14:14-16; Eph 4:23).<sup>45</sup> This designated the rational principle, either as simple intellect (nous) or inspired (pneuma), both distinguished from the vital principle psyche. Here pneuma has more to do with the Semitic ruah than the Greek term previously used. The fundamental distinction seems to be between two types of person: the psychikos (natural) and pneumatikos (spiritual). This is put most clearly in 1 Cor 15:45 where he writes "Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being [psyche]' [quoting Gen2:7]; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit [pneuma]." While the psyche took the highest position in Greek anthropology, it retains the position of its Hebrew counterpart, nephesh, in the thought of Paul, who continues to give priority to the spirit rather than the soul. He

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<sup>45</sup> L. Reypens, DS, s.v. "Ame", col. 460.



also uses the Greek term for mind, nous, but in the same place as leb in the Old Testament: above the soul but below the spirit.

Caution must be taken not to impose unsupportable categorizations, but we seem to have a trichotomous consensus between the classical Greeks, the Old Testament Hebrews and the New Testament Apostle: epithumia, thumos, psyche; (vegetable, animal, rational in Aristotle) basar, nephesh, leb; soma, psyche, pneuma. Although the terms appear in different orders, the functions to which they refer remain relatively constant. In all three traditions, man is seen as a being composed of the highest and lowest elements in the universe in balance. The contrast is to be seen in comparing these traditions to those branded as heretical, which invariably identified man with only one of his component parts. These viewed the world as being subject to two opposing and irreconcilable principles of good and evil, or light and darkness. The individual could only be for one or the other. Followers of these teachings would either shun the world entirely or embrace its most sordid elements in the belief that they were free of moral responsibility through their purity.

The Hebrews gave the individual responsibility for the occurrence of any malady. There were two main offices of spiritual guidance at first: the prophets and the wise men. The prophets were the "crisis theologians", the wise men

"the educators of conscience".<sup>46</sup> While the teachings of the wise men were being laid down in the Wisdom books, a new class, the scribes, appeared. The scribes were the interpreters of the Law. The first synagogues grew up around them and they were given the honorific title of "rabbi" (my master).

The closest approximation to the scribes and wise men in the Hellenistic world were the Stoics, who also exalted the law. For them, though, the law was unwritten. There were also the Platonic, Peripatetic and Epicurean schools and Orphic religion. The latter shared with the Hebrew scribes an openness to the ideas of the East such as angels, reincarnation and degrees of dualism. By the time of Paul communal ties in both the Hellenistic and Hebrew traditions had weakened almost completely, opening up a free market in salvation. The individual was free to seek his salvation from among the many possibilities offered, and so these offerings often catered to the individual and displayed a greater regard for his potential than those of the past.

Paul's method involves empathy, contemplation and confession. 2 Corinthians 11:29, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant?", demonstrates his feeling for the plight of the individual. One of his favorite words is λογιζεσθαι--think appraisingly, dwell thoughtfully.<sup>47</sup> He suggests that the mind be turned in this

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<sup>46</sup> McNeill, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> ibid., p. 84.

way toward the worthiest things as a defense against passion and egocentrism. Two words, metanoia and exomologesis (repentance and confession), figure heavily in early church discipline, and, of the two, the latter is most important.<sup>48</sup> Personal confession was also a development in late pre-Christian judaism and hellenic cults, coming originally from the East.

Cassian drew from these influences, but they were transmitted to him through the Fathers of the Church, most importantly Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius of Pontus. The key connection between these writers and those developments we have summarized was the Alexandrian Jewish scholar of the second century A.D., Philo.

Philo combined concepts and language from classical philosophy with the symbolic language of the Old Testament, continuing the process of allegorization that had begun before Plato's time. At the same time that Semitic culture was being hellenized, hellenic culture was being semitized. One bit of evidence of this is Origen's conclusion that only the Trinity is incorporeal--all other beings are corporeal, even if ethereal. This sort of question would never have occurred to a Hebrew; what was important for him was what Yahweh wanted done, not what His composition was. With Origen a use of the term nous appears. This is the term he applies to those creatures who occupy the place below God in the chain of being, and of whom some fell to become devils.

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<sup>48</sup> ibid., p. 91.

The nous still predominates in the angels, but it is the psyche which predominates in man and the devils. The Alexandrian school developed the system of interpretation in three senses: allegorical, moral and mystical. Gregory of Nyssa had had extensive training in rhetoric, but it is hard to say how direct was the influence of classical philosophy. He and his contemporaries may have picked it up in pieces from collections of sayings.<sup>49</sup> This would have made it easier to mix and match platonic ideas with ideas from other sources without having to worry about the conflicting assumptions of the systems whence they came.

Gregory of Nyssa also displays influences other than platonic. He has taken the interdependence of the virtues and the idea of virtue as equilibrium<sup>50</sup> from Aristotle and from the Stoics. He uses a Stoic term, edone, to indicate the movement of desire towards sensual pleasure which upsets the equilibrium of the soul. He also carries with him the Stoic emphasis on force of will to achieve impassibility in the face of passion. The idea of the Christian life as one of constant battle with the flesh and sin was prominent in Alexandria and Origen had insisted on the indefinite character of this battle. The ideal was impassibility, but the doubt was often expressed whether it was possible to achieve this state in this life. The further connotations of the idea were of perfect familiarity with God, or enjoying a

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<sup>49</sup> Mariette Canevet, DS, s.v. "Gregoire de Nysse", col. 980.

<sup>50</sup> ibid., col. 981.

godlike state from which one could not fall. The notion that this was being promoted as a possibility enraged St. Jerome, who launched an attack on the legacy of Origen, which he himself had done so much to further in the past. His campaign struck his old friend Rufinus, whose Latin translations of several of Origen's works has saved them from oblivion, and Evagrius of Pontus, a friend of the Capadocian fathers and of Rufinus and a teacher of John Cassian. From Evagrius, Cassian took his theory of prayer and his system of the eight principal faults,<sup>51</sup> which makes up the most part of his first work, the Institutes. This takes us back to the Stoics, to whom the connection between the virtues was a familiar idea and to Clement of Alexandria, of whose hierarchy of virtues Evagrius seems particularly to have made use.<sup>52</sup> This having been said, it must be added that there was a wide hellenistic tradition of catalogues and lists of vices and virtues, perhaps for reasons similar to those which saw the proliferation of catalogues and specula during the later part of the middle ages.

Evagrius was important as a popularizer of the works of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, bringing their ideas to the Egyptian desert. Even more than this, he was a masterful synthesizer in a syncretistic age and it is his achievement

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<sup>51</sup> Antoine and Claire Guillaumont, DS, s.v. "Evagre le Pontique", col. 1741.

<sup>52</sup> Antoine Guillaumont, "Etude Historique et Doctrinale", in Evagrius Ponticus, Traite Pratique ou le Moine, translated by Antoine and Claire Guillaumont. (Sources Chretiennes, 170. Les Editions du Cerf, 1971.) p. 75.

to have created "a fully articulated and systematized view of the whole spiritual life".<sup>53</sup> Further than this, he was the first fully to take into account the spirituality of the desert--which had begun its development with the flight of St. Antony to the desert c. 282 and increased in importance with the legalization of Christianity after 312--and in a way demarginalize it. In fact, by systematizing it he greatly aided its dissemination. He separated the essential teaching of the spiritual life as one of lifelong effort of the will against the vices and of increasingly pure contemplation of the virtues from the more pedestrian details like demons, little black boys, imperial troops, crocodiles and other wild animals that populated the stories told about the Desert Fathers. He also brought about a shift in method from the personal, direct, situational utterances of the Fathers to a system that could be applied to all.

The illiterate Coptic monks were suspicious of all this, but most particularly of Evagrius' teaching of the immateriality of God, which came to him from Origen. According to John Eudes Bamberger, this is the keystone in his system.<sup>54</sup> It was, of course, implicated in the whole Alexandrian system of allegory, which assumed that truth was spiritual in nature, and not bound by physical or literary forms. In contrast to this, the Copts were--although mostly illiter-

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<sup>53</sup> John Eudes Bamberger, introduction to Evagrius Ponticus, The Praktikos: Chapters on Prayer, (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1970), p. xxxii.

<sup>54</sup> ibid., xlviiii.

ate--mostly literalists. They took the Old Testament descriptions of God with no allegorical water and believed that his hands, eyes, tongue etc. were like those of human beings, only larger. For Evagrius, however, the height of purity was indicated by contemplation free of concepts or notions or images. Although Origen and Evagrius were to be condemned in the sixth century, their teachings were at this time essential to the edifice of orthodoxy being built.

These thinkers shared a fundamental difference from those whose thought they built upon. They were part of the monastic movement, which began in the late third century and grew in popularity and importance in the next. While the empire was collapsing in the West, a new world with new values was coming together outside the cities and the usual centers of society. "As a repudiation of all secular and social responsibilities, monasticism was the Church's answer to the humanism of Greece".<sup>55</sup> Philosophy became more practical in the desert. Students were given directions tailored to their particular station, and the advice given by their teachers was based on their own personal experience. The primary test of one's authority was the holiness of his life, testament to his closeness to God, the source of all wisdom. In some ways then, the desert mentality was a rejection of the very bases of classical culture--the significance of thought, discussion, familiarity with tradition (at least with literary tradition). Late Antique men also

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<sup>55</sup> Baker, p. 70.

"had inherited a continuum of Mediterranean sensibility that longed for invisible and ideal companions".<sup>56</sup> The place of the secular patronus was taken by the supernatural figure of the guardian angel at the same time that the speculations and cosmologies of neo-platonism and gnosticism gained in popularity. While the nature of the pagan gods had never been an important issue, since they were recognized as theatrical creations, as projections, by most of those who paid their respects to them, the nature of the angels (good and bad) became of greater importance at this time because it was now felt that the human destiny was closely bound up with the celestial hierarchy.

However, as the fourth century progressed these projections were brought back to earth. The 'charism of the word' became less important in the desert<sup>57</sup> and the human saint took over from both the local magnate and the guardian angel as protector. Ironically, the pressures of the Egyptian desert forced its inhabitants to acquire a stability of lifestyle and outlook unnecessary in the oikoumene. "It stimulated a rapid elaboration of the skills of organization, an emphasis on stability and introspection . . ." <sup>58</sup> Peter Brown points this out in contrast with the milder Syrian desert: while the monk who retreated to the Egyptian

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<sup>56</sup> Peter Brown, Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity (University of California Press, 1982), p. 13.

<sup>57</sup> Philip Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 337.

<sup>58</sup> Brown, Society and the Holy, p. 111.



desert had to bring some of the manners of the city with him in order merely to survive, the monk who retreated to the Syrian desert had in effect to create the contrast himself, by creating a wild place, a desert, around him. Not unexpectedly, this produced no masterpieces of organization or reflection, but did contribute some interesting specimens to the genre of the saints' lives, the most notable being the figure of the Stylite.

Increasing stability, complexity of interpersonal relations, emphasis on example over charisma and interior isolation: these were the developments that took monachism out of its primitive stage.<sup>59</sup> The written word took precedence as the founding generation of monks passed away and took the genius that began the movement with them. Those who remained recognized their own inferiority.<sup>60</sup> It is out of this that the masterpieces of desert monasticism arose: the Life of Antony, Apophthegmata Patrum, Rule of Pachomius, Lausiatic History, Life of Martin, and, most important to us, the Institutes and Conferences of John Cassian.

This increasing formality lent itself well to adoption in the West, where there was a greater readiness to join the monastic life with service to the Church as a whole.<sup>61</sup> While many of the Egyptian monks, as in Antony's case, left the world while young, those in the West tended to leave in the

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<sup>59</sup> Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church, p. 49.

<sup>60</sup> ibid., p. 71.

<sup>61</sup> ibid., p. 79.

midst of a worldly career, in the civil service often enough. It is probably important that some of those whom we know to have been among the losing party in the desert, such as Evagrius, also answer to this description and persisted in such worldly activities as reading and writing after their retreat. Not only was asceticism in the West more conditioned by the ingrained ambition and abilities of its practitioners, but it also began with the written word, with the circulation of works such as those previously cited.<sup>62</sup> One result of this is that the holy man never reached the level of significance in the West that he did in the East. He was most important during the later Empire when things were falling apart, but his significance was put to an end in the East by the revival of the morale of the towns and in the West by the final organization of the monastic and ecclesiastical hierarchy of the towns around the tombs of the dead.<sup>63</sup> The saint, rather than being an outsider, like the figures in the Syrian desert, was the locus around which the values of the community crystallized. He became an upholder of the status quo, of conservative values, and his relation to the authority of the living is summed up by what Peter Brown suggests could be the motto of the western church: "Judge no man holy until he is dead."

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<sup>62</sup> ibid., p. 93.

<sup>63</sup> Brown, Society and the Holy, pp. 151-152.

It is in the midst of this that we see a growing concern with the interior structure of man. Prudentius wrote his Psychomachia, an allegorical description of the internal battle between the virtues and vices (mache, battle). But the climax of this development can be seen in the career of St. Augustine: saved from the damnation of hellenistic culture and of Manicheeism by his breakthrough to the realization of the incorporeality of God, he ended up a bishop in a Church that was, sometimes in spite of itself, becoming a part of the world. "The Christian's worst enemies could no longer be placed outside him: they were inside, his sins and doubts; and the climax of a man's life would not be martyrdom, but conversion from the perils of his own past."<sup>64</sup> It is in light of this that we will examine our key concepts of the soul as they wend their way toward the pen of John Cassian.

Augustine's own external enemies were the Donatists and Pelagius. The former battle brought him to the realization that the Church had an essential role to play in the world, and that it must in some ways accomodate the world. This was based on the belief that the Church's identity was insured by the objective promises of God, not by the efforts or contributions of its members. His fight against Pelagius was against a perceived threat to this accomodation. The Pelagian ideas had their greatest attraction in areas where the Church did not see itself as being so able to assimilate

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<sup>64</sup> Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), p. 159.

the world to itself--in Britain, southern Italy and Gaul--places heavily under seige from the barbarians who would erase the confident Church of Augustine. Pelagius' ideas contained a good deal of Stoicism and appealed to a classical sense of the autonomy, even the divinity, of the individual. While this attitude would foster an interest in the soul, it would also be vanquished by the ideas of Augustine, whose vision of the Church as a community of sinners would establish the place of the Church in the world. For this reason, Brown points to this as being the point of transition from the ancient to the medieval world.<sup>65</sup>

It was another heresy of the same time that focused concerns on the need for a fully developed Christian anthropology. Apollinarius, a bishop of Laodicea who died in 390, conceived one of several interpretations of Christ's humanity/deity at this time. His interpretation built on the tripartite view of the soul found in Origen but replaced the middle term, the psyche, with the divine counterpart, thus mutilating Christ's humanity. Although this division of the soul has itself never been declared heretical, it came under suspicion from this time forward, as the nature of the soul suddenly became a controversial topic.<sup>66</sup>

The vegetable/animal/rational trichotomy of Aristotle appears in the work of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. Plato's trichotomy had been between nous or psyche, thumos and epi-

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<sup>65</sup> ibid., p. 367.

<sup>66</sup> Macklin Smith, Prudentius' Psychomachia: A Reexamination (Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 82-83.

thumia and applied only to the soul itself. In Origen, although his trichotomy-- soma, psyche, pneuma --applies to the whole person, he did divide the soul (psyche) into a superior (nous) and inferior part.<sup>67</sup> With Origen a new use of the term nous appears. He applies this term to those creatures who occupy the place below God in the chain of being, of whom some fell to become devils. The nous still predominates in the angels, but it is the psyche which predominates in man and the devils. (For Evagrius, man was ruled by sensuality epithumia and the devils by passion thumos.) The division of soma-psyche-nous was used by Possidonius, a source of much neo-Platonist thought, and Plotinus, who divided men into sensible, rational and intelligible classes along these lines.<sup>68</sup> Augustine divides the human into body and soul, but divides the soul into memory, intellect and will.

These Christian writers focused much of their attention on the heart. They speak of affectus cordis where the ancients would have used affectus animi.<sup>69</sup> The heart becomes the site of all interior functions--feeling, thinking and willing. The heart is referred to in the same allegorical manner as the Old Testament, sometimes appearing as a pattern for the exterior man,<sup>70</sup> just as Yahweh was a pattern

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<sup>67</sup> Henri Crouzel, DS, s.v. "Origene", col. 937.

<sup>68</sup> Reypens, "Ame", col. 435.

<sup>69</sup> Guillaumont, "Cor", col. 2278.

<sup>70</sup> ibid., col. 2281.

for the actions of men, or vice versa. It has members, eyes, thoughts and intentions. It is also referred to as a house (with corners) and a universe.

Deep within the heart is the mind, nous, which is the instrument of contemplation.<sup>71</sup> In this our authors follow the ancient Semites as known through the Septuagint, evidenced most clearly in the common phrase logismois tes kardi-  
as, "thoughts of the heart". Throughout the neoplatonic tradition it is the nous or mens (mind) which carries the image of God, because of its spiritual nature, and in this way the anthropomorphic theory was avoided because the image was purely spiritual and did not refer to the whole form of man but only that which was contained in his mind, in the very center of his heart. This qualifies the ascetic method of the desert. The aim was to quiet the passions and subdue the lower parts of the soul or heart with their importunate and fleeting thoughts in order to perceive the image of God within the mind. For Origen and Evagrius, the nous designates the essence of spiritual beings<sup>72</sup> and the body is the mark of their fallen stature. There seems to be no simple dualism here, for throughout the occidental tradition man is seen as being by his very nature a mixture of the two.

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<sup>71</sup> ibid., col. 2284.

<sup>72</sup> Aime Solignac, DS, s.v. " 'Nous' et 'Mens' ", col 463.

<sup>73</sup> ibid., col. 464.

Ambrose of Milan calls the nous the animae principale.<sup>73</sup> There was some attempt to relate the psychological senses of these terms to their physical counterparts. We have seen how others placed these functions within the body. In On the Making of Man Gregory of Nyssa addresses the question whether the mind is seated in the brain or the heart. At various points he seems to favour both. Galen is a major source for Nemesius of Emesa, whose On the Nature of Man is largely a compendium of Hippocratic, Stoic and neo-Platonic teachings, important to us perhaps mostly as evidence of the general interest in the subject at the time. Pneuma is implicated in the physical life of the body. The arteries transmit blood, which is produced by the liver, and pneuma, which is inhaled by the lungs and warmed by the heart, although Nemesius did not follow Galen in thinking that the arteries distribute blood as well as pneuma.<sup>74</sup>

According to Origen, the highest part of man held the divine presence in the soul and remained free of sin. The superior part of the soul was at any rate the platonic nous, the Stoic hegemonikon, or the biblical kardia. Hegemonikon can be translated as principale cordis, animae or mentis. The superior part, whether nous, hegemonikon or kardia was the place for the image of God and this is the part that is pre-existent.<sup>75</sup> For Origen, kardia is a synonym for nous.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> D.S. Wallace-Hadrill, The Greek Patristic View of Nature (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), pp. 41-43.

<sup>75</sup> ibid., col. 940.

<sup>76</sup> Michel Olphe-Galliard, DS, s.v. "Cassien", col. 247.

The inferior part seems to be the two lower segments of Plato's: thumos kai epithumia, the sources of imagination and passion respectively. The psyche was for Origen the field upon which the battle between the nous and the soma was fought.

It is Origen's view that the lower order can only be understood in relation to the higher, and Gregory of Nyssa says much the same thing in his analysis of the three types of soul.<sup>77</sup> The fact that only man contains all three within himself gives him a unique place in creation. He is capable of realizing the qualities of any one of these by the choices he makes. The same view is taken by Nemesius. The finest elements of balance and moderation are borrowed by these Christian writers from classical thought. The idea that man is naturally a composite being requires that his health entail the proper attention to each of his constituents, whatever these are seen to be. This is important because it was possible, especially in an age when the physical world could easily be seen as the realm of the devil, to take an unbalanced approach. Such an approach can be detected in some of the tales told of the desert fathers in the Apothegmata, in Augustine's background and elsewhere.

One important means of integrating the three elements was confession. The general course of development over the late antique and early mediaeval period was from public to private confession. Although the final push to private confes-

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<sup>77</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, Greek Patristic View, pp. 114-115.



sion came from the Irish monks, who are outside our scope, there were some important moves in that direction from the objects of our interest. Origen and Ambrose saw private confession as salutary but not obligatory for reconciliation.<sup>78</sup> Basil counsels confession of one's troubles to brothers who have the gift of healing and direction. His use of medical metaphors for this operation is noteworthy. It is quite possible that he, as well as Nemesius, had medical training.<sup>79</sup> It is also probable that private confession was frequently used in early monasticism.<sup>80</sup>

Demons were an important element in the mental life of the time; they were indicators of good health and of bad health. Good health did not mean an absence of devils, but power to rebuke them and resist their suggestions. Often devils expressed the latent concerns of the community, and when they did, the cure was not to punish the one through whom they would speak, but to exorcise the fear and re-integrate the possessed.<sup>81</sup> With medical cures accomplished by saints or holy men, the devils took on the negative projections in a process of 'focusing' which created clear channels of power from God through the individual and onto the devils, much as with the herd of swine in Matthew. In order to accomplish this it was very important that both sides of the

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<sup>78</sup> McNeill, p. 95.

<sup>79</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> McNeill, p. 95.

<sup>81</sup> Brown, Society and the Holy, p. 18.

projection be clearly visualized in order to be effectively real.

Prudentius approximated the psychological approach, but his portrayal of the psychomachia was more formal or literary than those of Evagrius or Augustine, who expressed the fruits of their own experience. Prudentius was a Roman citizen with no connection to the monastic movement, and so did not share in some of the developments that we have traced.<sup>82</sup> He could not focus on the workings of the individual in the same way that the monks could, because he was too civilized, had a great deal of faith in the Empire and could only see the individual as a citizen of the Empire.<sup>83</sup>

At a lower level, the virtues and vices could be visualized or conceptualized in order to make the psychomachia easier to grasp. Prudentius' achievement was to lend the virtues and vices these allegorical habillements. Ambrose drew on Cicero to draft a list of seven virtues (four classical: prudence; wisdom; justice; fortitude; and three Christian: faith; hope; love). These were often set in later times against the seven vices enumerated by Gregory the Great.<sup>84</sup> Gregory derived his list from the eight capital sins of Evagrius and Cassian.

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<sup>82</sup> ibid., p. 17.

<sup>83</sup> ibid., p. 41.

<sup>84</sup> McNeill, p. 104.

Gregory of Nazianzen, a close friend of Gregory of Nyssa and his brother, Basil of Caesarea, was the source of much of the therapeutic method contained in Gregory the Great's Pastoral Care. Gregory believed, with Epictetus and other Stoics, that the spiritual director sometimes has to feign emotions that he does not feel in order to get a response.<sup>85</sup> He sought to tailor his advice to each individual and lists various types of personalities and types of sins and the proper measures for each. This is one approximation to the personal method that would become dominant later on: in public confession there was no distinction made between types of sins. Public and private sins were confessed in the same way. There did develop some schedule of reconciliation but it was a matter of degree taken with the same type of punishment. Humility and external measures were taken with all sins. If it was a re-integration of the individual with the community, the authority seems to have lay with the community. Gregory of Nazianzen also refers to this whole process in medical terms. Thus McNeill:

That reflection upon the soul's diseases which we observed in Cicero and Seneca appears here in new forms and results in a veritable science of the soul, and increasingly systematized psychology. The 'disorders' of the soul are now 'sins'; the guide, or physician, of souls diagnoses the patient's case in terms of sin, and applies the remedies in rebuke, counsel and penance.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> ibid., p. 109.

<sup>86</sup> ibid., p. 111.

The aims of asceticism in general have been stated as being three: the primacy of the total over the partial; the primacy of the objective over the subjective; the primacy of evolution.<sup>87</sup> The ideal of asceticism is the open personality rather than the closed type of the Stoics.<sup>88</sup> The primacy of the total over the partial gave great significance to integritas in the thought of the more sophisticated authors of ascetic works. It is this which makes the integrity of the will such a jealously guarded and controversial function. Free will was an essential faculty of God, and therefore an important component of the image of God which the ascetics sought to realize within themselves. The realization of this image was essential to their definition of mental health.

The first step in realizing this image was the restraining of the passions, which would allow the powers of the soul to be used to seek virtue. This is the practical side of asceticism, referred to by the Greek writers as praktike, and contrasted with the second step of contemplation of virtue, called gnostike. The point of praktike was not to suppress the passions but to purify the passionate part of the soul so that the passions would no longer be set in motion or at least never trouble the individual.

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<sup>87</sup> J. de Guibert, DS, s.v. "Ascese", col. 1003.

<sup>88</sup> ibid., col. 1004.

This is the system that was elaborated by Evagrius. In it, the next step is the contemplative. It is composed of two steps, the physike, or natural contemplation, and the theologike, or knowledge of God.<sup>89</sup> The former is itself divided into two: contemplation of secondary natures, i.e. corporeal bodies, and contemplation of spiritual natures. Of these, the former seeks knowledge not of the bodies themselves, but of their logoi, or reasons for being. The latter stage does not seek a direct vision of God, which Evagrius does not think possible, but of the image of God, a "light without form". This is participation in angelic knowledge. Actually, it appears that Evagrius had a tripartite schema, with the physical being added to the practical and the theoretical.<sup>90</sup> This is derived from the Stoic division between the moral, natural and rational realms (practical, physical, theoretical).

The word praktike had a long history by the time Evagrius used it (in a novel way), beginning with Plato, who used it to refer to those who work with their hands. Aristotle used it in a wider sense, to indicate those whose lives were oriented towards action or business of any sort. The Stoics applied it more specifically to those who undertook political or social labors. In Gregory of Nazianzen, it refers to the church officials engaged in day-to-day business and administration, as opposed to the monks. Evagrius turned

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<sup>89</sup> Guillaumont, "Evagre", col. 1739.

<sup>90</sup> Guillaumont, "Etude Historique et Doctrinale", p. 38.

this around by applying it solely to the monks, those who lived in the hesychia.<sup>91</sup> The attainment of this state is composed of complementary tasks: the overcoming of the vices and the acquisition of the virtues. Evagrius treats of the vices in his work On the Eight Principal Vices. He does not match these up with an opposing number of virtues, but does at one point enumerate five: fear; faith in God; abstinence; perseverance and hope.<sup>92</sup> It is important to note that for Cassian humility seems to be the most potent virtue and to ask whether this is reflected in Evagrius. For Evagrius, the three most important seem to be abstinence, perseverance and hope.

As for the faults which most be overcome, they are eight in number: gluttony, fornication, avarice, sorrow, anger, acedia, vainglory and pride. The list appears in unfixed form in the work of Origen.<sup>93</sup> In the Praktikos Evagrius refers to these entities as logismoi, which it would be best to define as loosely as possible. The word can mean simply "thoughts" with no negative connotations, but this is not how Evagrius employs it. For him, they are always bad. In the De Octo Cogitationibus Malae he uses the word pneuma or "spirit". Each vice is also closely associated with a demon. Unfortunately, there seems to be no difference between his applications of these terms to what are basical-

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<sup>91</sup> ibid., pp. 48-49.

<sup>92</sup> ibid., pp. 52-53.

<sup>93</sup> ibid., p. 71.

ly the same phenomena. He seems to equate the thought with the demon, sometimes referring to the thought of the devil.<sup>94</sup> If anything is possible, it is that on one side are the logismoi that individuals experience as their motivations and on the other the daimon or pneuma that inspires the sinful thought or act.<sup>95</sup> It seems to have been the Octo Cogitationibus rather than the Praktikos that influenced Cassian in this regard, for he uses almost exclusively spiritus, the equivalent of pneuma, (which does not appear in the Praktikos ) and because of his ordering of the vices, which is different between the two.<sup>96</sup>

The other notable mark of Evagrius' originality is his inclusion of a new and particularly ascetic vice: accedia, the sixth in the list. It can be defined as spiritual weariness. Antoine Guillaumont feels that the tripartite ascetic schema-- praktike, physike, theologike.<sup>97</sup> --is the true Evagrian one, but denies the contention of S. Schwietz that his hierarchy of thoughts rests on a tripartite division of the soul.<sup>98</sup> In fact, this is one area in which Cassian improves on the work of Evagrius, if we accept systematization as being one of Evagrius' aims. Evagrius does relate gluttony and fornication and perhaps also avarice to the

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<sup>94</sup> ibid., pp. 56-57.

<sup>95</sup> ibid., p. 59.

<sup>96</sup> ibid., p. 66.

<sup>97</sup> ibid., p. 49.

<sup>98</sup> ibid., p. 93.

epithumetikon, dejection and anger to the thumikon, but he does not relate vainglory or pride to the logistikon, while he attributes accedia to the whole soul.<sup>99</sup> As we shall see, Cassian clearly relates the eight principal vices to the tripartite soul.

The goal of asceticism is the state of passionlessness called apatheia. Jerome attacked Evagrius for teaching this doctrine, which he associated with the errors of Priscillian, the Gnostics and Pelagius. There is something in this, for before this time the word had already become a part of the Christian vocabulary, but it related specifically to God, being the very quality that separated Him from humans. They could look forward to sharing in this state after the resurrection, but Evagrius seemed to promise its attainment in the present life.

Apatheia was originally a Stoic term and was turned toward its Christian ascetic use by Clement of Alexandria.<sup>100</sup> It had also, it appears, been used by Philo. Evagrius' new twist was to include the lower functions of the soul in the maintenance of apatheia, rather than requiring their suppression, as in Clement and Philo.<sup>101</sup> However, for Evagrius, the attainment of this state does not make one comparable to God, but to the angels; in fact, one becomes angelic.<sup>102</sup> It appears further that this is a goal to be

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<sup>99</sup> ibid., p. 94.

<sup>100</sup> ibid., p. 101.

<sup>101</sup> ibid., p. 106.



aimed at, rather than one to be achieved. There is no clear step by which one completes the requirements of the practical stage and breaks through to the impassibility of the theoretical, angelic stage. There is nothing like the experience of enlightenment which is found in Buddhism, a sudden breaking through to ultimate reality, puncturing of illusion, stopping the wheel of karma, etc. In Buddhist theory one must only realize that one is already enlightened, at which time the efficacy of labor, hope, and desire are revealed as being illusory. The saying from the Hindu religion which expresses this is tat tham asi, "thou art that", you are already what you desire to be. The enlightened Buddhist becomes something of an angel, a Bodhisatva, one who is no longer tied to the earth, one who is free to leave for Nirvana. However, it is also the nature of the Bodhisatva to postpone this gift in order to stay on earth and help others free themselves from illusion. In Evagrius, however, these possibilities exist as teloi, ultimate ends, rather than skopoi, immediate goals. For him, the ultimate ends help to focus one on attaining the immediate goals; for the Buddhist, the discipline involves focusing on what is most present, in order to avoid misleading concepts like ultimate goals. Evagrius gives much greater place to the process (and Cassian perhaps even more, making the process uppermost) while the Buddhists deny the reality of process.

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<sup>102</sup> ibid., p. 108.

The point of this being that the two stages, the practical and the theoretical, are to a great extent interrelated, and distinguish different types of activity rather than clearly delineated states of being.<sup>103</sup> However, Evagrius draws closer to the eastern tradition perhaps and further from the Stoic roots of the word in making apatheia not an end in itself, but a clearing away of the passions (what Cassian will call "purity of heart") in order to allow charity to spring up. It is charity which is truly the imago Dei. Here again we have the curious equivalence between associated terms, for the distinction between purity of heart and charity is often blurred beyond recognition in Cassian.

The importance of the term "heart" (kardia) distinguishes the Christian tradition from its classical foundation. According to Macarius, the heart and the soul are mixed together so that their intentions are almost equivalent. Sometimes the two are used interchangeably. Insofar as they can be distinguished, 'heart' has wider references, 'soul' being restricted to the sensible life while 'heart' includes the sensible and the emotional. Thus to love God 'with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind' is the Deuteronomic formula (6:5) transposed into a Greek schema,<sup>104</sup> although mind is a translation of dianoia or ischos rather than nous. A further distinction is that, following the

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<sup>103</sup> ibid., p. 111.

<sup>104</sup> Guillaumont, "Cor", col. 2283.

Hebrew leb, the heart is religious and moral, the domain of sin and grace, while the soul follows the Greek psyche and includes the natural and interior capacities of man.<sup>105</sup> The proper ordering of one's soul is then the regulation of habits of thought and action, preparing the field of nature in the soul for the action of grace through the heart or mind.

The Platonic and neo-Platonic traditions were restrained in their use of the word and the use of affectivity as a whole (but we have already said that the word referred more often to rational than emotional functions) and did not pick up on the metaphorical usages lent to the word in the Septuagint translation.<sup>106</sup> In fact, reliance on this term was more pronounced in the West than in the East, the "mysticism of the heart" finally triumphing in the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, and this was one difference between the two worlds that was becoming apparent at this time. In a broad way one could say that the Greek-speaking East remained fairly intellectualistic, while the Latin-speaking West adopted an abhorrence of Greek and the classical tradition and grew more comfortable with emotion and will, both of which are very evident in that great westerner, St. Augustine. Cassian uses the Latin equivalent, cor, more than any other anthropological term, and this term is more appropriate for metaphorical use than the Greek for some reason.<sup>107</sup> It

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<sup>105</sup> ibid., col. 2284.

<sup>106</sup> ibid., col. 2287.

<sup>107</sup> ibid.

appears that through the years and transliterations, the term came to be applied to the affective part of the soul and the will, while the rational part was taken by mens, particularly in the West, where references to "prayer of the heart" and "prayer of the mind" appear more often than in the East; there the terms retained a more generic meaning. When the distinction does appear, it is one of degree rather than of nature, the mind being the "fine point" of the heart.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> ibid.

## Chapter IV

### JOHN CASSIAN AND THE CARE OF SOULS

The East retained its concern for theological and theoretical issues during the centuries of the East Roman Empire, while the West concentrated on practical issues and concerned itself more and more with the will, its motivation through the heart, and its regulation through law. John Cassian played an important role in this shift of emphasis and we can see it happening in his own life. Having been raised, as it were, in the harsh Egyptian desert--abandoning his cenobitic promises in Bethlehem to do so--it has been adduced that his outlook must have been quite severe at the time of his expulsion along with the rest of the Greek-speaking community in 399, soon after Evagrius' death. This cannot be known for sure, since Cassian wrote nothing until about twenty years later and says very little of himself in his writings. But both the major writers in English on Cassian agree that his connection with St. John Chrysostom, the patriarch of Constantinople who took in many of the refugees and gave them positions in his church, was a major turning point in the attitude of Cassian,<sup>109</sup> from independence and isolation to communal living and involvement with the world. Chrysostom had tried the life of a monk and then given it up

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<sup>109</sup> Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church, p. 171.

to be a priest, but had lost none of his ascetic and righteous fervor, a fact which contributed to his own downfall in 404. Cassian himself acknowledges Chrysostom's influence in his third and final work, the Seven Books Against Nestorius. This is interesting in light of the fact that in none of his books does he mention the name of Evagrius.

The subsequent course of Cassian's life was certainly one of increasing involvement in the world. When Chrysostom fell, Cassian and Germanus went to Rome with the news and to plead for help for him. Cassian was ordained a priest around this time, possibly by the future Pope Leo I, whom he appears to have befriended. He finally settled in Marseille before Rome was sacked by the Visigoths in 410, and established a monastery there. In 417, bishop Castor of Apta Julia wrote to Cassian for instructions on how to organize a monastery so that he could have one in his own diocese. The resulting works, the Institutes of the Coenobia and the Remedies for the Eight Principal Faults and the Conferences bring Cassian onto the stage of history.

It cannot be denied that Cassian played an important--perhaps the most important--role in transmitting the teachings of the Egyptian Desert to the West in an orderly and useful way. Previously, much of the knowledge current had come from saints' lives, which tended to focus on the miraculous, the extraordinary and marginal. At the very least, this literature encouraged ascetic ideals without providing the framework within which to realize them, resulting in a proliferation of what were called gyrovagi and sarabaites,

monks who, either individually or in groups, wandered about and followed no laws but their own. St. Martin of Tours was an early western ascetic who developed a following and was popular and respected enough to become a bishop, but there was also much suspicion about him and his way of life, especially from other bishops. Monasticism was new and potentially dangerous to the emerging ecclesiastical hierarchy. It seemed to pit individual excellence against the communal muddling through and compromise of the church establishment. The expulsion of the Greek monks from Egypt in 399 was an example of the political power of the monks, who forced the patriarch of Alexandria to reverse the condemnation of anthropomorphism in his initial pastoral letter.

Since the ascetics often performed miracles, they also seemed to pose a threat to the Church as the conduit of divine power. According to Philip Rousseau, Cassian reflected and strengthened the process whereby the original brilliance and charismatic power of the founders of monasticism was replaced by a dependence on the tradition of their sayings and examples and the authority of the group over the individual. The tales told in the Historia Monachorum in Aegypto and Historia Lausica and the corpus of the Apophthegmata Patrum indicates the relation between master and pupil that obtained in the desert. Those who had gained insight through their experience bestowed gems of counsel on individuals. Their method was 'client-centered', their authority complete, to be matched by the obedience of their

hearers. In Cassian's casting of the monastic life, however, the authority of the individual is lessened, as is the required obedience. These are balanced out by an increase in the authority of the group and the conscience of the individual. The oikoumene had fully infiltrated the eremos. In bringing this about, Cassian brought the monastery and the world closer together, probably for the most part against his own intentions, but this is a debatable point.<sup>110</sup> Cassian wanted the monk to be dead to the world, but the fact that he himself was a priest, took part in somewhat political activities, valued friendship and wrote his books at the behest of others who were not even monks belies this to a certain extent.

In fact, a connection between the cloister and the world began its formation as soon as the world became aware of what was happening in the desert. In the early fourth century, the desert became a popular object of pilgrimage. Faced with this sort of public demand, most movements have given up some of their purity in the name of success or just survival. One of the important changes that occurred was that the desert tradition exchanged an oral for a written culture, and this is when eremitic monachism began to doubt its own insight and authority.<sup>111</sup> The shift is symbolized by the story of the monk who is suddenly blessed with the knowledge of scripture without having learned to read. The

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<sup>110</sup> ibid., p. 199.

<sup>111</sup> ibid., p. 224.



written word became the standard, and since many could not read, or at least not very well, standards dropped to accommodate them. Formulas were developed so that all could take part equally in the search for perfection, without the benefit of letters or the sort of charismatic and insightful teacher no longer to be found.<sup>112</sup> The collatio, which forms the basis of Cassian's second and major work, became obsolete in a way, the obvious example being the very fact that Cassian wrote these conferences down. Originally they followed the usual pattern: a master gives direct answers to the questions of his hearers, answers specifically addressed to their concerns and level of development. Once he wrote them down as being the authoritative words of the masters and of use to all, they conditioned what was seen from then on as being the appropriate questions to ask about the monastic life and then supplied the answers to those questions, thus delimiting what issues were addressed by the monastic life. It is not far to go for these formulae to become regulae, as they did in the Rule of St. Benedict, where Cassian is specifically recommended as the reading during meals. Although Cassian spent little time in monasteries before his settling in Marseille--he never visited the establishments of Pachomius or Basil--he seems to be equal in importance to these in establishing the common life as the standard form of retreat for the Christian in search of perfection.

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<sup>112</sup> ibid., p. 225.

In fact, Cassian mentions Basil as being an influence, which indicates to what extent personal experience rather than literary tradition was essential to Cassian's work. Basil believed that the common life was the only context in which to find perfection because it was only in the company of others that one could exercise charity, which is indeed the crowning virtue in Cassian's eyes as well. Charity has more to do with the heart, and the heart was becoming much more important during this time. This was occurring even in the desert, where it was no longer good enough to sit in one's cell and say prayers all day; it was more important, according to Poemen, to make 'hidden progress' in one's heart, which Augustine would later call 'the royal cell of wisdom'.<sup>113</sup> The sense of the inner man current in the desert had previously been tied to the sense that each ascetic had carved out "a spiritual, a mental, perhaps even a physical, area of self-possession and mastery that demons could not penetrate". When demons decreased and fellow men grew in significance, the inner man became more inner and more human, a world-within-a-world, where the external strife with one's brothers was mirrored. As Macarius says, "when we recall the evils that men inflict upon us, we rob ourselves of the power that comes from recollecting God; but when we recall the evils wrought by demons, nothing can harm us".<sup>114</sup> The self was no longer a safe oasis, but the

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<sup>113</sup> ibid., p. 46.

<sup>114</sup> ibid., p. 47.

scene of the struggle itself. "The difficulties and strain caused by closer involvement with others, especially when combined with a discipline of silence, became interior problems, afflicting the mind, examined and resolved in private".<sup>115</sup>

But the most important figure in this set of developments, in many ways the crowning figure, was St. Augustine of Hippo. Much of what we think of as western thought derives from the voluminous writings of Augustine. He furnishes an unmistakable watershed between East and West, ancient and medieval, and even between ancient and modern, according to William James, who called him "the first modern man".<sup>116</sup> We have seen how psychology became an important object of study in the late fourth century. The efforts to create a distinct Christian psychology is traced by Macklin Smith to Origen's On First Principles and Philo's method of exegesis, through such treatises as Tertullian's De anima and Ambrose of Milan's De Isaac et anima. But the essential limitation of these was that they were not properly psychological but allegorical: the internal properties they isolated behaved as corporeal entities. While internal, the conflicts described were basically external in nature. It is not clear in Paul where the line of battle was to be drawn between the flesh and the spirit which lust against one another. The early Church seems to have located the

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<sup>115</sup> ibid., p. 48.

<sup>116</sup> De Burgh, p. 374.

battle largely between the individual and the world at large, but this was not so easy when that world became Christian. It was Augustine's achievement to portray the psychomachia as not only on behalf of or by the soul as within the soul itself.<sup>117</sup> Augustine follows Plotinus in seeing the fall of the soul as a turning outwards, but makes it more personal and less abstract. His Confessions remains to this day a masterpiece of self-revelation which nonetheless is universal in its portrayal of internal conflict. Augustine also shares with Plotinus the theme of 'the conversion to the heart', meaning one's own inner life, a theme that does not figure in the work of Plotinus' contemporary, Origen.<sup>118</sup> The fall of the soul which forms in Plotinus the background to the human tragedy becomes in Augustine an intensely personal experience of loss and searching and a constant sense of weakness and incompleteness.<sup>119</sup> An element of this was that the Christian struggle was now seen as an inner struggle against the forces of the soul itself, rather than primarily against external enemies such as demons.

It is in Augustine that the Christian drama, the psychomachia comes home to the heart. His term for the soul itself is anima but he sometimes refers to it in its intellectual operations as mens and in its volitional with animus.<sup>120</sup> Memory, will and intellect are the permanent facul-

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<sup>117</sup> Smith, p. 138.

<sup>118</sup> Brown, Augustine of Hippo, p. 169.

<sup>119</sup> ibid., pp. 168-169.

ties of the soul, and the vices and virtues are not permanent.<sup>121</sup> He also used spiritus generically for the soul.

Augustine set the standard for the future in using a bipartite anthropology, dividing the individual between body and soul, although the soul itself was divided into three functions, if not distinct parts. A tripartite division has also been ascribed to him on the basis of the importance he gives to the mind in relation to the soul, which seems to give it a life of its own. This appears especially in De trinitate, where the mind is that through which man realizes the image of God within himself.<sup>122</sup>

The relation between body and soul was an important issue for Augustine, as it was for his forbears, but he came to a realization that many others did not, or at least not in such broad outlines or such detail. Having begun his conversion full of philosophical idealism and intent on attaining perfection, his self-knowledge led him within some years to abandon these hopes, and with his duties as bishop of Hippo Regius he came to a new point of view more accepting of life in the body and its appurtenances. As he tells in the Confessions, it was the realization of the spiritual nature of God that saved him from his Manichean errors, and it is his final acceptance of the partnership of body and soul that characterizes his Christian teaching and his oppo-

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<sup>120</sup> Smith, p. 138; Reypens, col. 438.

<sup>121</sup> Smith, p. 156.

<sup>122</sup> "Nous", col. 460.

sition to Pelagius and the Donatists, for when he realized that he could not overcome the body by rational or volitional means, he was left dependent in his own mind on the grace of God. Ironically, he conceived this grace as being essentially external to man, having nothing to do with his faculties or achievements (at least in his most dogmatic writings) and this pulled him away from his earlier psychological view of things.

Men of Augustine's age were already inclined to feel humiliated by the body.<sup>123</sup> When he went looking for the causes of the body's disobedience he found it in the mind, rather than in the body itself. This was itself a step forward from the more emotional reactions to the body displayed by others such as Origen, Tertullian, Jerome, Ambrose etc. There is more in Augustine of the detached approach of Gregory of Nyssa in his book On the Making of Man. Augustine found temptation to be a permanent part of the soul, a punishment for man's initial disobedience. It would remain active even when repressed, infiltrating the imagination and leading the mind away from the course set by the will. This tension was the dominant feature of the spiritual struggle. He believed that all desires could be brought into agreement with the will except sexual ones.<sup>124</sup> Augustine broke with the classical tradition by substituting the will for reason as the highest and most human faculty of the soul.<sup>125</sup> Fur-

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<sup>123</sup> Brown, Augustine of Hippo, p. 388.

<sup>124</sup> ibid., p. 389.

thermore, unlike the Stoics, he saw will as working with, rather than suppressing, the raw material of passion. "In our ethics, we do not so much inquire whether a pious soul is angry, as why he is angry," he says in The City of God (ix 5). Augustine traced the permanence of evil in the soul to the workings of the memory and the habits it nourished. He came to recognize the continuity of man's inner life, an important criterion of any definition of personality, and how this continuity, rather than the body, could become man's tomb.<sup>126</sup> This contrasts with most classical and medieval heroes who are archetypal in their perfection. As Brown says, "it is almost as if they had no past."<sup>127</sup>

Augustine shared with Plotinus a sense of the magnitude and importance of the inner world, but for Plotinus it held the promise of eternal peace if one could only recollect one's true nature. For Augustine, the strife he experienced reached to the furthest depths of his being. For both, a man's inner depths contained his true nature, but for each their conception of this true nature was quite different. As his thought developed, he saw the soul as being wounded more deeply and its healing as involving more time, more parts of the personality<sup>128</sup> and ultimately more grace. Augustine says at one point in the Confessions "For I still

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<sup>125</sup> Baker, p. 172.

<sup>126</sup> Brown, Augustine of Hippo, p. 149.

<sup>127</sup> ibid., p. 173.

<sup>128</sup> ibid., pp. 278-279.

held the view that it was not I who was sinning, but some other nature within me . . . I very much preferred to excuse myself and accuse some other thing that was in me, but was not I. But in truth, I was a complete whole: it was my impiety that divided me against myself."<sup>129</sup> This sums up Augustine's greatness and the source of his philosophical difficulties: he could not get away from himself. He was faced with his brokenness, and the height of this was the break between what he saw as the two main powers of the soul: loving and willing. Knowing what to choose is not all that it involved in acting righteously: the undertaking involves feeling and acting and in man the ability to know, feel and act integrally has been broken.<sup>130</sup> The sense of free will was another symptom of the fall: ideally the act of willing would involve the mind and emotions so closely with the object of desire that there would be no sense of alternative or having to make a choice. Augustine came to believe that this wholeness could only be bestowed from outside of man by God.

We have come to the point where we can address Cassian's relation to these developments. Our main focus will be upon his therapeutic view of man, with special attention to those elements of his pastoral approach to human problems can be isolated, in brief, how he divided the individual up in his

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<sup>129</sup> John Cassian, Conferences, translated by Edgar C. S. Gibson, Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957; rep. 1964), Vx18.

<sup>130</sup> Brown, Augustine of Hippo, p. 373.



practice, and how these components worked together in a state of health. We will study the means to health and the obstacles most often encountered.

#### 4.1 MODERATION

One aspect of Cassian's pastoral approach that leaves a strong impression is his moderation, and this might as well be our starting point. A quotation from I 12:8 relates this to our subject:<sup>131</sup> "And so God, the Creator and Healer of all, knowing that pride is the cause and fountainhead of evils, has been careful to heal opposites with opposites, that those things which were ruined by pride might be restored by humility." This is just one specific example, but our study will show that for Cassian health is in every case a matter of equilibrium. Sickness of any kind is to be relieved by re-establishing equilibrium. Relaxation is a part of maintaining this equilibrium. In contrast to some views of the monastic life there is a place for it. In C<sup>132</sup>24:20 he warns that those who do not reduce the 'strain and tension of their mind" will fall "either into coldness of spirit, or at any rate into a most dangerous state of bodily health." Clearly he sees some relation between spirit and body. It is also with reference to a physical metaphor that he points out that a momentary alleviation of the pressure of temptation can, like a draught of cold water

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<sup>131</sup> Institutes, book 12, chapter 8.

<sup>132</sup> Conferences, book 24, chapter 20.

taken to quench a fever, actually inflame the condition.<sup>133</sup> This homeopathic approach, which appears in Hippocrates, was applied elsewhere by Cassian. Incitements to sin that arise in the mind should be countered by "opposite and contrary things".<sup>134</sup> This is a holistic view (we use this in contrast to the brand of dualism that existed then, not the kind that exists now) and extends from the relation of the physical to the spiritual to that of grace and free will. "Cassian has a more subtle insight into the workings of grace than most modern thinkers, obsessed with the artificial distinction between nature and supernature, eros and agape can aspire to."<sup>135</sup>

One way in which Cassian moderated his presentation of monasticism (and what else is meant by his admission that he has changed some of the desert traditions for the changed climate of Gaul? Do we have to assume that he meant climate exclusively in the literal sense?) was by softening the distinction between precepts and counsels.<sup>136</sup> Cassian's own words demonstrate his concern regarding the burden of precept: "For anything that is absolutely commanded brings death if it be not fulfilled; but whatever things we are urged to rather than commanded, when done are useful, when

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<sup>133</sup> Conference 24, chapter 5.

<sup>134</sup> Conf. 19, 14.

<sup>135</sup> Peter Munz, "John Cassian", Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 11 (1960) p. 11.

<sup>136</sup> Paul Christophe, Cassien et Cesaire: predicateurs de la morale monastique (Paris: Editions J. Duculot, 1969) p. 25.

left undone bring no punishment".<sup>137</sup> In a way the distinction was very clear, but his readers were assumed to have followed the counsel of perfection and were therefore not under the Law and its stiff obligations. It is sufficient in Cassian's view to follow the Law of the Old Testament, but it is the minimum. He takes a seemingly drastic step in prevaricating even on the word of the Ten Commandments by a lengthy justification of lying. He outlines a well-developed theory of relative truth and relates the utility of lying through a medical metaphor: it is like hellebore, which is useful in the presence of a deadly disease, but fatal on its own.<sup>138</sup> He even implies that the ends justify the means because many holy men employed lying "so as not only to incur no guilt of sin from it, but even to attain the greatest goodness . . ." The reason for this is not so much political as psychological: Cassian's goal for every monk who read his words was purity of heart, or charity, and its maintenance took priority over any temporary or secondary disturbances.<sup>139</sup> Although he spends some time on outward observances and though he is not really a mystic, Cassian clearly saw the goals of the spiritual life as being wholly spiritual. He sums this up himself in C 18:11:

Further, true humility of heart must be preserved, which comes not from an affected humbling of body and in word, but from an inward humbling of the soul: and this will only then shine forth with

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<sup>137</sup> Conf. 21:14.

<sup>138</sup> ibid.:17:7.

<sup>139</sup> ibid., 1:7.

clear evidences of patience when a man does not boast about sins, which nobody will believe, but, when another insolently accuses him of them, thinks nothing of it, and when with gentle equanimity of spirit he puts up with wrongs offered to him.

#### 4.2 SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Cassian's method called for self-knowledge gained through experience. A major technique for gaining self-knowledge was confession. This does not appear in Cassian as a sacrament or even a precept but as a counsel, although a very important one. However, there is no sense that it must be done for one to be saved. There is a clear impression that it is completely for the present good of the individual and to help him in his monastic undertaking. The confession that Cassian mentions is not sacramental but therapeutic.

Sacramental confession is deemed necessary for salvation, aside from any other measures taken to deal with sin. Private confession was in use at this time, appearing in Ambrose's writings and in Origen, but it was not a substitute for public confession. Confession was not primarily penitential in either Cassian or Basil. The confessor need not be a priest and it seems that the exercise was reserved for younger members.<sup>140</sup> Since private confession did not become effective in the Church until some time later, we must assume that public confession was accepted by Cassian as necessary for reconciliation with God. The important

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<sup>140</sup> Owen Chadwick, John Cassian, second edition (Cambridge University Press, 1968; 1950) p. 79.

thing is that the issue does not come up in his work. He has an astounding feel for the efficacy of confession and he recommends it so strongly it is difficult to distinguish it from a commandment by the language alone.

The call to private confession is tied to a dependence on the personal experience. Cassian found his authority in two kinds of experience--individual and collective--and the nature of his undertaking is apparent in the conflicting statements he makes on these two foundations. In C 19:12-16, 20:7-10, 21:22 and 24:8 he dictates that the individual must decide on the extent of his own abstinence and consumption. In C 16:10, C 18:3 and other places he puts the authority of the elders and the authority of the group and tradition above individual discretion. (We have already indicated the poles that gave Cassian his direction: a world of vanished heroes and one of lukewarm muddlers. It is understandable that there would be difficulties in adapting the methods of one for the other). In C 16:10 he says of the elders that "it was ordered by them almost with the force of a law, that neither of us should trust to his own judgements more than his brother's, if he wanted never to be deceived by the craft of the devil." However, one's judgements are based on one's experience, and in C 10:11 he tells us that experience exposes "the very veins and marrow" of Scripture and actually gives one the ability to anticipate its meaning "and the sense of the words is revealed to us not by an exposition of them but by practical proof".

How was this insight to be gained? Private confession to the seniores and the constant evaluation and testing of experience were essential. One of the renunciations of the beginner is the privacy of his own thoughts. This is one of the first precepts set down by Cassian as he gets into the meat of the monastic life in I 4:9. From the beginning he is on guard against "false shame and I suppose false humility" in his charges. Each one seems to be under the supervision of one elder to whom he must reveal all his thoughts, "For they lay it down as a universal and clear proof that a thought is from the devil if we are ashamed to disclose it to the senior." In I 4:40 he says that "a man is more thoroughly instructed and formed by the example of some one . . ." (emphasis mine), implying that there was a type of "buddy system". This is not logically consistent with the rest of Cassian's teaching, since it implies that a sinful thought proudly displayed might not be from the devil, or that a good thought we are for some reason embarrassed by is itself from the devil, rather than perhaps the personality characteristic that makes us ashamed. This statement points at least to Cassian's desire to emphasize the importance of confession and the utility the desert fathers still had in backing up what the next generation might decide was most important. Of course, it is possible that the desert fathers did say this, because they would not have clearly distinguished between a thought and the devil that inspired it, even if the devil only inspired the reluctance to reveal the thought.

In fact, Paul Christophe says that Cassian's insistence on exposing the conscience illustrates his fidelity to primitive monasticism and his perfect knowledge of the human heart.<sup>141</sup> In Conference 2, Abbot Moses says that a thought springing from the devil must be shown to "some charmer, I mean some spiritually minded person who knows how to heal the wound at once by charms from the Scripture, and to extract the deadly poison of the serpent from the heart" or the sufferer will pass beyond help and die.

This is the foundation of Cassian's method. His entire undertaking was to provide a scheme in which to fit one's experience, rather than to attempt to dictate that experience. In this the renunciates and the seniores shared common ground: "often recognizing in ourselves many of these things, when the elders explained and showed them, as men who were themselves disquieted by the same passions, we were cured without any shame or confusion on our part, since without saying anything we learnt both the remedies and the causes of the sins which beset us. . . ." <sup>142</sup> He goes on to clarify his reason for not going into detail on the sins he is talking about: he is afraid that the book might fall into the hands of someone outside the monastic life, to whom it would be a scandal. This corroborates our suspicion that confession is, if not a secret teaching of John Cassian,

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<sup>141</sup> Christophe, Cassien et Cesaire, p. 39.

<sup>142</sup> John Cassian, Institutes, translated by Edgar C. S. Gibson, SLNPNF second series, vol 11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964; 1957) 7, 13.

then a potent one to be used wisely and under expert supervision. Although it was said to Cassian that he should trust his brother's judgement over his own,<sup>143</sup> he himself says that one must have mastered a sin before counselling a brother in that same one. In fact, "he who wants to heal another's wound ought to be in good health himself and free from every affection of weakness himself, lest that saying of the gospel should be used to him, 'Physician, first heal thyself'".<sup>144</sup>

The monastic life appears as a cooperative venture. Light is an important word in this regard and it should be the result of self-examination. While Cassian lays out the material basics of the monastic life in the first three books of the Institutes his main task seems to begin in the fourth book, when he gets into the psychological, not yet even spiritual, things. Although the purpose of the Institutes is to address the "external man" and remedy his passions, this is done by turning inward and applying the light of understanding to the dark areas in the soul. Having mentioned the need for an experienced counsellor, in I 5:2 Cassian indicates how one is to overcome the passions, to:

make them yield to our investigation and explanation, and thus breaking the gates of our ignorance, and cutting asunder the bars of vices which shut us out from true knowledge, may lead to the hidden things of our secrets, and reveal to us who have been illuminated, according to the Apostle's word, "the hidden things of darkness, and may make manifest the counsels of the hearts," that thus

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<sup>143</sup> Conf. 16:10.

<sup>144</sup> Institutes, 8:5.



penetrating with pure eyes of the [soul] to the foul darkness of vices, we may be able to disclose them and drag them forth to light; and may succeed in explaining their occasions and natures to those who are either free from them, or are still tied and bound by them . . .

Note the prevalence of metaphors of light and darkness and eyes. The eyes can be those of the soul, heart or mind (the question of any difference between these will be discussed later). These three have this at least in common, that they are "internal eyes" as opposed to the external ones. The proper functioning of the internal eyes is what allows the passions of the "external man" to be overcome. If not, then the emotions overcome understanding, "blinds the eyes of the [heart]", preventing us "from seeing the sun of righteousness".<sup>145</sup>

Along with illuminating the darkness of the soul or heart, which we have seen as being largely a personal, if not private, venture, went the theory of vices that Cassian inherited from Evagrius. This theory seems to have been based on experience in what we would call a "scientific" way. As Cassian himself says in I 12:4, "For weakness can never be cured, nor the remedies for bad states of health be disclosed unless first their origin and causes are investigated by a wise scrutiny." The first stage of confession which we have already looked at was in part an exercise in renunciation, in part an exercise in bonding,

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<sup>145</sup> ibid., 6.

and in part a preparation for the next stage, in which the renunciant's passions and conflicts are objectified. Fundamental to this stage is the realization, as given by Piamun in C 18:13, that overt responses are best seen as manifestations of hidden conditions rather than sins in themselves. In other words, he distinguished between symptom and disease, and the long list of possible "symptoms" or vices was related by Evagrius to eight "principal faults" or diseases that affected the soul.

Evagrius' main work on the subject has come down to us as De octo principalis vitiis and was until recently attributed to St. Nilus. His influence is clearly seen in conference 5, where Cassian puts Evagrius' teaching in the mouth of Serapion. It also appears in conference 14, where Nestoros discusses the two types of religious knowledge, praktike and gnostike, and in the last eight books of the Institutes, in which Cassian analyses each of the faults separately. These eight are gluttony, fornication, covetousness, anger, dejection, accidie, vainglory and pride. They proceed from the simplest and most physical to the more subtle and spiritual. The overthrow of the lowest provides the necessary foundation for overcoming the higher, and this process takes place, theoretically, in a systematic way. The vices are connected with various parts of the soul, and as these vices are subjugated, that part of the soul is liberated and its energy made available to fight against the rest of the vices and to search for the attainment of virtue. The character

of the undertaking changes as it proceeds through nine stages, beginning with fear, followed by compunction, renunciation, humility, mortification of desires, extirpation of faults, the budding of virtues, purity of heart and ending in the perfection of apostolic love. This ninefold process may be reflected in St. Benedict's thirteen degrees of humility.

Cassian's "scientific" approach is admirably displayed in Serapion's discourse on the eight principal sins. To begin with, he classifies sins as being of two kinds: natural and unnatural. Then he proceeds to identify four manners of acting: with physical action; without it; with external incitements; with internal. Those that are accompanied by physical action are actual, and those without are theoretical. Since these four categories are not exclusive, a diagram of the virtues based as fully as possible on Cassian's often incomplete, sometimes contradictory, information would be as follows:

Natural				Unnatural			
Actual		Theoretical		Actual		Theoretical	
int	ext	int	ext	int	ext	int	ext
--	gluttony (sens-ual)	--	vain-glory (ratio-nal)	--	--	dejection (pass-ionate)	covetousness (sens-ual)
--	fornication (sens-ual)	--	pride (ratio-nal)	--	--	accidie (pass-ionate)	anger (pass-ionate)

The progression of vices according to this and following the scheme set out by Cassian in the Institutes starts with the natural, actual sins of gluttony and fornication, proceeds to the theoretical and unnatural sins of covetousness (which is related with the previous two to the sensual part of the soul) and anger, then to the unnatural actual sins of dejection and accidie (which proceed like anger from the passionate part of the soul) and finally back to the natural but theoretical sins of pride and vainglory (which are rational). With the natural sins one begins with the actual ones, and with the unnatural sins one begins with the theoretical.

Cassian (or Serapion) then relates each of these stages to the many other sins that represent them. In something like Freud's stages of psychobiological development, the indulgence in drunkenness indicates that an individual has a has not yet subdued the spirit of gluttony. Fixation with fornication manifests itself in filthy conversation, scurrility, buffoonery and foolish talking, along with the most obvious act, which the monk was at least supposed to be safe from. Covetousness produces lying, deceit, theft, perjury, greed, false witness, violence and inhumanity. Anger produces murder, clamour and indignation. Dejection produces rancor, cowardice, bitterness and despair. Accidie produces laziness, sleepiness, restlessness, instability of mind and body, chattering and inquisitiveness. Vainglory produces contention, heresy, boasting and confidence in novelties. Pride produces contempt, envy, disobedience, blasphemy, mur-

muring and backbiting. Finally, Cassian relates these vices to some virtues, but this is not done systematically by him. That would have to wait for several centuries, during which time Gregory's amended list of vices, numbering seven, would come to be opposed to the list of seven virtues enumerated by Ambrose. Cassian relies throughout his work mostly on the virtues of humility, perseverance and charity and applies them equally to all the vices. At the end of Conference 5, however, Serapion does oppose chastity to fornication, patience to wrath, joyful sorrow to deathly sorrow, courage to accidie and humility to pride, but this is not an integral part of the system as Cassian gives it to us.

Finally, he does provide some possible answers to the question we might be inclined to ask: "Why eight sins?" and even, "Why not seven?", a question that Gregory the Great answered with "Why not indeed?". Cassian suggests that it may be a reflection of Egypt in addition to the "seven nations" of Deuteronomy 7:12 or gluttony and the "seven other spirits worse than himself" from Matthew 12:43 or the "seven mischiefs in his heart" of Proverbs 26:25.

I 7:13 and C 1:20 make clear the connection between illumination and confession. Both proceed from very similar pronouncements on the necessity of scrutinizing the "thoughts of the heart", discovering their origins and causes and then prescribing a cure to the importance of a confessor. The latter builds on the former by suggesting three sources of thoughts: God, the devil, and ourselves. This

bears on our response as much as the character of the thought itself, an additional level of psychologism: thoughts were to be categorized according to whether they were good or bad, but this did not obscure the fact that God could use evil for good and the devil good for evil, and the final authority in distinguishing between the two and deciding which way to go was not contained in the structure of vices and virtues itself, but in the traditional wisdom of the fathers, the experience of the elders and the self-knowledge of the individual. So too, once the individual began his psychomachia he would find himself in a unique position because of the structure of the vices within himself, "so that one man will have to fight his first battle against the fault which stands third on the list, another against that which is fourth or fifth."<sup>146</sup> In addition to this, although the relative strength and importance of the sins is contained within the Evagrian hierarchy, each man will have his own "besetting sin" which will characterize his relation to all the other vices.

This brings us to another feature of Cassian's method which gives it a "scientific" feel. He loves to enumerate things. It seems that if something is worth studying, it is worth making into a list. Or, it may be that anything important must be open to this sort of analysis. There is a series of dichotomies in Cassian's work: inner man/outer man; praktike / gnostike ; natural and unnatural vices; two

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<sup>146</sup> Conf. 7:8.

kinds of trial (in prosperity and in adversity); two steps to practical religious knowledge (knowing the nature of the faults and their cures and discovering the order of the virtues); two divisions of theoretical knowledge (historical and spiritual); and two grades of love ( agape and diathesis ). Of these, the divisions between the outer and inner man and their respective types of knowledge are the most important. Of Cassian's collected trichotomies, the most important are the three parts of the soul-- logikon, thumikon, epithumetikon --(reasonable, irascible and sensual), the three kinds of soul (carnal, natural and spiritual), and most importantly the division between flesh, will and spirit. But there are others: gluttony and covetousness are described as threefold; dejection can be useful in three ways and can be caused by anger, failure, "or even just the influence of the enemy"; the three sources of thoughts are God, the devil and ourselves; the Kingdom of God can be spoken of in a threefold way; the three steps of renunciation abandon wealth, affections of soul and flesh, and present and visible things; the three kinds of things and of possessions in particular are good, bad and indifferent; 'mental dryness' or accidie can be the result of our carelessness, the assaults of the devil or the allowance of the Lord; the three forms of trial are for probation, improvement, and punishment; the three methods of controlling faults are the fear of hell or legal punishment, hope of the Kingdom of God, and love of virtue itself; the threefold division of spiritual knowledge

(one of the two divisions of theoretical knowledge) are tropological, allegorical and anagogical; the three types of healing are through signs, by faith, and with pride; the three kinds of friendship are from unity of business, instinct, or similarity of virtue and the three types of monks are eremites, coenobites and sarabaites. Perhaps the most important information afforded by these categories is the indication they give of Cassian's distance from actual existence.

#### 4.3 THE OUTER MAN AND THE INNER MAN

Cassian makes some distinctions that are not so easily dismissed. A striking aspect of his view of man is the distinction between the inner man and the outer man. He probably did not invent these terms but no one else, except perhaps Augustine, used them as much. Cassian often refers to "the outer man" and then to 'our inner man' (emphasis mine). Clearly he places all that is most important to the personality within. This is not surprising. What is interesting is the way he refuses to exclude the external from the equation, regardless of the distinction he has made. While the Institutes were meant to address the "exterior cultus" of the monks and the Conference the inner, Cassian's emphasis on the will as the expression of the invisible part of man required that he give considerable space to the importance of actions and decisions in the development and exercise of



perfection.<sup>147</sup>

Cassian introduces the terms of the psychomachia in I 5:21:

For it is not an external enemy whom we have to dread. Our foe is shut up within ourselves: an internal warfare is daily waged by us: and if we are victorious in this, all external things will be made weak, and everything will be made peaceful and subdued for the soldier of Christ. We shall have no external enemy to fear, if what is within is overcome and subdued to the spirit.

The battle goes even deeper: in the Conferences it turns out that a man's worst enemies are his own faculties. In C 18:16 he says that "no one is more my enemy than my own heart", if it turns against him, but if it is for him then the other intestine enemies can do no harm.

In spite of this, Cassian's method works from the outside in. The first books of the Institutes prescribe the dress and daily routine for monks. The last eight concern the passions, which are supposed to be the arena of the outward man. And yet, from the very beginning, Cassian mitigates this distinction: "We ought, therefore, whenever the outward man fasts, to restrain the inner man as well from food which is bad for him [slander, anger, envy, vainglory, lust]."<sup>148</sup> In the next chapter he says that the spirit of fornication proceeds from the flesh and the mind, from without and from within. The key scriptural passage for this chapter is Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all dili-

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<sup>147</sup> Philip Rousseau, "Cassian, Contemplation and the Coenobitic Life", Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 26 (1975) p. 118.

<sup>148</sup> Inst. 5:21.

gence; for out of it are the issues of life", among which Cassian includes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft and lying. This leads him to an important distinction between being egkrate, or self-controlled, and enjoying the state of hagnon, chastity or wholeness. If we can elucidate what he meant by this last term we will have the key to his view of man. For now we will simply observe that he deliberately rejects an exclusive for an inclusive definition of chastity and chooses to associate this most strongly with wholeness.

The idea of the internal and external man remains a useful tool even though Cassian strays from it as soon as he introduces it. The fact remains that people do experience things as being inside or outside of themselves, and how they categorize things can change with their self-concept. At the outset, we can see that Cassian does not associate the inner man with the good and the outer man with the bad, as the desert fathers seemed wont to do. For them, evil came to one in the form of devils.

It is interesting to note that although Evagrius makes constant reference to daimones in his work on the eight principal faults, Cassian makes almost no reference to demons or devils in the Institutes. His most common term is spiritus, which is less easily hypostasized, and his use of the term does not indicate that he conceives of these spiritus as being anthropomorphic. Where he does make mention of them is in the Conferences, where of course he works more

closely with the desert idiom. But as an apparently derivative element, the appearance of demons in Cassian's work might be a good place from which to begin a study of the relation of good and evil to the human individual. Since it is Cassian's approach to begin with the external man and proceed to the internal, we shall follow him by beginning with a look at the powers of the demons to inspire evil from without.

To study this we shall go first to Serenus' conference (7) "On Inconstancy of Mind and Spiritual Wickedness". Here he makes it clear that demons are entirely external to men. They can influence the character of our thoughts, but only from without, and their knowledge of our weaknesses and inclinations is entirely from close observance of our actions,<sup>149</sup> i.e., by reading the outward man. The demons can seize the mind, body and soul of men, but first must deprive them of their defense of holy thoughts.<sup>150</sup> However, it also appears in 7:12 that weakness of the body can give them entrance and thence to interfere with the workings of the mind. Perhaps Cassian did not bother clarifying what he thought was going on behind the experience of loss of concentration, since in this the body and mind seem to lose their vigor together. The first line of defense in either case is not an action of mind or body but of will: to adhere vigorously to holy contemplation. "It is therefore clear

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<sup>149</sup> Conf. 7:15.

<sup>150</sup> ibid., 8:19.

that each man goes wrong from this; viz., that when evil thoughts assault him he does not immediately meet them with refusal and contradiction . . . "151 Demons are also hampered by their specialization and competition. While each individual has a good and a bad angel presiding over him,<sup>152</sup> (a seminal idea that does not take root in Cassian) each devil can implant only one particular sin, and each individual can only be infected with one at a time. Although the devils can only see the outer man directly, he who has "good eyes in his inner man" can see them.<sup>153</sup> Cassian says at one point that it is good that we cannot see the multitude of devils that swarm around us in the air or we would go crazy, but the desert fathers frequently saw devils. They do not even seem to have been afraid of them and knew how to rebuke them. Cassian says that they are hurt by failure.

It is interesting that Cassian makes the devil the third and least important cause of dejection in Institute 9. In Conference 19 the three sources of thoughts he gives are God, the devil and ourselves. The difference between the first two is not that one gives us good thoughts and the other bad, but that God can compel us to do good against our will, while the devil cannot force us to do evil but must rely on our own proclivities to provide an opening for his suggestions.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> ibid., 7:8.

<sup>152</sup> ibid., 8:17.

<sup>153</sup> ibid., 7:21.

#### 4.4 THE NATURAL AND THE UNNATURAL WILL

A more important distinction seems to be between the natural and unnatural vices. The unnatural ones, such as covetousness, are acquired and are not found everywhere, while all men inherit the natural ones and can never be free of them.<sup>155</sup> When the unnatural vices do take hold, it is because of an individual's sloth.<sup>156</sup> Cassian sets it down almost as a law that evil cannot come to one from outside unless that one has made himself vulnerable through carelessness, and once he does that, it becomes harder to draw a line between interior and exterior. The devils take possession of the individual "and the result is so close a union between them and the soul that it is almost impossible without God's grace to distinguish between what results from their instigation, and what from our free will".<sup>157</sup>

It begins to appear that the boundary between interior and exterior is a movable one that depends on the strength of the will for its location and permanence. Once a monk loses control of his will, he appears to be much less a person, his own actions no longer clearly distinct from diabolical ones. In Conference 4:7 Cassian himself describes the place of the will between the spirit and the flesh. It appears to be the natural inclination of the will to prefer

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<sup>154</sup> ibid., 8.

<sup>155</sup> ibid., 5:8.

<sup>156</sup> ibid., 6:9.

<sup>157</sup> ibid., 7:9.

ease<sup>158</sup> but the natural tension between the flesh and spirit keep it active in maintaining a balance between them. He says that this tension is good. Even more, the flesh itself is good because it gives us a safety net of sorts. Completely spiritual beings have no material excuse and therefore no remedy for wickedness, whereas proper regulation of the body gives a person a foundation from which to attain even greater virtue.<sup>159</sup> The righteous man must be amphoterodechion or ambidextrous, "for we see that the inner man consists of two parts, and if I may be allowed the expression, two hands", the right one being the ability to fight positively for virtue, the left the ability to fight negatively against sin.<sup>160</sup> The ideal is to "turn both hands into right hands", turn everything one touches to good.

The inner man mirrors the outer man in other ways. He has eyes as we have seen and a face, and the counsel to "turn the other cheek" does not for Cassian mean the other external cheek but the corresponding cheek of the inner man.<sup>161</sup> The inner man must share the sufferings of the outer man and learn to accept them with equanimity so that it will never be disturbed by physical misfortune.

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<sup>158</sup> ibid., 4:12.

<sup>159</sup> ibid., 14.

<sup>160</sup> ibid., 6:10.

<sup>161</sup> ibid., 16:22.

We have already seen how from the beginning Cassian subjects the inner man to the same renunciations as the outer man, giving up its own gluttony, fornication, covetousness etc. Perhaps one important difference between the two is that the inner man has greater potential for good and evil. He has within him knowledge of God's law<sup>162</sup> but also the heart, which can move him contrary to or in concert with this law. But the fact remains that this is hypothetical without the contribution of the external man and his cruder faculties of movement, desire, etc. Cassian never gives the slightest indication that the outer man is any less essential than the inner man, or that the two do not share the same destiny.

The distinction between outer man and inner man seems to be a preliminary step toward this tripartite view, for we shall see below that the will is a cooperative venture between the inner man and the outer man. Eunuchs have less trouble with their desires because they have disarmed the flesh, but Cassian rejects their achievement because it is not fully human. They are bad because they are lukewarm.<sup>163</sup> Therefore the passions of the outer man are not bad; they are essential to Cassian's view of man as a system in equilibrium. The value of a man seems to be both in the steadiness of the equilibrium and the valence of the tension it controls. The eunuch fails in the latter regard, the sinner

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<sup>162</sup> ibid., 8:23.

<sup>163</sup> ibid., 4:17.

in the former. Both are less than fully human.

Now we shall break down the human individual into smaller components to see how Cassian views the inner dynamics. The terms we shall study are anima, animus, caro, cor, corpus, mens, spiritus (soul, vitality, flesh, heart, body, mind, spirit). Of these, the one most frequently encountered is cor (502 by my count). After it come mens (412), corpus (312), caro (285), anima (241), spiritus (219), animus (99). This may seem a little surprising at first. We would expect anima to be near the top, since the soul is certainly very important in Christian thought. The fact that spiritus is near the bottom may also cause some initial confusion. The presence of cor at the top might also be unexpected. We have followed what looks like a "scientific" or "rationalist" emphasis in Cassian's method. The primary importance of the heart might give the impression that he is a mystic, comparable to St. Bernard or St. Francis. We have already seen that these presumptions are not borne out in the Hebrew use of this terminology. Although this is very likely the case with Cassian as well, there is no reason why we cannot use our expectations as a starting point, since we have to start somewhere, as long as we are prepared to re-evaluate them when they are contradicted by Cassian's words. For this reason, we shall begin by surveying what we are still entitled to consider man's most sublime elements, the soul, the heart and the mind. These are the most personal. Thence we shall proceed to the flesh and the spirit, more general terms, and the body and its animus.



#### 4.5 SOUL, HEART AND MIND

Cassian does indeed call the soul "the nobler part of man" in his defense of its immortality in C 1:14. It is here that the "image and likeness of God" resides and it is the soul which "contains in itself all the power of reason" and "makes the dumb and senseless material flesh sensible, by participation with it." (It is interesting that Cassian puts aside "Scripture proofs" to discuss further the "nature of the soul itself" on entirely rational terms. He thinks it is "beyond the bounds of, I will not say the folly, but the madness of all stupidity" to have the slightest suspicion that the soul is not immortal, "especially when the order of reason itself demands that when the mind has put off the grossness of the flesh . . . it will restore its intellectual powers better than ever . . .") In C 9:4 he compares the soul to a feather or wing in that it has the natural ability to soar to the heavens when not held down by "the moisture of injurious lusts". Cassian held the eastern view that every soul was created individually and inserted into the body, rather than being descended from the parent like the body.<sup>164</sup> However, in I 4:35 he gives a moving description of the soul that compares it to a body hanging on a cross:

The fear of the Lord is our cross. As then one who is crucified no longer has the power of moving or turning his limbs [animi sui motu membra] in any direction as he pleases, so we also ought to affix our wishes and desires-- not in accordance with what is pleasant and delightful to us now,

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<sup>164</sup> Chadwick, John Cassian, p. 115.

but in accordance with the law of the Lord, where it constrains us. And as he who is fastened to the wood of the cross no longer considers things present, nor thinks about his likings, nor is perplexed by anxiety and care for the morrow, nor disturbed by any desire of possession, nor inflamed by any pride or strife or rivalry, grieves not at present injuries, remembers not past ones, and while he is still breathing in the body considers that he is dead to all earthly things, sending the thoughts [intuitum] of his heart on before to that place whither he doubts not that he is shortly to come: so we also, when crucified by the fear of the Lord ought to be dead indeed to all these things, i.e. not only to carnal vices but also to all earthly things, having the eye of our minds [animae] fixed there whither we hope at each moment that we are soon to pass.

Although the word anima is only used once in this passage, this does not describe the mind, as Gibson translates anima in this instance, nor the heart, because this passage refers to man in a general way that encompasses all his faculties, from thinking and dreaming to moving his limbs, from his past through the present to the future. In C 18:1 the "deadly poison of anger has to be utterly rooted out from the inmost corners [recessibus] of our soul. For as long as this remains in our hearts, and blinding with hurtful darkness the eye of the mind, we can neither acquire right judgement and discretion . . ." A "comparison of a soul and a millstone" in C 1:18 proceeds directly to the term "heart", which Moses says can be compared, but the comparison is finally made to the mind; in fact, it is the frequent torrent of temptations, the instability of the mind, which is the topic.

It begins to appear that the soul is a catch-all for several related functions. In I 10:4 Cassian discusses the sleep that overcomes the soul infected by accidie and contrasts it with bodily sleep, "for in truth the soul which is wounded by this passion does sleep, as regards all contemplation of the virtues and insight of the spiritual senses". Here it has mental (contemplation) and visual (insight of the spiritual senses) functions ascribed to it. It is in the final Conference, 24, that Cassian describes the structure of the soul, with its three parts: logikon (rational); thumikon (passionate); and epithumetikon (sensual). 'Of all faults there is one source and origin, but different names are assigned to the passions and corruptions in accordance with the character of that part, or member, if I may so call it, which has been injuriously affected in the soul . . .

<sup>165</sup> We have seen how the eight principal vices arise in the different parts of the soul. Although one might insert a disclaimer that covetousness, anger, dejection and accidie, being unnatural vices, cannot be said to proceed from the soul, Cassian himself does not discriminate in listing them with the others. He uses three words-- procreabit, parturiet and generabit --to describe their manifestation, and all three strongly imply being born or generated from within.

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<sup>165</sup> Conf. 24:15.

Each fault has its own corner [stationem] in the heart, staked out "in the recesses of the soul"(C 5:23). Convictions that give rise to keenness of spirit and delight of the heart proceed "from the inmost recesses of the soul"(C 9:27) but the mind can also shut itself off from the world when the spirit is overwhelmed. The next question is whether we can equate these three parts of the soul with corresponding terms, i.e. the rational with the mind, the irascible with the heart and the sensual with the body or the animus.

We will begin with the heart. We have already encountered in our discussion of the soul mention of the "thoughts of the heart". This is a key concept for Cassian. Cogitatio is associated with cor fifteen times throughout the two works. In comparison, it is associated only eleven times with mens. In I 4:9 he counsels renunciants not to hide the thoughts of their hearts from the elders. In I 5:14 and 15 references to "mental gaze" (mentis obtutum) and the proper direction thereof, appear beside others to the heart. Yet, in 5:34 the "efforts of his mind and intentions of his heart" are required to purify one's self, so that the eyes of the heart can see the Scriptures clearly. In fact, although we do have these references to the gaze of the mind, according to Cassian eyes are ascribed directly to the mind (oculos mentis) only once. This means that they are ascribed to the heart seven times, the soul four times and twice each to the flesh and the body and once to the mind.

In Institute 6 Cassian derives all thoughts from the heart using the quotation from Proverbs to which we previously referred. It is interesting to note that, as in C 2:10, thoughts "rise" in the heart, and can do harm if they remain "hidden" there. Intimo, recessus, occultus are associated altogether sixteen times with cor, the only comparison to be made with anima, which is related to concepts of "hidden" or "secret" nine times. Conversely, there are only three such references to the mind. We can recall here that the heart was also referred to by others in comparison to the monk's cell, in the sense that his most important work was done not in his physical cell, but the cell of the heart. The cells of the monks in the desert were small huts; in Cappadocia there are examples of holes burrowed into the rocks. Can we conceive with Cassian of the heart as some kind of cave, the unfathomable source of thoughts, perhaps also a safe place to which to retreat?

In his discussion of growth in prayer, Abbot Isaac says that prayer is perfected when the monk rids his heart of distractions, allows himself to be deeply moved and the content of his prayer is known only to himself and God.<sup>166</sup> Abbot Joseph in C 16:27 counsels Cassian and Germanus to let their hearts be enlarged, rather than be constrained in the straits of impatience, cowardice and anger. Thus, he says, they "will have within it safe recesses of counsel." The emotions with which he associates the heart in this passage

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<sup>166</sup> Rousseau, "Cassian, Contemplation and the Coenobitic Life", p. 125.

are all irascible, which would seem to connect it with that part of the soul. Perhaps it is misleading to use the concept of "thought" too rationalistically, translating the phrase "thoughts of the heart" differently from "thoughts of the mind", or perhaps to keep in mind that it refers to "irascible" thoughts.

One problem with this is that Cassian uses mens in the same way as cor within the same passage, so that, while we may expect it to be associated with "rational" thoughts, it is already not doing so. In fact, there are many similarities between the two terms. Intentio is a capacity of both, appearing eighteen times with cor and fourteen with mens. And a discussion of intentio in C 5:14 freely moves from one to the other. The characteristic of the mind that stands out is its instability, and Cassian defines it in this way: 'And so the nous, i.e., the mind, is defined as aeikinetos kai polukinetos, i.e., ever shifting and very shifting . . .<sup>167</sup> The title of C 1:18 is "Comparison of a soul and a millstone" but the word anima is not used. However, the comparison that Abbot Moses draws is between both the mind and the heart and a millstone. The point of it is that thoughts drive either or both incessantly, but it is within the power of the man in charge "to decide whether he will have wheat or barley or darnel ground by it." We would assume that study might be work for the mind, but for Cassian it is a cooperative venture between "the efforts of his

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<sup>167</sup> Conf. 7:4.

mind and intentions of his heart" in first purifying the individual, at which point "the eyes of the heart, as if the veil of the passions were removed, will begin as it were naturally to gaze upon the mysteries of Scripture . . .  
 "168 This points to one minor difference in usage between the two: although intentio can be attributed to either one, actio, vigor, ardor and, negatively, tepor are almost exclusively attributed to the mind. The mind therefore seems for the moment to have more of a quality of motion to it.

In C 5:4 Serapion discusses the difference between carnal and spiritual faults (and overtly corrects Paul's opinion that all faults are carnal). Carnal desires excite the mind "when at rest" and drag it "against its will" to consent to them. He goes further to say that spiritual faults proceed from the soul only and can be overcome "with an effort of the mind alone". The carnal ones need physical objects for their inspiration and consummation (are these also the unnatural ones?). On the other hand, physical incitements are beneficial in the fight against the spiritual ones because they provide the opportunity to deal with them. The cure for the spiritual ones is to be given to the heart.

A recurring question in the conferences is that of the instability of the mind.<sup>169</sup> The mind is not implicated in the appearance of distracting thoughts (whereas the heart and soul are to an extent) but it is in the individual's

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<sup>168</sup> Inst. 5:34.

<sup>169</sup> Conf. 9:7; 10:8.M

response to them. Since "the mind cannot possibly remain in one and the same state" one must always (Theodore quoting Paul) "be renewed in the spirit of the mind . . . pressing forward to those things which are before" (C 6:14). A comparison to a man paddling against a stream follows this instance and similar ones appear elsewhere, giving a strong impression that the mind is an organ of control. This may follow in part from the fact that the Greek word "dianoia" can be translated as either "mind" or "might". Isaac prescribes in C 10:8 "some material for this recollection, by which we may conceive and ever keep the idea of God in the mind". The Anthropomorphites kept the image of God before their eyes by imagining him in human form. Isaac's image is the phrase "O God, make speed to save me; O Lord, make haste to help me." This phrase kept in the mind is the first line of defense against demons, but it also leads to the image of God becoming firmly established there. Isaac summarizes his teaching on this subject in 10:14: "as you want it repeated to you again, I will give you a brief instruction on steadfastness of heart. There are three things which make a shifting mind steadfast, watchings, meditation, and prayer, diligence in which and constant attention will produce steadfast firmness of soul."

Cassian depended a great deal on Saint Irenaeus for his ideas on the image of God. But for Irenaeus the image of God as engraved on the soul was of a physical order.<sup>170</sup> Cassian

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<sup>170</sup> Michel Olphe-Galliard, "Vie contemplative et vie active d'après Cassien", Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, 16



followed Ireneus in making it partake of will and of reason, rather than just reason, as with Gnostics and some Christians like Clement and Origen who were gnostic in their approach.<sup>171</sup> Chaeremon says in C 11:9 that a companion is the image of God.

The images in the mind indicate the state of the soul. The absence of mental images of past sins is the proof of God's forgiveness for them and a precondition of perfection.<sup>172</sup> Until that point, the recollection of sins can be used to practise forbearance.<sup>173</sup> "There will then be for the man who is thoroughly established a similar test even in regard to this passion, so that one who is sure that he has altogether exterminated the roots of this evil may for the sake of ascertaining his chastity, call up some picture as with a lascivious mind. But it is by no means proper for such a test to be attempted by those who are still weak . . .  
 .<sup>174</sup> In the next conference, Pinufius contradicts these words of John and says that this distracts from the contemplation of virtue.<sup>175</sup> While John seems to feel that it is a good test for the expert, Pinufius says it is a beginner's trick. I would say at this point that the image of God is

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(1935) p. 277.

<sup>171</sup> ibid., p. 274.

<sup>172</sup> Conf. 20:5.

<sup>173</sup> ibid., 19:14.

<sup>174</sup> ibid., 16.

<sup>175</sup> ibid., 20:9.

contained in the mind rather than the heart and has more to do with the will (according to Hausherr the will is equal in importance to the intellect here) than things associated with the heart.

#### 4.6 FLESH AND SPIRIT

Animus, caro, corpus and spiritus are connected in many ways, just as we have seen to be the case with the terms we have just examined. Animus has already appeared in one quotation from I 4:9 in connection with the power to move the limbs. It is associated with some form of virtus ten times, more than any other term, and also appears with motus, intentio and anxietas. The word with which it is most often associated is mens, interestingly enough, twice as often as it appears with corpus and three times as often as with caro. The two have a cooperative relationship, sometimes progressing together, sometimes falling back into torpor. "Rigida animi obstinatione" (stiff obstinacy of mind) is the opposite of the important virtue of discretio spiritus.<sup>176</sup>

The terms most commonly associated with caro are concupiscentia, fragilitas, desiderium, pugna, infirmitas, aculeus, conmotio, passio, motus, necessitas and corruptio. The flesh appears in an adversarial relation with the heart, the mind and the spirit, while it complements the body. It is most often used with spiritus (32 times) and then with mens (25 times). While there is frequent mention of the

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<sup>176</sup> cf. Conf. 17:23.

battle between the mind and the flesh and the duty of the mind to correct the promptings of the flesh, they are also at times given as two sources of error that perhaps conspire together to make things easier for themselves: "carnis pruritu mentisque consensu", "inanitate non solum carne, verum etiam mente pervolitant". However, they are both perfectible, and people can virgines vel carne vel mente perdurant.

We have seen already that physical chastity or virtue is for Cassian only an image of true, internal chastity or virtue. The relation between the flesh and the spirit is almost entirely adversarial. The most common terms around which they meet are adversus, bellum, contentio and the terms most often associated directly with caro are in contrast with those, such as promptus, fervore, rector, although there is less qualification of spirit; it seems to stand on its own as a keyword. However, the two do share utilitatus, contritio and confinia. Cassian does not think that this conflict is a bad thing. In fact, the confinio between the spirit and the flesh is where much of what is human is made manifest.

Corpus usually works with the spirit, in dolorem corporis ac spiritus contritionem, laborem corporis quam contritionem spiritus, integrum spiritus suum et animam et corpus. Its relations with the soul are amicable; they work together for virtue, perfection, purity and wholeness. The hominem integrum is one qui ex corpore constat et anima and has

integrum spiritum suum et animam et corpus. However, like the body and the mind, the two can also work together for evil. Along with corporis atque animae puritatem there is corporis atque animae passiones and amborum vitio, id est animae et corporis generatur. The body is not the source of sin and bodily weakness does not hinder one's perfection, so long as it is not pampered and this is a matter for one's heart and will to decide.<sup>177</sup> Far from leaving it behind, the mind depends on the body's strength, which can be undermined through excessive fasting (I 5:9). While Serenus says in Conference 7 that demons can only occupy the body, he also says that they must first occupy the mind, and talks about those "who, while they seem to be very little affected by them in the body, are yet possessed in spirit in a far worse way, as they are entangled in their sins and lusts."<sup>178</sup> The body seems to be an image of the mind. In C 11:14 Germanus asks whether one can ever be free of carnal incitements while in the flesh and Chaeremon answers in the following untranslated conference. The answer is no.

Spirit seems not to be very personal. It is often used to refer to our enemies, and is certainly less personal than calling them demons or devils. The most common use of the word is to refer to the inmundus spiritus that harass the monks. Second to this is fervor spiritui which relates it to the virtus of animus. The next most common reference is

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<sup>177</sup> Inst. 5:7.

<sup>178</sup> Conf. 7:25.

to the concupiscentia of the spirit as opposed to the flesh and then contritio, which is also a major characteristic of the heart along with humility.

We have a division between the clean heart and the unclean spirits. Necessity impacts the flesh and the body, six times to nine. The flesh carries the burden of fragility, concupiscence and the fight against the spirit. The fight uses energy from the spirit's fervor and the strength of the animus (although it remains unclear how physical the animus is). While deeper down and further away in the hidden recesses of the heart thoughts are forming into intentions. Which, if the mind can be moved to exchange its tepor for ardor in the service of its intentions, will result in perfection, cleanliness and, the most common (48 times) and most important term in Cassian's vocabulary, purity of heart, puritas cordis. Having mentioned this, we are no longer merely involved in anthropological archaeology. This term embraces all of Cassian's theology, psychology, method and hopes.

#### 4.7 PURITY OF HEART

Perfection is for Cassian purity of heart. It is the life of the angels. In some places Cassian implies that only monks will enjoy this perfection, but in others he indicates that it is the height of the evangelical counsel and not binding on everyone for salvation. Since Cassian could only conceive of perfection within the monastic enclo-

sure, we must examine how this perfection was composed. We already know that he perceived two steps to perfection, the discipline of the outer man as given in the Institutes, and the discipline of the inner man as laid out in the Conferences. In Institute 7 the word is that one must renounce everything in order to be perfect, which requires that one live in the coenobium. In I 5:36, however, there are several stories about those who graduated from the common to the solitary life. This is the usual progression according to Cassian. Practical knowledge corresponds to the common life and theoretical knowledge to the solitary. Practical knowledge is necessary in order to gain the theoretical.<sup>179</sup> The practical is divided in two: knowing the nature of the faults and their cure and then knowing and following the order of the virtues. The theoretical is more concerned with Scripture and is divided into historical and spiritual, the latter being broken down further into tropological, allegorical and anagogical, so there are actually four kinds of theoretical knowledge.

These two ways can be divided in another manner: The communal life has the ideal of mental possession of God while the solitary has an affective ideal.<sup>180</sup> In the former the individual actually intensifies his relations with his fellows because he has rejected relations with all but monks. In the latter the individual gives up even human

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<sup>179</sup> Conf. 14:2.

<sup>180</sup> Olphe-Galliard, "Vie contemplative", p. 281.

relations in order to focus all his energies on God. Both reject the world, but the former only in order to create a new world,<sup>181</sup> the latter to leave it. One could say that one is a school while the other is a reward.<sup>182</sup>

Cassian followed Evagrius' introspective rather than ecstatic aims. Neither sought to leave the bounds of nature in order to find God, but to find him within.<sup>183</sup> For Clement, the simple believer was not excluded from salvation, but from the perfection of the gnostic.<sup>184</sup> For Cassian, the monk living the common life is denied the gift of contemplation, but not perfection. This brings out three characteristics of Cassian's view of the monastic life: contemplation and perfection are not equated as with more gnostic predecessors like Clement; contemplation is a gift more than a reward and theoretical knowledge cannot then be achieved by all equally nor can they be expected to do so; both ways are therefore of equal value in achieving perfection. In C 19:8 Cassian says that except for a few instances, no one can be perfect in both ways of life. Only the "completely perfect" can excel in both, examples being the abbots Moses, Paphnutius, and the two Macarii.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> ibid., p. 282.

<sup>182</sup> ibid., p. 283.

<sup>183</sup> ibid., p. 285.

<sup>184</sup> Michel Olphe-Galliard, "La purete de coeur d'apres Cassien", RAM, 17 (1936), p. 182.

<sup>185</sup> Conf. 19:9.

J. Leroy has examined the question of whether Cassian is reporting the monastic tradition as it was handed on to him or, as it is already beginning to appear, he integrated two forms of life that were previously distinct with his notion that one was a preparation for the other. To begin, it is interesting that Cassian began by writing about the coenobitic life since he had very little experience of it,<sup>186</sup> although by this time he was settled in Marseilles and had his own monastery. Leroy isolates, by the intent of the Prefaces, the first four books of the Institutes and the last section (books 18-24) of the Conferences as being coenobitic in character,<sup>187</sup> the others being eremitic. He points out that the prefaces of the former parts were addressed mostly to coenobites or non-eremites and that the coenobites within the works never refer to their aspirations to graduate to the next level.<sup>188</sup> Leroy concludes that the passages setting out the solitary life as the natural progression from the common and the common as the necessary prerequisite for the solitary are Cassian's personal contribution to the genre.<sup>189</sup> Philip Rousseau feels that in the end Cassian became a thorough-going coenobite and undervalues the strong distinctions he made, such as between the

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<sup>186</sup> Julien Leroy, "Les Prefaces des ecrits monastiques de Jean Cassien", RAM 42 (1961), p. 164.

<sup>187</sup> ibid., p. 174.

<sup>188</sup> Julien Leroy, "Le cenobitisme chez Cassien", RAM 43 (1962), p. 127.

<sup>189</sup> ibid., p. 154.



practical and theoretical, as minor aspects of his work.<sup>190</sup> Owen Chadwick denies that this clear distinction was ever made in the desert and that the eremitic life still contained a high degree of sociability, a point that Rousseau also makes in his book.

In fact, Cassian praises solitude because it offers companionship with saintly men<sup>191</sup> while Chadwick says that he considered one advantage of living in common an increased desire to get away from others, but feels that in practice Cassian discouraged those who wanted to be solitaries.<sup>192</sup> Leroy may have some explanation for this innovation of Cassian's, while Chadwick doesn't seem to think there was much change. Rousseau does, but for him it was not a process of bringing together two ways of life that had been separated so much as one leading directly into the other beginning from very early on. It would be possible to define the ideal of perfection of the solitary life as negative, the renunciation of everything including the personality, which would put it out of the bounds of this thesis and of the common life as more positive at least, requiring definite duties toward others. This is certainly the way Basil saw it. The two points of view carry different ideas of what is ultimately possible for humankind. The solitary seems more prone to dualism, as demonstrated in the famous saying of

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<sup>190</sup> Rousseau, "Cassian, Contemplation", p. 113.

<sup>191</sup> Conf. 18:16.

<sup>192</sup> Chadwick, John Cassian, pp. 53-54.

Dorotheus, as reported in the Apophthegmata, "I kill my body, my body kills me." However, Chadwick does not agree that Egyptian eremiticism was necessarily anti-social or dualistic.

The question is whether for Cassian there are two kinds of perfection or one, which is attained in two stages. Most of what he says points to the latter. Olphe-Galliard holds this view. Leroy points out that although this is true for Cassian it is an innovation brought about by him which does not reflect previous conditions. Cassian identifies different aims (finēs) for the two--to mortify the flesh for the coenobite and free the mind for the hermit. Abbot John has already said<sup>193</sup> that only a few exceptional men have been able to excel in both lifestyles. Cassian's attempt to combine them slips apart within his own work. In C 24:8 Abraham says "we do not assert that because the anchorite's life is good, it is therefore suited for everybody: for by many it is felt to be not only useless, but even injurious." Obviously there was not a consensus that the two had any relation to each other. Rousseau believes that Cassian became in the end a convinced coenobite; in spite of the system he tries valiantly to uphold, conditions changed during his life to the point where the common life became the norm.

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<sup>193</sup> Conf. 19:8-9.

While the life of Antony inspired and motivated much of the ascetic development of the fourth and subsequent centuries, much of it resulted in the appearance of alternatives to Antony's original vision. Pachomius was the first and foremost. The changes were the result of factors both internal and external to the eremitic lifestyle. A weakening of the cohesion of the original group ran concurrently with an increase in demands from the outside world. (Cassian's ambivalent position is indicated by his relation of the dictum to "flee from bishops and women", which he confesses he has failed to uphold. He is a priest, has run errands and written books for bishops and had a house for nuns beside his own monastery of St. Victor, run by his sister. Later, he would get into the theological arena and write his other work, the de incarnatione domini contra nestorium, at the request of Pope Leo I.) Jerome came to mitigate his initial idealism and recognize the diversity of functions in the church and the necessity for involvement.<sup>194</sup> Cassian also sees this. His solution is that each should retain the line "which he has once for all chosen" while admiring the virtue of others in different vocations, for "the body of the church is indeed one, but the members many . . . " <sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church, pp. 128-9.

<sup>195</sup> Conf. 14:5.

This implies that coenobites and anchorites were separate vocations. It also implies the recognition of the responsibility of the adepts to provide leadership to the rank and file (or at least at first a decrease in the sort of zeal found in the traditional expedient of self-mutilation to avoid pastoral office) as well as recognition of the place of the weaker brethren within the church. Not only does Cassian counsel not to despise those who are "delivered up to various temptations" he says that "we cannot possibly be perfected without them inasmuch as they are members of us . . . " <sup>196</sup> Hospitality, care of the sick, intercession for the oppressed, teaching and charity are practical components of both the common and solitary lives. <sup>197</sup>

St. Martin of Tours prepared the ground for Cassian and for the monk-bishops of Lerins with whom Cassian was familiar enough to dedicate the last two parts of his Conferences (books 11-24). Martin combined in himself for the first time in the West the offices of bishop and hermit. His wonderworking supported his ecclesiastical authority and vice versa. This symbiosis characterized the West until it broke down in the Later Middle Ages and it is described by Peter Brown in The Cult of Saints and Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity. Sts. Ambrose and Augustine were later great examples of this symbiotic relation between withdrawal and pastoral care. It is possible that John Chrysostom, the

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<sup>196</sup> ibid.

<sup>197</sup> ibid., 14:4.

patriarch of Constantinople to whom the Origenist monks ran in 399, played a role in Cassian's conversion to coenobitism. Chrysostom himself had been a hermit and then gave it up to become a priest and continued to pursue his ascetic ideals in a pastoral setting. His fervour, his preferential treatment of the Egyptian exiles (he ordained Cassian a deacon) and imperial jealousy led to his downfall in 404, at which time Cassian and Germanus went to Rome to plead for support for Chrysostom with the bishop of Rome. Rousseau and Chadwick both suggest that Chrysostom was a moderating influence on Cassian, and although there is not the sort of doctrinal correspondence that exists with Evagrius, there is something else--an open avowal of debt. In his book on the incarnation he calls himself a disciple of John.<sup>198</sup>

Abbot John of the Conferences admits that eremitic perfection has become impossible due to overcrowding<sup>199</sup> (which seems to contradict Chadwick's opinion that Egyptian asceticism was social). The increasingly psychological approach would induce suspicion of the solitary ideal. Cassian and those of his generation seem to have recognized something of the projection involved in the diabolical apparitions of the early desert experience. Now it seems more likely that the perfection of the desert may consist largely in a lack of opportunity for passion.<sup>200</sup> The gulf separating a man's out-

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<sup>198</sup> On the Incarnation, translated by Edgar C. S. Gibson, SLNPNF series two, 11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964; 1957) 7, 3.

<sup>199</sup> Conf. 19:5.

side from his inside had eclipsed that between the monk and the devil. Things had been easier in the pre-Constantinian days: as Hilary of Arles said, "There was never any doubt that you were dealing with persecutors: they pressed you to deny your faith with punishment, sword, and fire".<sup>201</sup>

After the Edict of Toleration, the enemy was to be found within the body of the Church and then within the soul of the believer. When the world stopped being the main enemy of the faith, the retreat from the world lost much of its validity. The patience of the solitary can easily be illusory. Patience, evidence of true humility, is the means to perfection of heart when friction with others reveals one's hidden faults. Patience with others is important because it maintains the insight that they are not the cause of one's faults. One's efforts at correction should be turned inward. It begins to appear that one can only approximate the perfection of the solitary life with the help of others. Indeed, although avoidance is the first step in remedying carnal sins, the spiritual, or social ones, are more quickly beaten down with the frequency of their appearance, so intercourse with others can be of the greatest benefit.<sup>202</sup>

On the positive side, life in the community with its levels of expertise gives one the opportunity to practise the charity necessary for perfection. This was one, if not the

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<sup>200</sup> Inst. 8:18.

<sup>201</sup> Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church, p. 84.

<sup>202</sup> Conf. 5:4.

major, reason for which Basil of Caesarea rejected the solitary tradition. Cassian mentions Basil several times. The proper response of a pure soul to the offences of others is sorrow and pity, rather than censure.<sup>203</sup> The fact that "Christ is at the present time divided, member by member, among all the saints" requires that the quest for virtue (theoretical knowledge) be conducted in a group, for no man, no matter how excellent, can exemplify for the monk all the virtues he seeks.

An effect of increased communalism was increasing importance in the virtue of discretion. This consisted in part in observing the tradition of the elders as practised in the group and in obedience, especially pertaining to the revealing of one's thoughts. The teaching of the elders was seen "not as a fountain of original insight, but as a static and negative scale against which to measure the opinions of others".<sup>204</sup> Asceticism became a formalized ars, disciplina or scientia,<sup>205</sup> although it is described equally as often in the language of war or medicine. Of course, these are both formal disciplines as well. Rousseau feels that this process reduced the initial brilliance of asceticism and replaced it with something less desirable, in which vitality and insight were replaced by conformity and mediocrity. He is probably correct with respect to the first part, possibly

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<sup>203</sup> ibid., 11:10.

<sup>204</sup> Rousseau, Ascetics, p. 196.

<sup>205</sup> ibid., p. 197.

even in the second, but not, I think, in his overall evaluation of the process. The loss of brilliance was accompanied by a shift from an oral to a written transmission: the Conferences replaced the conferences they contain, with their reference to specific personalities and concerns.<sup>206</sup> As a result, however, asceticism became useful, both to the church community and the individual. Besides, the same thing happened with the founder of this religion. Rousseau assumes that relying on another's insight is detrimental to truth. However, in order to make this point he ignores the paradox that these developments are revealed through a process of alteration, in Cassian's case sometimes devious alteration. He also ignores for the time being Cassian's demonstrations of the uncertainty of tradition and his promotion of conscience as arbiter of truth. Rousseau maintains that somehow formalized techniques left out the personality of the individual, but it is also possible that it made it easier for personality to flourish by offering a balanced system of liberty and constriction. On the whole, Cassian's world is less heroic than Antony's or even Evagrius', but it is also more human. For some this may have been a problem, but not Cassian. He approached the problem with discretion.

Formalized asceticism made it easier to focus on the heart. There is probably a close connection between the diminished presence of devils and a more compromised life-

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<sup>206</sup> ibid., pp. 224-226.



style. Serenus suggests that it may be due to "the power of the cross penetrating even to the desert" or just the carelessness of late fourth century monks, who do not inspire the same fury as the previous generation of soldiers of Christ.<sup>207</sup> But as Piamun tells it, the real test of virtue is to be found among men and this is confirmed by a story about one famous monk, who returned to the common life from the desert. Far from being enslaved to formulae, the one who finds "true patience and tranquility" has "no need either of the good offices of the cell or of the refuge of the desert . . . ."<sup>208</sup> For "we cannot be safe from the storms of temptation and assaults of the devil if we make all the protection for our patience and all our confidence consist not in the strength of our inner man but in the doors of our cell or the recesses of the desert, and companionship of the saints, or the safeguard of everything else outside us."<sup>209</sup>

This is a tremendously liberating view of the ascetic life; Piamun expresses a sense of the ascetic life as one of grace that echoes Cassian's own. Ultimately the laws followed are not those set down by the community or tradition, but those revealed by the heart to the inner man. The institutes, conlationes, artes, disciplinae and scientia are means to this end, and essential means. The balance between

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<sup>207</sup> Conf. 7:23.

<sup>208</sup> ibid., 18:13.

<sup>209</sup> ibid., 16.

the positive and negative, the "right hand of virtue" and the "vices on the left hand" is the "royal road" along which the monk should walk, says Antony, quoted by Moses.<sup>210</sup> This is discretion, and "discretion is the mother of all virtues, as well as their guardian and regulator."<sup>211</sup> Discretion keeps one uninjured by either extreme, overzealous virtue or complacency. The result in either case is the same, because, as the old saying goes, akrotetes isotetes, "extremes meet".<sup>212</sup> True discretion can only be secured by true humility, which comes from not withholding one's thoughts from the scrutiny of the elders.<sup>213</sup> We have also seen how life among others is essential to true humility, so it is hard to see how one could even achieve perfection alone. Perhaps a dawning awareness of this led Cassian to include later conferences that deny the necessity, even the usefulness, of the solitary life.

There is the possibility that Cassian changed from a perception of two distinct groups, which he intended to harmonize, to one in which two elements operate concurrently in the same life, the coenobitic and eremitic ideals being harmonized synchronically rather than diachronically as he originally intended. (Rousseau suggests a slightly different development<sup>214</sup> but I lean towards Leroy's view and I

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<sup>210</sup> ibid., 2:2.

<sup>211</sup> ibid., 4.

<sup>212</sup> ibid., 16.

<sup>213</sup> ibid., 10.

have already indicated my differences with Rousseau's opinion.) The difference becomes one of an orientation of mind, rather than of location or method.<sup>215</sup> Cassian himself does not seem to forget that the division between the inner and outer is formal: even before he proceeds with his discussion of the principal vices, he tells how the two, as in thought and labor, form a unity, 'so much so that it is almost impossible for anyone to decide which depends on which'.<sup>216</sup>

This is important in understanding the virtue of castitas, which suffers in the translation to "chastity". It often has the connotation of repression. Cassian credits the classical philosophers with this much, calling it "some particle of chastity", but his ideal of castitas is "internal purity of mind and continual purity of body".<sup>217</sup> The culmination of chastity is the overcoming of desire, not only the act but the impulse and image.<sup>218</sup> When the mental vestiges of sin have left, one can be sure that one has been forgiven. The test of penitence and testament of pardon is to be found in the conscience.<sup>219</sup> This quality of integritas, which also suffers in the obvious translation, is fundamental to Cassian's sense of virtue and of humanity, for the

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<sup>214</sup> Ascetics, p. 182.

<sup>215</sup> ibid., p. 181.

<sup>216</sup> Inst. 2:14.

<sup>217</sup> Conf. 13:5.

<sup>218</sup> ibid., 12:16.

<sup>219</sup> ibid., 20:5.

virtuous man is the whole man, in whom all parts are in harmony.

Evagrius' doctrine of apatheia got him into trouble with Jerome, who had an exaggerated idea of what he meant. While Evagrius' apatheia is a permanent state of the soul, unlike the transient tranquilitas or stabilitas that Jerome and the other Latin fathers would have spoken of, it is debatable whether it was really meant to suggest that man can attain a godlike state of impassivity in this world. With the discovery of Evagrius' book of speculative theology, the Kephalaia Gnostica, Anton Guillaumont remarks that his proscription was perhaps not completely unwarranted. Cassian follows Evagrius' doctrine of apatheia but for him it is an ideal not to be reached while in the flesh. He does not use the Greek, but also avoids easily misunderstood terms like impassibilitas, (which was used by the Pelagians), in favour of tranquilitas, stabilitas and puritas.<sup>220</sup> Puritas cordis is his key term, the skopos of the whole business.<sup>221</sup>

Skopos means "mark", in the sense of a target. It is used in this way in Philippians 3:13: "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of the Lord" which recalls the closest classical equivalent to sin, hamartia, or missing the mark. In

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<sup>220</sup> L. Th. A. Lorie, Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translations of the Vita Antonii, (Nijmegen:Dekker & van de Vegt, 1955), p. 125.

<sup>221</sup> Conf. 1:4.

that case, the word is applied to the fault; in the later case it is applied to the cure: the fault is now more serious. Also, now hitting the mark is just a step towards final and lasting success. "Those things which are of secondary importance", like fastings, vigils, withdrawal from the world and even meditation on Scripture, are only aids to achieving purity of heart. It is quite simply the absence of passion, which allows the mind to dwell on God. "This, I say, is the end of all perfection, that the mind purged of all carnal desires may daily be lifted towards spiritual things, until the whole life and all the thoughts of the heart become one continuous prayer".<sup>222</sup> This state extends even unto sleep, when diurnal meditations produce nocturnal revelations.<sup>223</sup> The highest form of prayer dispenses with the four kinds of supplication enumerated in conference 9 for one in which the mind addresses God familiarly as its father,<sup>224</sup> which transcends human thought, does not involve words or concepts but is a flow of thoughts that expresses in the shortest possible space of time things otherwise inconceivable.

Cassian is not a mystic and says relatively little about the telos of the ascetic life. It is certainly not formalized by him, as it has been by others, such as devotees of Cassian like John Climacus and St. Ignatius. In spite of

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<sup>222</sup> ibid., 10:7.

<sup>223</sup> ibid., 14:10.

<sup>224</sup> ibid., 9:18.

his admiration for the great hermits, it does not appear that he saw himself or his readers as their equal. It even appears that he is ambivalent about the ideal they present. The conference of Theonas on sinlessness (anamartetus) is not optimistic.

The mark of the saint is his vision. Cassian calls them "men who see". One of the things they see is their own depth of iniquity.<sup>225</sup> They are not safe, not as long as they are in the body. Cassian compares them to tight rope dancers. The earth, which is "the natural base and the most solid and safest foundation for all" becomes a danger to them because of the space they have put between it and them.<sup>226</sup> He makes it clear that it is not the nature of the earth that poses the danger, but the height achieved by the monk. This is Cassian's version of apatheia, a constant tension between spiritual height and physical depth, in which the danger increases with each new height. The carnal danger of sin and the spiritual danger of vainglory increase and neither is ever surpassed. The more a man is purified in his mind, the more clearly he sees this and is impelled to go on higher, increasing the risk and his own vision.<sup>227</sup> This is a crisis of consciousness like Socrates' aporia, except in this case the individual betakes himself to the grace of God, more and more as each new achievement reveals

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<sup>225</sup> ibid., 23:6.

<sup>226</sup> ibid., 23:9.

<sup>227</sup> ibid., 23:19.

more clearly the distance to go and his insufficiency for the journey. Cassian holds out no hope that this will ever cease in the flesh and this realization is present throughout his work. His constant theme is the necessity of the movement of grace in the human equation. It is his most important legacy.

## Chapter V

### CONCLUSION

The inspiration for this study came in 1985, when I first encountered the works of John Cassian. A first reading left some strong impressions that encouraged further investigation. These impressions may be put in the form of five hypotheses that formed the basis of the investigation that followed:

1. Cassian possessed keen psychological insight, especially regarding motivation.
2. The vividness of his descriptions of states of mind indicated that this insight was the result of personal observation.
3. His references to specific aspects of personality and their relation to motivation demonstrates an amount of theoretical sophistication reserved at that time for doctrinal questions.
4. The ability to formulate what appeared to be a coherent method of analysis and cure based on a model of man required an approach both scientific and humanistic, rather than conventional and bound to the traditions of the Bible and earlier Christian writers.



5. This achievement was at the time too personal to be of historical value, which was not realized until a century later, when his influence was encapsulated in the Rule of St. Benedict, which did not itself achieve prominence until 300 years after being set down.

These hypotheses were formulated in spite of considerable ignorance of the period, which several years of study have alleviated only slightly. Yet the framework within which they were formulated has held up. Cassian was a relatively minor figure, sharing a generation with such greats as Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine and Leo the Great. The distinction between the personal and psychological concerns of Cassian, and the, in some ways, more fundamental issues concerning heaven and earth addressed by the most important thinkers of the time holds true. It is also true that the world was not ready to receive his wisdom, although he did much to establish the conditions necessary for the development of monasticism in the West.

However, the research for this thesis has not supported my hypotheses:

1. Cassian did possess insight and it was partly psychological. But he was more attuned to the Zeitgeist than any menschengeist. A large part of his insight was editorial.

2. This accounts for the vividness of his insights, in that he seems to have had a phenomenal memory and a well-developed sense of organization. He was very impressionable and managed to carry the strength of his impressions over into his writing.
3. He was not as theoretically sophisticated as initially appeared by his apparently deliberate references to anima, animus, cor, mens, and spiritus, his careful use of Greek terms and his many lists and schemata. Ludwig Wrzol has pointed out his "that mens sometimes appears as the equivalent of anima, animus, cor and spiritus."<sup>228</sup> If Cassian were entirely consistent, we could conclude that these terms are roughly equivalent to each other, and therefore relatively meaningless.
4. Cassian did not develop his method by experiment. He relied heavily on written sources and oral tradition. There is a passage in the Praktikos of Evagrius that is so similar in tone and style to Cassian's own descriptions of mental states that it is hard to believe that he composed any of them from his own experience. Cassian is also a copious quoter of the Bible, but these passages are generally quite conventional.

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<sup>228</sup> Ludwig Wrzol, "Die Psychologie des Johannes Cassianus", Divus Thomas, V (1918), p. 431.

5. Although the world of the desert fathers, among whom Cassian received his education, was initially one of personal innovation, Philip Rousseau has argued convincingly that almost from the moment it attracted notice this world tended toward convention and decreasing vitality. Within a hundred years of gaining prominence the ascetic movement suffered the same fate at the hands of the Christian church that the church had suffered at the hands of the Empire during the previous century. In fact, the Conferences of John Cassian appeared exactly one hundred years after the Council of Nicea. Having been written for bishops, the Conferences established that from that time forward, there was to be one recognized method of asceticism, which would be upheld by the authority of the church, just as the Council of Nicea had recognized one dogmatic line which was to be upheld by the authority of the Empire.

A further conclusion that only came after numerous readings of the Conferences is that Cassian was not the senior partner in the travels through the desert that produced this work and the Institutes. It is a natural assumption that of the two who travelled through the desert for twelve years, Cassian was the leader and Germanus the follower, since it was Cassian who mastered the materials gained and wrote the books, while Germanus disappears from history after their

arrival in Rome. It has even been suggested by Nora Chadwick that Cassian uses Germanus in the Conferences as a "literary stalking horse". Having altered my impression of Cassian's originality, however, I was able to see some indications that he was in fact the junior partner. It is clear that he was the younger of the two. At one point he refers to his friend as "Abbot Germanus", while at another Abbot John singles out Cassian because of his youth. It is often reported that John Chrysostom ordained Cassian a deacon, but not that he made Germanus a priest at the same time. Furthermore, the questions posed by Germanus throughout the Conferences have a definite and consistent character which is easily distinguished from the tone of the Institutes, where Cassian is freer to speak with his own voice. Germanus is insistent, skeptical and sometimes belligerent. His main concern is with the instability of the mind and its significance with regard to the ascetic theories of the Abbots, whereas Cassian's concerns as expressed in the Conferences are with his personal insufficiency and lack of confidence. The clarity of Cassian's recollections may reflect his status as an attentive spectator.

In spite of changes in my estimation of the nature of Cassian's importance, the fact of his importance remains undisputed. However, it is most clearly seen the context of slow developments that began centuries before his time and bore fruit centuries later. These developments took place with regard to the individual's relation to society.

Increasing liberation of the individual from the bonds of the tribe, the family and archaic religion in pre-classical Greece laid the foundation for later interest in the individual as an object of study. The polis became a place where the individual came to self-knowledge and accomplishment, though its declining importance after the fifth century left a social and political vacuum, forcing people to turn within to find meaning. This is reflected in the development of the Greek science of the soul, beginning with Socrates' vision of it as a moral entity and proceeding through Plato's theoretical embellishments, Aristotle's natural studies and leading to the Stoics' doctrine of the autonomy of the soul.

The Greeks were, however, unsuccessful in establishing the importance of the soul in a way that was compelling to any but the most erudite. The Hebrews lacked the Greeks' genius for analysis but brought to the Hellenistic world a strong sense of morality and a vision of history as a personal relationship between God and man. Similar developments to those that led the Greeks to conclude that man's most important relation was with himself led the Hebrews to conclude that the individual's primary concern was his relationship with God the Father. They did concur in the belief that in order to take part in his primary relationship man's will must be free.

Free will became hotly contested in pagan, Jewish and Christian circles in the first centuries of the Empire and

one lasting result of this conflict was the fruitful but uneasy alliance of the Greek and Hebrew traditions within Christianity. The specifically Christian element was the believer's devotion to the person of Jesus Christ, which replaced all previous attachments to family, state or tradition. This was in many ways the culmination in the liberation of the individual that had begun so long ago.

The need to replace the structures of authority of the declining Empire of the third century onward resulted in an alliance of the Christian with the remnants of Roman authority. At the same time that the liberation of the individual was reaching the height of its development, it was being joined to a system of power that would remain unchallenged for over a thousand years.

The final contribution to this strange alliance of personal and political sovereignty was made by the ascetic movement, which purified both and left them strong. It was its recognition of the value of the individual and his need for a structured life that made the vision of men like the Cappadocians, St. Augustine, Cassian, St. Benedict and Gregory the Great enduring. Cassian's attention to the soul is in the final analysis most important as a sign of its importance to his generation. Although he did not create a coherent theory of the soul, Cassian left no doubt that the attempt was worthwhile. His survey of the tensions inherent in living expressed his desire to retain a constant balance in all things. His most pregnant insight was that this bal-

ance could never be static, but must remain a living synthesis of experience, an ongoing endeavour. That he could see no end to the enterprise meant that he could see no end to the process of living and learning, and without such a positive endowment, the ensuing age would have been much darker than it was.

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