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# CONTEXTUALIZING CASSIAN

ARISTOCRATS, ASCETICISM, AND  
REFORMATION IN FIFTH-CENTURY GAUL



Richard J. Goodrich

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in Fifth-Century Gaul*

RICHARD J. GOODRICH

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## Abbreviations

The abbreviations used for primary sources are drawn from the following standard lexicons: Blaise, *Dictionnaire Latin–Français des auteurs chrétiens*; Lampe, *Patristic–Greek Lexicon*; *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*; Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*; Liddell, Scott, Jones, *Greek–English Lexicon*. Note also the following abbreviations:

CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CSCO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , ed. H. Dessau (3 Vols. in 5, Berlin, 1892–1916)
J ECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
J EH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
J RS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
J TS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , ed. J. P. Migne (162 Vols., Paris, 1857–66)
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J. P. Migne (221 Vols., Paris, 1844–64)
MGH.aa	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, auctores antiquissimi</i>
RevBen	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>
SPAT	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
UBS	<i>The Greek New Testament</i> , 4th rev. edn.
VC	<i>Vigilae Christianae</i>

When citing the works of John Cassian I have supplied the book, chapter, and (when present) paragraph numbers found in the critical editions. I have also cited critical edition references for quoted texts, utilizing the relevant page and line numbers. In cases where line numbers were not printed in the critical editions, line references are counted from the top of the page. References to the three prefaces of Cassian's *Collationes* take the form Pref. 1 (for the Preface to Books 1–10), Pref. 2 (Books 11–17), and Pref. 3 (Books 18–24).

## Introduction

This is a book about a Late Roman writer and his context. The writer is the ascetic theoretician John Cassian; his context is the world of early fifth-century Roman Gaul. The purpose of this study is to make connections between Cassian's thought, work, and the much-larger milieu of later Roman society. In some ways this project is not original: Augustine, Ambrose, Basil, and Paulinus of Nola have all been the subject of recent studies that re-evaluate them in the light of a deeper understanding of the late antique world. Even in the circumscribed area of Cassian studies there has been a growing awareness of the need to critically rethink the suppositions that have undergirded earlier work.<sup>1</sup> Although Cassian was an ascetic writer, we must resist the temptation to make him into a proto-Benedictine monk, tucked safely away in a cloister, divorced from the concerns of his fellow

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Philip Rousseau, 'Cassian: Monastery and World,' in *The Certainty of Doubt: Tributes to Peter Munz*, edited by Miles Fairburn and W. H. Oliver (Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University Press, 1995), 78, who signals this change by noting that in his earlier study (Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978]), he had assumed that Cassian was a monk and that he (Rousseau) 'knew what [being] a monk meant'. The deconstruction of Cassian as a reliable source for the history of early Egyptian monasticism in Jean Claude Guy, 'Jean Cassien, historien du monachisme égyptien?' *SPAT* 8 (1966), 363–72, should have been a warning that Cassian had his own rhetorical agenda in his works. Nevertheless, despite recent attempts to look at Cassian through different lenses, it should be noted that the two most recent English-language studies of Cassian (Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998] and Steven D. Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture* [New York and London: Routledge, 2003]) remain resolutely focused on his theological contribution to the monastic life; cf. David Brakke, 'Review of Cassian, The Monk,' *Church History* 68 (1999), 142.

Gallic aristocrats.<sup>2</sup> Cassian was an important fifth-century writer with demonstrable connections to the churches of three significant areas: Constantinople, Rome, and south-eastern Gaul. While his work was one of the cornerstones for the western monastic tradition mediated by Benedict of Nursia, it was also Cassian's entry in a competition for the hearts and minds of Gallic ascetics. Competition, authority and self-justification are as present in Cassian's works as his teaching on psalmody.

Cassian was probably born sometime in the mid 360s; his place of birth has been disputed and no scholarly consensus exists on this question. Quite possibly he was a native of the Roman province of Scythia Minor;<sup>3</sup> a conflicting opinion locates him in Roman Gaul, the land where he would ultimately settle and live out his days.<sup>4</sup> As a young man he entered a monastery in Bethlehem,<sup>5</sup> where he first experienced the monastic life. Inspired by an encounter with a visiting Egyptian ascetic (Abba Pinufius), Cassian and his friend Germanus sought and received permission to make a tour of Egypt, at that time the heartland of the ascetic movement.<sup>6</sup>

Cassian and Germanus remained in Egypt for an extended period,<sup>7</sup> learning the principles of monasticism at the feet of the Desert Fathers. In total he may have spent fifteen years in Egypt, and the

<sup>2</sup> A point suggested to me by Conrad Leyser, very early in my study of Cassian.

<sup>3</sup> This is based on Gennadius' entry for Cassian in Gennad. *Vir.* 61, in which he refers to Cassian as: *Cassianus, natione Scythia*. Supporters of a Scythian origin include: Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 190–8; Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 227 n. 5; Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, 169; Theodor Damian, 'Some Critical Considerations and New Arguments Reviewing the Problem of St. John Cassian's Birthplace,' *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 9 (1990), 149–70; and Stewart, *Cassian*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> See M. Cappuyn, 'Cassien,' *Dictionnaire D'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques* 11 (1949), 1321; Karl Suso Frank, 'John Cassian on John Cassian,' *SPAT* 33 (1997), 422.

<sup>5</sup> He would have been extremely young at this point: how (and why) he made his way to Bethlehem at this age are not known.

<sup>6</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 21–32; Cassian, *Coll.* 17, can be read as an elaborate apologetic intended to explain why Cassian and Germanus had broken their promise to return to Bethlehem.

<sup>7</sup> Although see Frank, *John Cassian*, 431, for doubts about the length of this stay. In my opinion, scepticism about the length of Cassian's stay is undermined by the unparalleled expertise that underlies his ascetic treatises. I doubt if this mastery could have been picked up on a brief tour of Egypt.

end of his sojourn roughly coincided with the close of the fourth century. His exodus has been connected to the rise of the Anthropomorphite controversy in Egypt, and while it is possible that Cassian was among the band of monks who were led out of the desert by the Four Tall Brothers, (c.400), this is by no means certain. Eventually Cassian appeared in Constantinople, arriving in that city before the deposition of John Chrysostom.

Chrysostom ordained Cassian a deacon and placed him in charge of the cathedral treasury.<sup>8</sup> When Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria carried his persecution to the door of the eastern Emperor, Cassian was one of the delegation who travelled to Rome in order to solicit support from Bishop Innocent I.<sup>9</sup> Following the exile and eventual death of Chrysostom, Cassian disappeared from the gaze of history. References in his third work, *On the Incarnation* (*De incarnatione*), and two letters from Innocent suggest that he might have spent some time in Antioch,<sup>10</sup> but little can be stated with certainty about his activities until the early 420s, when he declares his presence in south-eastern Gaul by writing his first work, *Concerning the Institutes of the Coenobites and the Remedies for the Eight Principal Vices* (*De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium uitiorum remediis*). *De institutis* may be dated to the period (419–25). This work was followed by the longer *Conferences of the Fathers* (*Collationes patrum*), which developed aspects of the teachings of *De institutis* and was probably completed c.428.

*De institutis* can be divided into two logical parts: Books 1–4 which establish a framework for institutional monasticism, and Books 5–12, which are designed to teach the monk how to master the eight principal faults (Gluttony, Lust, Greed, Anger, Dejection, Accidie, Vainglory, and Pride).<sup>11</sup> My study grew out of a modest aspiration to write a commentary on the first four books of *De institutis*, books that have been largely ignored by Cassian scholars in favour of the

<sup>8</sup> Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 31–2.

<sup>9</sup> Pall. V. *Chrys.* 3.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart, *Cassian*, 14–15.

<sup>11</sup> The list was modified by Pope Gregory and Thomas Aquinas (who conflated Pride and Vainglory) to form a list that is more likely to be familiar to a modern audience: the Seven Deadly Sins.

greener fields of his *Collationes patrum*.<sup>12</sup> Outside of the material used by liturgical historians, who use Books 2 and 3 as evidence for the development of the eastern monastic offices, *De institutis* seemed to contain little of interest; at least nothing that Benedict of Nursia had not said much better a century later. Chadwick's suggestion that Cassian lacked the 'trim economy of the competent legislator',<sup>13</sup> implied that there was little value in the first half of his earliest work. What he wrote was poor and uneven; important topics such as how to select an abbot were omitted entirely. Cassian's true brilliance was found in the development and synthesis of the theoretical aspects of the ascetic life, the material found in the last eight books of *De institutis* and the 24 books of *Collationes*. Consequently, the absolutely fundamental thought contained in *De institutis* 1–4 is often read as a preface to the more important writings that follow. These four books are relegated to the status of helpful advice for Gallic monks, underestimating their central place in Cassian's entire monastic project.

My early interest in Cassian was stimulated by the apparent wrong-headedness of this view. *De institutis* is many things, but to reduce it to a collection of good advice misses the central thrust of Cassian's approach to the Gallic problem. *De institutis* was the wedge Cassian used to get his foot in the Gallic door. More than a simple introduction to later works, these four books were Cassian's attempt to establish his right to prescribe ascetic practices for a Gallic audience. His thesis was simple: the Gallic monks did not know how to live the ascetic life; if they wanted to be monks, then they would do what Cassian told them to do. Cassian had no interest in the gentle emendation of existing ascetic practices. Those who read his work were to scrap their own novel formulations and adopt the programme Cassian advanced: the institutes of the Egyptians (*instituta Aegyptiorum*).

As I studied the first four books of Cassian's *De institutis*, I began to appreciate the subtlety of Cassian's approach. He was a superb

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the only significant look at *De institutis* has been Adalbert de Vogüé, 'Les sources des quatre premiers livres des Institutions de Jean Cassien. Introduction aux recherches sur les anciennes règles monastiques latines,' *Studia Monastica* 27 (1985), 241–311.

<sup>13</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 1st ed., 60.

polemicist and rhetorician with a simple agenda: to establish his own version of the ascetic life in Gaul. To that end he repeatedly emphasized his own experience against that of his audience. He also offered a subtle critique of the work of other ascetic writers while simultaneously suggesting that these writers lacked the qualifications necessary to offer advice. Finally, he prescribed a programme centred on the concept of renunciation, one more socially radical and rigidly dogmatic than anything proposed by his contemporaries.

These themes, which emerged while I was engaged in commenting on the text, became the core of this study. They are complemented by an investigation into the question of Cassian's provenance while writing his works and an examination of the authenticity of certain chapters in *De institutis* 3.

I will begin my study with a sketch (Chapter 1) of Cassian's Gallic context. John Cassian did not write in a safe, untroubled world, but rather in a Gaul whose face was changing rapidly. In the years 406–13, the Roman Empire lost control of the province. Two usurpers and invaders from the north significantly altered the political landscape before Emperor Honorius' generals were able to reassert imperial rule. My exposition of the political scene is closely linked to a consideration of how some of the earliest Gallic ascetic writers responded to this changing world by promoting a form of ascetic Christianity that preserved the cultural values of their audience — the Gallic elite. This historico-literary approach will en flesh the concerns of those men and women who would have been Cassian's earliest readers.

Having suggested an audience for *De institutis*, Chapter 2 examines Cassian's critique of Gallic asceticism. If this was reduced to a single word, it would be inexperience. The Gallic monks, lacking experience, had created idiosyncratic ascetic structures that Cassian condemned. The principal problem of Gallic monasticism was the untrained abbot who had the temerity to establish his own monastery without first having served as a disciple under an experienced master. This action, the epitome of pride, undermined one of the chief goals of the ascetic life, the cultivation of humility. Cassian portrayed himself as a man with impeccable credentials, an author whose experience could correct the disorder of Gallic asceticism.

Yet Cassian was not the only person offering ascetic advice. Chapter 3 examines how Cassian positioned himself with regard to the works of



his competition. Cassian took deliberate steps to promote himself as something quite different from earlier writers (Jerome, Rufinus, Sulpicius Severus, Basil et al.). Their works, Cassian argued, were the product of men more eloquent than experienced. Cassian never overtly attacks any of these writers, but as this chapter suggests, he does make subtle allusions to (and corrections of) their writings which were designed to highlight his own experience, over and against their less-trustworthy treatises.

Ultimately, Cassian will not rest on his own experience as the foundation for his authority. Chapter 4 will demonstrate how Cassian shifted the final justification of his monastic precepts onto a mythical code of ascetic law, the *instituta Aegyptiorum*, which had been formulated at the birth of the ascetic movement. This monastic code was rooted in antiquity and had been observed by all true ascetics since the apostolic age. Cassian characterized himself as a conduit for this orthodox teaching; the practices he advocated were not his own creation, but rather, the well-tested wisdom of the holy fathers.

With Chapter 5, I will take up the question: what did Cassian offer his audience that was truly unique? This chapter will argue that his emphasis on an actual renunciation (*renuntiatio*) — as opposed to the theoretical renunciation preached by his contemporaries — set Cassian apart from his fellow ascetic writers. Whereas other writers saw asceticism as a new aristocratic *cursus* that led to even more honours in the present world, Cassian advocated a complete separation from the world and its concern for rank and status. He proposed a literal interpretation of Christ's words in Matthew 19:21: 'If you would be perfect, go sell your possessions, give to the poor, and then come follow me.' While other western ascetics and writers were busy attempting to integrate traditional Roman elite values and Christian asceticism, Cassian preached a complete change of life: the monk was to cast off everything that conferred status in the secular world and, imitating Christ, to don the humility and obedience of a slave. In this way (and this way only) the monk might then take the first steps toward spiritual perfection.

I close this work with two appendices that treat issues tangential to my main exposition. Appendix 1 will examine the long-accepted notion that John Cassian composed his ascetic works *De institutis* and *Collationes* while a monk or priest of Marseilles. An assessment of

the evidence for this attribution will demonstrate that there is little to substantiate the proposition. Indeed, there is no evidence to firmly locate Cassian in Marseilles prior to the year 429. To the contrary, Cassian actually was intimately involved with the ascetic project developing in the Gallic province of Narbonensis Secunda. The antipathy between the bishop of Marseilles (Proculus) and the bishops and ascetics of Narbonensis Secunda created a rift that Cassian could not have bridged had he actually been living in Marseilles at that time.

Finally, in Appendix 2, I change my approach to Cassian slightly in order to follow up a textual question. This investigation centres on four chapters from Book 3 of *De institutis* (4, 5, 6, and 8), which are in my opinion a later interpolation into Cassian's work. This claim will be demonstrated by employing a combination of traditional textual analysis as well as new computer-based statistical stylometry.

## The world of Gallic asceticism

As soon as they have risen from supper, all shall sit down together and someone shall read from the *Conferences* or the *Lives* of the Fathers or something else that will edify the hearers.

What are the *Conferences of the Fathers* and their *Institutes*, as well as the *Rule* of our holy father Basil, if not tools of virtue for obedient monks of good conduct?

(*Rule of Saint Benedict*, 42, 73)

The *Rule of Saint Benedict* (*Regula Benedicti*), written c.540, enshrined the works of John Cassian, ensuring his writings would be copied and his words read long after all other memory of him passed away. Singled out twice in the rule as an example of material that would edify the monk, Cassian's works received an accolade that ensured his ongoing popularity among monastic readers. Cassian's writings were grafted into the hardy shrubs that sprouted wherever Benedict's *Regula* took root. As a result of Benedict's endorsement, Cassian's legacy survived and his works have been the subject of a wide range of study, a great deal of which has been conducted by the sons and daughters of St Benedict.

But we who write from the shelter of peaceful *scriptoria* or university libraries run a significant risk: because Cassian's work is so relevant and contains such a penetrating insight into the ascetic vocation, there is generally little acknowledgement of the great distance between modern commentators and this ancient author. This sense of familiarity is dangerous: because he speaks to us, he makes us feel that he wrote for us—or at least people like us. While it is undeniable that Cassian composed his works for those who wanted

to commit themselves to the monastic vocation, it would be a great mistake to think of his audience as monks in either the mediaeval or modern sense of the word. In fact, Cassian's primary audience, those he sought most immediately to influence, consisted of people very much unlike most of his modern readers. Cassian wrote for neither Benedictine nor proto-Benedictine monks; he wrote for wealthy Roman aristocrats, an elite class that had more in common with Cicero, Caesar, and Augustus than mediaeval or modern followers of St Benedict. If we fail to acknowledge Cassian's audience — factoring in their preoccupations, prejudices, and preconceptions about their place in the world — we risk missing much.

The goal of this study is to locate Cassian's works in the late antique Gallic context in which they were composed. Primarily it is a consideration of how Cassian sought to persuade his elite readers to adopt his version of the ascetic life, setting aside the privileges and perquisites of their positions. But before embarking on this task, it is vital that we come to grips with the worldview of the men and (possibly) women who would have made up Cassian's initial readership.<sup>1</sup>

Cassian wrote during a time of upheaval, the point of fracture that marked Gaul's irredeemable drift away from the Roman Empire. Although a number of modern historians have sought to minimize the disruption that followed the Germanic invasions of 405/6, before the fifth century closed the Western Roman Empire no longer existed, and Gaul had been divided among Germanic kings. Nearly half a millennium of Roman rule came to a sudden end. These changes would have had the greatest impact on those who had enjoyed privileged lives under Roman rule.

Before Gallic aristocrats began to adopt ecclesiastical careers (as either bishops or monks) in the late-fourth, early-fifth centuries, the way was paved by writers who sought to induce their peers to think seriously about a Christian career. Recent studies have addressed the question of why Gallic aristocrats turned to the church for new career opportunities;<sup>2</sup> I do not propose to take up such an important

<sup>1</sup> Cassian evinces no obvious interest in female ascetics. His works are virtually devoid of references to women, and his impersonal references to monks are all constructed with masculine pronouns. In the interests of fidelity to his thought and writings, I have generally retained this bias.

<sup>2</sup> A small, but influential cross-section would include: John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court: A.D. 364–425* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975);

question in the limited compass of this chapter. Rather, I will examine the strategies late antique Gallic writers employed to make an ecclesiastical career seem more plausible and palatable to an aristocratic readership. In the main, I will focus on works written by Cassian's contemporaries. These include the writings of Sulpicius Severus (d. c.420), Hilary of Arles (d. 449), and Eucherius of Lyons (d. c.450). The latter two writers were alumni of the island monastery of Lérins, and Eucherius was actually a dedicatee of Cassian's *Collationes*.<sup>3</sup> Sulpicius Severus, though pre-dating Cassian, offered the first native Gallic version of the ascetic life, and one of his close friends, Paulinus of Nola (d. 431), was still active and an influential source of ascetic ideals for the readers of Cassian's day.

Sulpicius Severus wrote two works (*The Life of Saint Martin* [*Vita Martini*] and *Dialogues* [*Dialogi*]), and Hilary wrote *The Life of Honoratus* (*Vita Honorati*) to promote their own versions of the ascetic life. These works were prescriptive as well as descriptive, intended to demonstrate that a Christian aristocrat could join the true nobility (*uera nobilitas*) without relinquishing their Roman status. Eucherius' *On the Contempt of the World* (*De contemptu mundi*) was intended to persuade one of his relatives that true security was only to be found in a committed Christian life. By examining the history and literature of this period, I intend to enliven Cassian's readership, suggesting what might have concerned them and to provide a context for the study that will follow.

## 1 GAUL, 390–418

Modern historians are distinctly uncomfortable with terms like 'crisis' or 'fall' and grand narratives that purport to offer causal explanations

Ralph Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989); Ralph Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). These major studies have been supplemented by a vast host of articles and monographs, which I shall cite *in situ*.

<sup>3</sup> As was Honoratus, the subject of Hilary's *Life of Honoratus* (*Vita Honorati*).

for cataclysmic upheavals such as the destruction of the Western Roman Empire. Whereas scholars of an earlier generation could confidently assert: 'in the opening years of the 5th century, barbarian hordes began to pour over the province of Gaul in a great desolate stream',<sup>4</sup> modern scholars tend toward greater circumspection. In the context of the Roman occupation of Gaul, incursions of Germanic migrants were not that unusual. Movement across the Empire's northern border had occurred for centuries, and the suggestion that the crossing of relatively small bands of northerners in late December 405/6<sup>5</sup> led to the destruction of the Western Empire overemphasizes one of a great number of factors that contributed to the destabilization of the region (if indeed we can even discern the point at which the Roman world ended and the mediaeval began).<sup>6</sup> As a number of scholars have noted, the foundation of independent Gothic kingdoms in Gaul was not something new, but rather a return to a pre-Roman order.<sup>7</sup> Rather than viewing the period as an unexpected crisis, we should probably note that the forces at work during these twenty-eight years had actually affected Gallic life for centuries.

Nevertheless, by minimizing or relativizing the upheavals of the early fifth century, we risk embracing the opposite extreme, ignoring the impact these events would have had on the fabric of fifth-century Gallic society. As Simon Schama noted about recent scholarly attempts to rehabilitate the image of the Vikings who vexed England during the early mediaeval period: 'with the best will in the world, the idea of the early Vikings as speedy Baltic commercial travellers, singing their sagas as they rowed to a new market opening doesn't quite ring

<sup>4</sup> A. C. Cooper-Marsdin, *The History of the Islands of the Lerins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 1–2.

<sup>5</sup> The traditional date for this is December 406, but recently, Michael Kulikowski, 'Barbarians in Gaul, Usurpers in Britain,' *Britannia* 31 (2000), 327–31, has argued for December 405, a theory that solves a number of chronological problems.

<sup>6</sup> Most provocatively argued by Henri Pirenne, 'Mahomet et Charlemagne,' *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 1 (1922), 77–86, who attributed the dissolution of the Roman world in the west to the rise of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries. Although Pirenne's thesis has been repeatedly challenged on a number of grounds, there is little doubt that it sparked a very important reappraisal of the way ancient historians thought about the relationship between the Roman Empire and Gaul.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Van Dam, 'The Pirenne Thesis and Fifth-Century Gaul,' in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* edited by John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 332–3.

true...it seems likely that the inhabitants of ninth-century Britain would have had some difficulty in finding the Norsemen ethnographically fascinating, being too busy defending themselves against dismemberment or being dragged off into captivity.<sup>8</sup> Schama's point can be applied to fifth-century Gaul: the destructiveness of the Germanic invasions and the subsequent civil wars may have been minimal and localized but that does not mean it did not have a dramatic impact on those who lived through the events. We do well to skirt the Scylla of suggesting that the years 405/6–18 were something unprecedented and cataclysmic in the history of the Western Empire, but it is also necessary to steer around the Charybdis of assuming that these years were simply business as usual for the residents of late antique Gaul.

Even rebellion and internal uprising had a history in Gaul: one of the traditional stereotypes in Roman historical writing was the propensity for the Gauls to support usurpers, strong leaders who would place Gallic interests at the forefront of their concerns. This unreliability had become a conventional theme in Latin literature, found in works stretching from Julius Caesar to Ammianus Marcellinus.<sup>9</sup> Probably the most impressive breakaway from the Empire had been the creation of the Gallic Empire (260–74) under the general Postumus.<sup>10</sup> This bid for autonomy had led to most of the Western Empire joining the Gauls, abandoning the tottering Roman state in order to pursue their own agenda. After the reassertion of Roman control by the Emperor Aurelian, a string of usurpers, including Magnentius (350), the Emperor Julian (360), and Magnus Maximus (383) sprang from Gallic soil. As a number of scholars have noted, the proverbial Gallic welcome for usurpers was nothing more than a manifestation of insecurity: if the Roman Empire could not be trusted to defend the interests of its people, then the prudent supported a local leader who would keep his attention focused on their needs.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Simon Schama, *A History of Britain: At the Edge of the World? 3000 BC–AD 1602* (London: BBC Worldwide, 2000), 56.

<sup>9</sup> Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats*, 18.

<sup>10</sup> See John Drinkwater, *The Gallic Empire: Separatism and Continuity in the North-Western Provinces of the Roman Empire A.D. 260–274*, (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats*, 18–19; Van Dam, *Leadership and Community*, 20–4; John Drinkwater, 'The Usurpers Constantine III (407–411) and Jovinus (411–413),' *Britannia* 29 (1998), 271.

After the chaos of the third century and the dissolution of the Gallic Empire, emperors had remained close to Gaul, maintaining a presence that brought nearly 100 years of stability to the province.<sup>12</sup> With this heightened access to the court, the Gallic elite enjoyed new opportunities for imperial service. Many prominent Gauls (for virtually the first time) began to participate in the imperial administration.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately this tide of imperial interest soon began to ebb; Valentinian II was the last Emperor to sit on a throne in Trier. After his death in 392, the gaze of the emperors turned east. Soldiers were withdrawn from the defences along the Rhine and some time before the year 406, the seat of the Gallic prefect was moved from Trier to Arles.<sup>14</sup> It is impossible to assess whether this shift signalled a conscious imperial plan to abandon northern Gaul, or whether it was simply the case that the Romans deemed the Germanic tribes a smaller risk than enemies elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, whether through design or ineptitude, the reduction of manpower curtailed the empire's ability to defend the northern borders.

What were the Gauls, who had enjoyed an unprecedented century of prosperity, security, and imperial favour, to make of the return of imperial neglect? When we attempt to tap the *zeitgeist* of this period, we find Gallic aristocrats arrayed on both sides of the fence: many hoped that the Roman Empire would continue to administer and protect Gaul. Indeed, after Theodosius defeated the Gallic usurper Magnus Maximus in 388, a number of Gallic aristocrats found employment in the Spaniard's imperial administration.<sup>16</sup> Clearly there

<sup>12</sup> It is unclear whether this was a conscious reaction to the discontent evident in the Gallic Empire or simply a policy to secure the Rhine border; for the latter position, see John Drinkwater, 'Gallic Attitudes to the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century: Continuity or Change?' in *Labor omnibus unus. Gerold Walser zum 70. Geburtstag*, edited by H. E. Herzig and R. Frei-Stolba (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 1989), 150.

<sup>13</sup> Participation: Ausonius is the notable example of this, rising to serve as consul. See also John Matthews, 'The Gallic Supporters of Theodosius,' *Latomus* 30 (1971), 1073–99.

<sup>14</sup> But see Drinkwater, *Usurpers*, 274, for arguments for a date as late as 407.

<sup>15</sup> Hugh Elton, 'Defence in Fifth-Century Gaul,' in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* edited by John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 169, argues for the latter view, suggesting that under competent leadership, the Roman armies were more than a match for the Germanic tribes.

<sup>16</sup> Matthews, *Gallic Supporters*, 1073–99; Drinkwater, *Attitudes*, 142–5.



were still loyalists to be found in Gaul. One such man, Latinus Pacatus Drepanius, was charged with delivering a panegyric to the conquering Theodosius, a tribute intended in part to exculpate those Gauls who had cooperated with Maximus.<sup>17</sup> Maximus (ruled 383–8) had served under Emperor Theodosius in Britain and Africa, and ultimately was appointed military commander of Britain.<sup>18</sup> There his troops declared him Emperor and eventually he crossed the Channel, defeated the armies of Gratian, and took up residence in Trier as the self-proclaimed Western Emperor.

Although a usurper, there seemed to be no shortage of Gallic aristocrats willing to rally to his standard and serve in his new administration. Pacatus offered compulsion as a defence: the savage Maximus had seized Gaul while Theodosius had been occupied in the east, and the citizens of Gaul who refused to cooperate with the Tyrant were subjected to proscriptions.<sup>19</sup> Any Gallic cooperation Maximus had enjoyed had simply been compelled out of necessity. A subtextual argument was implicit in Pacatus' speech: had the emperors tended to their duties in Gaul, the usurper would never have been able to mount his revolution.<sup>20</sup> If the emperor was unwilling or unable to protect Gaul, were not the Gauls justified in rallying around strong leaders who would make this a priority?

This Gallic sentiment, carefully submerged in Pacatus' panegyric, received expression in another work of this period, Sulpicius Severus' first work, *Vita Martini*. Writing in 396, Sulpicius offered a very sympathetic portrayal of Maximus, one that stands in stark counterpoint to Pacatus' vilification of the man.

Initially, St Martin was depicted as having been standoffish toward the usurper; while all of the other Gallic bishops fawned upon the conqueror, seeking imperial favours, Martin had maintained a discreet distance. When he was required to present petitions to the

<sup>17</sup> See C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 437–47, for a discussion of the context of Pacatus' speech. For Pacatus' later career under Theodosius, Matthews, *Gallic Supporters*, 1078–9. For Magnus Maximus: Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 173–82.

<sup>18</sup> John Matthews, 'Macsen, Maximus, and Constantine,' *Welsh Historical Review* 11 (1983), 435.

<sup>19</sup> *Lat. Pan.* 12/2. 23–31.

<sup>20</sup> *Lat. Pan.* 12/2. 23–4; cf Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats*, 18–9.

usurper, he maintained his apostolic dignity and refused to eat with the man who had stolen the throne from one emperor and killed the other.<sup>21</sup> Maximus, however, continued to chisel away at the recalcitrant bishop's resistance: he had not sought to rule Gaul of his own will, argued Maximus, but rather his soldiers had responded to God's prompting and forced him to don the imperial mantle. Obviously God had been with Maximus; how else would he have prevailed? Moreover, those men he had killed had found death on the battlefield, a legitimate end rather than regicide.

Eventually this specious line of argument persuaded Martin and the bishop deigned to eat with Maximus. Sulpicius' presentation of this entire episode is the complete opposite of what is found in Pacatus' panegyric. Where Pacatus labelled the usurper a 'butcher dressed in purple' and claimed that Spain had not suffered his tyranny,<sup>22</sup> Sulpicius accords Maximus the title of Emperor (*imperator*). This term, during the Republic, had meant nothing more than leader or general. Following the accession of Augustus, the title *imperator* increasingly became the exclusive property of the emperor. To apply this term to the usurper Maximus should have been a very risky thing for Sulpicius to do; men had been charged with *maiestas* (treason against the emperor) and executed for much less in the past. In 353, for instance, the Emperor Constantius had tortured and executed a number of Gallic aristocrats who had been followers of the failed usurper Magnentius.<sup>23</sup> Within the context of the typical punishment meted out to the supporters of a failed usurper, Sulpicius demonstrated incredible bravado (or foolhardiness) in his sympathetic treatment of Magnus Maximus.

For not only does Sulpicius grant the title *imperator* to Maximus, he also has his hero, Martin, accept Maximus' justification of his right to rule Gaul. The *Vita Martini* was composed less than a decade after the fall of Magnus Maximus and the purge of his supporters that had accompanied the resumption of Roman rule in Gaul. Sulpicius was either extremely bold or surprisingly naïve to write such a show of Gallic support for the vanquished strongman. His

<sup>21</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 20.

<sup>22</sup> *Lat. Pan.* 12. 24 [Baehrens (1874): 110. 2...25-6]: *carnifici purpurato... Tyrannidem ille non uidit.*

<sup>23</sup> *Amm. Res.* 14. 5. 1-5.

composition only makes sense if it reflects the uncertain prospects faced by Gallic aristocrats in the aftermath of the death of Valentinian II. Like many of his readers, Sulpicius looked longingly back to the days in which a strong leader sat on the throne in Trier and took an interest in Gallic affairs. Maximus may have been an *usurpator*, but he was an *imperator* to the Gauls.

Six to eight years later, on the eve of the Germanic invasion of Gaul, Sulpicius composed his *Dialogi*, which, if anything, were even more treasonous than the *Vita Martini*. Setting the scene for a story about the empress (Maximus' wife), Sulpicius noted that Maximus would have been an entirely praiseworthy man, had he not accepted the crown that his soldiers had forced upon him.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, rationalized Sulpicius, an empire could not be won without risk or held without fighting. Clearly Maximus had only done what was normal and understandable under the circumstances. Once again his position as emperor is endorsed by Martin, who was repeatedly summoned to the palace in Trier for theological discussions.

This story about Maximus' entirely proper respect for Martin is significant, coming as it does directly after a story about Maximus' predecessor, the legitimate Emperor Valentinian I,<sup>25</sup> in which we find Valentinian taking steps to prevent an audience with Martin. Although Martin perseveres and gains access to the emperor through God's intervention, there is an evident contrast to be drawn in the ways both men treat Martin. Whereas the legitimate face of Roman rule snubs the bishop, the usurper welcomes him with open arms.

But this is not surprising, as the story that closes Book 2 of *Dialogi* suggests a less-than-favourable view of the Empire. Here we find Martin prophesying about the end of the world and the coming of the Antichrist.<sup>26</sup> According to Sulpicius (and his narrator, Gallus), Martin had said that the end of the world was near, a sentiment that might have seemed entirely plausible in early fifth-century Gaul. The first sign of the end would be the resurgence of Nero, who would slay ten kings and seize control of the Western Empire. In the east, the Antichrist would appear, raising his throne in Jerusalem and misleading humanity, persuading the people to deny Christ. These two satanic agents would then fight and the Antichrist would triumph,

<sup>24</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 14.

uniting the eastern and western halves of the Empire under his dominion of evil. There was no doubt, Martin had stated, that the Antichrist had already been born. Since Martin had prophesied seven years before the *Dialogi* were composed, those with minds open to God's truth would realize that the Antichrist would have nearly reached the age when he would make his move.<sup>27</sup>

Once again Sulpicius had written a prediction that was doubly treasonous: on the one hand it could be read as an indictment of the current sitting emperors (the sons of Theodosius, Honorius and Arcadius). Were the young emperors the new Nero and the Antichrist? If this was not Sulpicius' intent, then his text must have meant that the two emperors were about to be deposed; predictions about the imminent doom of emperors was also a form of *maiestas*.<sup>28</sup>

That this prediction would have been controversial is supported by textual evidence: in a number of early manuscripts these paragraphs were not copied, censored by more prudent hands.<sup>29</sup> Yet, as in the *Vita Martini*, we find Sulpicius praising usurpers and denigrating the legitimate Emperors. It is difficult to believe that he was completely oblivious to the danger of writing such inflammatory prose. The best explanation would seem to be that these texts reflect a view from the periphery. The Roman Empire was withdrawing and Sulpicius, like many around him, was worried about what would take its place. You could afford to praise usurpers and predict dark times for the Empire simply because from where Sulpicius wrote (Aquitania) it appeared to be passing out of existence in Gaul. Better the strong usurper willing to devote himself to the defence of Gaul than the absent and indifferent emperor.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 14.

<sup>28</sup> See, for instance, the witch-hunt (c.371–2) initiated during the reign of Valens when high-ranking men were charged with attempting to learn who would succeed the Emperor (*Amm. Res.* 29. 1. 5–7, 31–3). For a discussion of this event, See John Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London: Duckworth, 1989), 219–22.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Halm, *Sulpicii Severi: Libri Qui Supersunt*, CSEL 1 (Vienna: C. Geroldi, 1866), x; H. Delehaye, 'Saint Martin et Sulpice Sévère,' *Analecta Bollandiana* 38 (1920), 8–18; F. R. Hoare, *The Western Fathers* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 66, suggests that the reason for the excision is that the text was deemed heretical and had been condemned by Jerome (*Hier. Ezech.* 11. 36), but it seems just as plausible to locate the problem along the axis of *maiestas*.

<sup>30</sup> Indeed, one of the great themes of Sulpicius' two works on Martin is the sufficiency of the Bishop who is allied with God against the limited ability of everyone else to protect the Gauls.

We may surmise that Sulpicius' view was shared by a number of Gallic aristocrats. It was not long after the Germanic tribes crossed the Rhine that a new usurper arose to defend Gallic interests. Like Magnus Maximus, Constantine III was also a British general elevated by his troops.<sup>31</sup> Crossing the Channel, he was welcomed by a Gallic aristocracy willing to serve and place their hopes in him. After landing near Boulogne, Constantine made his way to Arles, and took that city in 408. He also managed to pen the Germanic tribes up in the north, alleviating one Gallic worry.<sup>32</sup> The problem of Alaric and the Visigoths, coupled with Stilicho's ambition to take over the Eastern Empire, kept Rome from launching an immediate counter-offensive against Constantine.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, in 409, a revolt against Constantine in Spain, led by his general Gerontius, followed by the invasion of Gaul by an imperial army under Ulfilas and Constantius III led to the downfall of Constantine. He was captured and executed on the way to Ravenna.

Hard on the heels of the suppression of Constantine III came the revolt of Jovinus. Although this new revolt was short-lived, it was notable for the fact that, once again, many Gallic aristocrats rallied to Jovinus' side. This suggests a great deal of dissatisfaction among the elite class with the reimposition of imperial control over Gaul.<sup>34</sup> Following the defeat of Jovinus in 413, a significant number of Gallic noblemen were executed, including (most likely) Apollinaris, the grandfather of Sidonius Apollinaris.<sup>35</sup>

Under the able leadership of Constantius, Rome once again took a firm grip on its errant province, and for the next fifty years, despite the increasing numbers of Germanic federates settled within provincial borders, the province remained nominally Roman. A return to order was signalled by the resumption of the Council of the Seven Provinces in 418, but twelve years of invasion and civil wars had

<sup>31</sup> On Constantine and Jovinus, see Drinkwater, *Usurpers*, 269–98.

<sup>32</sup> See Kulikowski, *Barbarians*, 331–2, who does not see the Germanic tribes moving south until after the revolt of Constantine's general, Gerontius (409).

<sup>33</sup> Drinkwater, *Usurpers*, 280–1.

<sup>34</sup> Drinkwater, *Usurpers*, 287–90.

<sup>35</sup> Drinkwater, *Usurpers*, 288. For the claim that many nobles were slain in the aftermath of Jovinus' revolt, see Greg.-T. *Hist.* 2. 9; for Sidonius' grandfather: Jill D. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407–485* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 28–30.

radically altered the provincial landscape. Most striking, perhaps, was the conciliatory line the Romans took toward the Germanic tribes. Despite the fact that the roving bands of northerners may have borne a stronger resemblance to rampaging football hooligans than an ordered and disciplined army, and despite the fact that, the Battle of Hadrianople excepted, the Germanic tribes had never bested the Roman legions in a stand-up fight during the years 350–500,<sup>36</sup> the Visigoths were eventually settled in Aquitania by employing the laws that governed the settlement of Roman army veterans. This pragmatic solution is direct evidence for the inability of the imperial administration to drive the Goths back across the northern border.<sup>37</sup> Although the Empire would retain control over the province for the next half century, the seeds for the successor states had been planted in Gaul.

## 2 APPEALING TO THE ARISTOCRATS

What impact did the events described above have on Gallo-Roman aristocrats? One readily discernible trend was the increased support for local control. After the bloody suppression of the usurpers and their supporters, many Gallic aristocrats would have been less inclined to participate in the Roman administrative structure. Salvian (c.400–80), in his work *On the Governance of God* (*De gubernatione Dei*) criticized locally powerful aristocrats who were able to seize land and enslave their fellow men. A priest of Marseilles, who was also an eyewitness to the events of the fifth-century crisis, Salvian described a primitive feudal system, an obvious precursor to the political structure of mediaeval France: local landlords exercising power over their immediate surroundings.<sup>38</sup> Over the next half-century, Rome might have been in nominal control, but true power was being transferred to the local man who could protect his clients.

<sup>36</sup> Elton, *Defence*, 168.

<sup>37</sup> Hagith Sivan, 'On Foederati, Hospitalitas, and the Settlement of the Goths in A.D. 418,' *American Journal of Philology* 108 (1987), 770–1.

<sup>38</sup> Salv. *Gub.* 4. 20; cf. Van Dam, *Pirenne*, 327–8.

A variation on this theme was found in those who sought to barricade themselves away from the storms of the world. A traveller to the province of Alpes Maritimae might have stumbled across a gorge in a lonely, out of the way spot near Sisteron. In the early part of the century (after 415) the road would have been blocked, fortified gates denying entrance to all but a select few. If our traveller had been able to read Latin (by no means a certainty), he or she would have been able to decode the inscription chiselled into the wall near the gate, an inscription which read:

Claudius Postumus Dardanus, an illustrious man of patrician rank, former consul of the province of Vienne, secretary of State for judicial petitions, quaestor, praetorian prefect of Gaul, and Nevia Galla, a woman of the senatorial order, his wife. In the place that has the name Theopolis, they provided the use of the roads that pierced the mountains on both sides; they gave walls and city gates, which, established on their own lands were intended to provide a safe refuge for all.

Cl(audius) Postumus Dardanus, u(ir) in(lustris) et patriciae dignitatis, ex consulari prouincia Viennensis, ex magistro scrinii lib(ellorum), ex quaest(ore), ex praef(ecto) pr(a)et(orio) Gall(iarum) et Neuia Galla, clar(issima) et in(lustris) fem(ina), materfam(iliis) eius, loco cui nomen Theopoli est uiarum usum caesis utrimque montium laterib(us) praestiterunt, muros et portas dederunt, quod in agro proprio constitutum tuetioni omnium uoluerunt esse commune.<sup>39</sup>

Claudius Postumus Dardanus' answer to the threats of an increasingly hostile world was to adopt the guise of a snail, secreting himself in a remote mountain range and praying that his shell would hold should unfriendlies come looking. He had served as the praetorian prefect of Gaul under Constantius III, and in that capacity had arranged the execution of the usurper Jovinus (possibly doing the job himself).<sup>40</sup> Yet, even with Roman rule re-established, the retreat behind strong gates suggests Dardanus' fundamental pessimism about the ability of the Empire to ensure his continuing survival.

Other aristocrats simply escaped from the dangers, choosing to live as refugees rather than risk confrontation with hostile forces. In this category we may locate a nobleman named Paulinus of Pella,

<sup>39</sup> CIL 12: 1524.

<sup>40</sup> Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris*, 28–30.

who, having spent the early part of his life in relative comfort on his estates in Aquitania, ended up with a tiny house in Marseilles, his vast wealth and properties confiscated by the Goths (or lost through his own ineptitude).<sup>41</sup> In his poem *Eucharisticos*, a hymn of praise to God for delivering him from the multifarious perils of life, Paulinus noted that at one time he had contemplated the ascetic life but the wiser brothers of the monastery had managed to convince him that he lacked a vocation.<sup>42</sup> Paulinus' flight to safety is matched by other Gallic aristocrats,<sup>43</sup> who deemed relocation to the Italian mainland preferable to an uncertain existence in Gaul.

In the years that followed Constantius' reassertion of imperial rule in Gaul, we do not know how many retreated to isolated spots and built hill forts to hide themselves from the tempestuous times; we do not know how many continued to live on their estates, tolerating their new neighbours, or abandoned Gaul entirely for estates in other parts of the Empire. Nor should we assume, based on limited literary evidence, that a church career suddenly appeared compelling for Gallic aristocrats. There had always been men willing to serve the Church; the fact that Gallic bishoprics became the near-exclusive domain of the aristocratic class should not lead us to conclude that the church suddenly became attractive after 418. There may have been just as many aristocrats in the fourth-century Gallic Church.

What we can see during this time of uncertainty, however, is an attempt by certain Gallic authors to persuade elite readers to pursue an ecclesiastical career. At the centre of this effort was an authorial preoccupation with demonstrating how such a career was compatible with an aristocratic lifestyle. Works such as the *Vita Martini*, *Vita Honorati*, and *Vita Germani* were prescriptive as well as descriptive, proposing models for an elite readership. They advanced the argument that a well-born nobleman would not have to abandon social standing should he accept one of these offices; to the contrary, life

<sup>41</sup> Neil McLynn, 'Paulinus the Impenitent: A Study of the *Eucharisticos*,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 3 (1995), 470.

<sup>42</sup> P.-Pell. *Euch.* 451–67. A wise choice, as Paulinus does not come across as a man with a vibrant faith, despite the ostensible purpose of his poem.

<sup>43</sup> Rutilius Namatianus visited two of these Gallic exiles (Victorinus, Protadius) during his voyage back to Gaul c.416–17; cf. Matthews, *Gallic Supporters*, 1095–6.



as a bishop or monk was simply a continuation of what was being renounced. The career might change, but the lifestyle need not.<sup>44</sup>

Central to the argument for conversion to a more serious Christian life was the idea that heaven, like earth, was ranked into social classes. It was also a place of great reversals; there was no guarantee that an aristocrat's earthly status would translate directly into heavenly preferment.<sup>45</sup> Riches, family connections, position, property—the familiar landmarks of the elite life counted for nothing in the world to come.

Moreover, fifth-century Gallic life abounded in examples to support the proposition that the property, wealth, and position that supported an elite status were transitory and might be taken away in the present world. The bereft Paulinus of Pella, mentioned above, supplies an excellent example of a young man who, having led a fairly dissolute life, was left unprotected when his father died. He lost his estates and wealth to Germanic guests, having learned too late that everything man desires is to be sought in God.<sup>46</sup> In fifth-century Gaul, the potential for sudden reversal was an ever-present reality.

As Eucherius wrote, when trying to persuade a relative named Valerian to turn to the Christian life, the world offered enticements, but the prizes and pleasures of the temporal order were unstable. Life was short and miserable, pressed on all sides with sorrows and hidden dangers. What was the point in wasting energy to gain those things that could not be retained?<sup>47</sup>

The fact that this argument became a common theme in the Gallic writing of this period suggests its relevance. The perception that Roman order was breaking down in Gaul must have added weight and persuasiveness. This contention of Gallic authors was a modified version of the biblical injunction to store up riches in heaven. Rather than wasting time, life, and energy in climbing the rungs of an order that would pass away, the wise person did well to set eyes on true honour. Could the dedicated functionary hope to rise to anything higher than being the emperor's friend, asked the two civil servants

<sup>44</sup> Van Dam, *Leadership and Community*, 154.

<sup>45</sup> And, indeed, there are a great number of unnerving precedents in the New Testament for a belief that precisely the opposite would occur (Luke 1:53; 16:19–31).

<sup>46</sup> P.-Pell. *Euch.* 516–20.

<sup>47</sup> Eucher. *Ep. Val.* PL 714B–C.

whose story was so influential in Augustine's account of his own conversion?<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, by seeking a career with God, mortals could become courtiers to the Emperor of Heaven.

Our ascetic exemplars noted the insecurity of temporal life and took action. Honoratus, as an aristocratic model *par excellence*, was said to have recognized the futility of a life spent in pursuit of worldly pleasures and honours as a very young man. While Hilary (his biographer) fully subscribed to the idea that worldly honours meant nothing, he also made certain that his reader knew that Honoratus had been drawn from the consular class.<sup>49</sup> Honoratus had the very best familial antecedents and he also excelled in all the traditional pursuits of young men. The measure of his success in secular life was signalled by Hilary's claim that, when Honoratus felt God's call, his family and all of his acquaintances struggled to hold him back, unwilling to lose his companionship.<sup>50</sup> Honoratus had not sought refuge from a failed life in the church. He had been entirely successful and had abandoned worldly honours for something higher.

This action, which the world despised, placed Honoratus at the top of the celestial order. 'There is no higher rank than to be counted among the Sons of God,' wrote Hilary.<sup>51</sup> And Honoratus would not just be any son of God; in Hilary's theology, the highest place in heaven was reserved for those who had given up the most to follow Christ. 'No one is more glorious in heaven than those who, repudiating the lineage of their fathers, choose to acknowledge the fatherly care of Christ alone.'<sup>52</sup> Although Hilary certainly was not elaborating a developed theology of immortal stratification, his statement shows how his social world coloured his vision of the hereafter. Hilary was so firmly established in a class system that believed its hierarchies reflected merit (and we should note that the term for the highest ranks in the Roman hierarchy was *boni*, the good, and for the lowest, *mali*, the wicked) that he undoubtedly would have struggled to accept the idea that a member of a lower order could make a

<sup>48</sup> Aug. *Conf.* 8. 6. 14–15.

<sup>49</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 4.

<sup>50</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 5.

<sup>51</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 4 [SC 235: 76. 5–6]: *fastigium nobilitatis est inter Dei filios computari.*

<sup>52</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 4 [SC 235: 76. 8–10]: *Nemo est in caelestibus gloriosior quam qui repudatio patrum stemmate, elegit sola Christi paternitate censi.*

renunciation as profound as an aristocrat. It was the aristocrat, the man who had sacrificed the most, who would sit atop heaven's hierarchy.

Social order was preserved in heaven, just as it was on earth; the convert, despite having renounced his claims to an earthly elite status, continued to move among the best men. Committed Christianity did not break down social divisions on earth, a fact driven home in Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi*. In this work, three friends have spent a day telling stories, first about the monks that one of the friends (Postumianus) had encountered in Egypt, and then stories about Martin of Tours. The day draws to a close and the three friends agree to continue the session the next day. Mysteriously, word spreads overnight throughout the region and by daybreak, a great crowd has gathered to hear the anecdotes of the second day. After certain priests and deacons, who had also travelled throughout the night, were admitted, the question of whether the rest of the people should be admitted was raised. The final judgement was to bar their entry: 'they have come to listen out of curiosity, rather than from a sense of reverence', said the priest, Aper.<sup>53</sup> This discrimination caused Sulpicius a degree of embarrassment — certainly the best men were not to be shunned? Eventually he was able to sway the clerics: a deputy praetorian prefect named Eucherius and a man of consular rank named Celsus were admitted. The rest, belonging to neither clerical orders nor secular nobility, were sent on their way.

Sulpicius confessed to a sense of embarrassment about how the people who had travelled a considerable distance were treated by his fellow clerics. His discomfort was mitigated only by the admission of high-ranking nobles who presumably had come with motives no worthier than those of the lower classes. This exclusion of the lower social orders is doubly ironic when it is noted that Martin himself had been ennobled by his office, rising from less than stellar antecedents to become a man who interacted with every grade of elite society, all the way up to the emperor.

Sulpicius touched on this ennoblement (albeit satirically) in his account of what happens to a man who suddenly acquires an

<sup>53</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 1 [CSEL 1: 199. 11–12]: *quia ad audiendum curiositate potius quam religione uenerunt*.

ecclesiastical office.<sup>54</sup> The new cleric immediately sets about improving his condition: he enlarges the fringes of his garments, takes delight in receiving visitors and visiting others. Where he once went about town on foot or on a donkey, now he required horses; formerly content with a small room, he launches into grandiose building projects, establishing a residence suitable for a man of his stature. He is dissatisfied with the poor quality of his clothing and demands that the widows and virgins of the church weave new garments for his decoration.

Although this passage is tainted by an aristocratic sneer at the nouveau riche, Sulpicius does offer indirect evidence for the place of the clergy among the elite. A man might not be born to the top tier, but he could reach it through the church. From the fourth century onward, the offices of *presbyter* and *episcopus* placed one firmly among the upper classes.<sup>55</sup> Even Martin, who maintained his shabby dress and lived in a small cell attached to his cathedral,<sup>56</sup> was sought out by the upper classes. Sulpicius depicted Martin as a man who had achieved not just parity, but actually superiority over the Gallic gentry. As a member of the true nobility, no doors were barred to Martin. Even the emperor was unable to stand against God's aristocrat.

Shortly after Martin had become a bishop, he decided to seek an audience with the Emperor Valentinian I. Valentinian, learning that Martin was coming to see him, decided to refuse Martin an opportunity to enter the palace. When Martin was denied an audience, he resorted to his usual weapons, sackcloth and petition. After seven days of fasting and prayer, an angel appeared to Martin and told him that he could now see the emperor. When Martin reached the palace, the gates stood open and unguarded; no one interfered with him as he made his way through the courtyards.

Valentinian, seeing the bishop coming, decided that if he could not stop the bishop from entering his palace, he could at least show him no respect. As Martin approached, the emperor gritted his teeth and remained seated on his throne. Suddenly his throne was enveloped in

<sup>54</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 21.

<sup>55</sup> Ralph Mathisen, *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 11.

<sup>56</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 10. Eventually, unable to tolerate the crowds, Martin moved to a hermitage on the River Loire, about two miles away.

flames and Valentinian was forced to rise and welcome Martin. This display of power induced Valentinian to change his attitude, and from that time on he was very congenial toward the cleric, inviting Martin to dine on a number of occasions and granting all of his requests.<sup>57</sup> Martin had the same influence over the usurper Magnus Maximus,<sup>58</sup> as well as a host of lesser imperial officials. Indeed, one of the recurrent themes of Sulpicius' two works is the exalted company Martin kept; Martin is repeatedly portrayed interacting with members of the Gallo-Roman elite. Sulpicius' obvious point in including these stories is to suggest that Martin's ascetic and ecclesiastical life had made him the equivalent of the illustrious company he kept.

Naturally this was fine for Martin, who had no position to give up by turning his back on the world, but what about those who were already at the top? Once again, we discover that the Gallic literature tends to stress a continuity of position. Honoratus, having become an ascetic, lost none of his standing in Gaul. When Honoratus set out to renounce the world, he was restrained by family and friends because they feared losing the boy who was such an ornament to his family and Gallo-Roman society.<sup>59</sup> Honoratus and his brother made a trip to the east (where his brother died) to learn more about the ascetic life. Upon his return, Honoratus established a monastery on the island of Lérins, which, according to Hilary had been chosen for its remoteness and desert-like quality. The island that once had served as a place for exiles was now illuminated by Honoratus' radiance.<sup>60</sup> Although the island was isolated,<sup>61</sup> it quickly became a popular destination for elite travellers. What nation, Hilary asks rhetorically, did not have some of its citizens in Honoratus' monastery?<sup>62</sup> As abbot and teacher, Honoratus trained each man with disciplines that were mystically suited to the individual's temperament.

Although Honoratus had withdrawn from the world, the world was not content to leave him alone on his island with Christ. Guests were a frequent feature of life on Lérins— whoever went past the island without visiting him, asks Hilary?<sup>63</sup> Those on voyages would

<sup>57</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 6.

<sup>60</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 16.

<sup>62</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 17.

<sup>59</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 5.

<sup>61</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 15.

<sup>63</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 20.

risk losing a following breeze to ensure a landfall at Lérins; those who suffered from adverse winds would curse the weather that denied a visit. All who made it to the island (and Hilary claimed a great number, a continuous stream of people) found refreshment in Honoratus' company. In the waste of the desert, he would serve them delicacies suitable for an aristocratic palate. He also provided for refugees from the north, offering clothing and money from the island's treasury.

Honoratus clearly remained enmeshed in the social round, and in the middle sections of Hilary's panegyric, we find him doing the things that any aristocrat would do as a matter of course: constructing buildings, welcoming guests, dispensing patronage in the form of money. He also engaged in another typical, aristocratic activity of this time: letter writing. Those who could not make the trip to see Honoratus in person counted their letter file blessed if it contained a screed from Honoratus' hand.<sup>64</sup>

Honoratus' enduring connections to the elite are also strongly suggested by his elevation to the bishopric of Arles. This see, which also served as the seat for the praetorian prefect of Gaul, had been hotly contested in the past.<sup>65</sup> When Constantius had destroyed the usurpers Constantine III and Jovinus, he had ensured that a reliable man (Patroclus) had been installed in the bishopric. Following the death of Patroclus (and his successor Helladius) it is not unreasonable to suspect that Honoratus was chosen for this office more for his connections with the pro-Roman elite than his piety. As the administrative hub for the Gallo-Roman government, Arles was a politically sensitive see. Hilary alludes to a residual animosity that lingered after Honoratus' elevation,<sup>66</sup> and it is quite possible this is linked to resentment at his selection. The city's clerics might not have known who this ascetic from Lérins was, but the city's elite, who made the decision, certainly recognized Honoratus as one of their own.

This reading is reinforced by Hilary's account of Honoratus' death. As the bishop lay stricken upon his pallet, the chief men of the

<sup>64</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 22.

<sup>65</sup> See the discussion of Gallic ecclesiastical politics in Appendix 1.

<sup>66</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 28.

province, the governor and the former governors rushed to his side.<sup>67</sup> There Honoratus delivered one of his last sermons, imploring them to see in his example that all men died. Death was not a penalty unless it was accompanied by judgement. For those who lived rightly, who turned from the things of the world, death was going home. Through this literary tableau, the elite men of the province gathered around the saintly bishop who exhorts them with his last breath, Hilary shows his readers how Honoratus' renunciation of the world had led him to acquire even higher honour within the world.

With the possible exception of John Cassian, very few fifth-century thinkers would have seen any value in severing connections with the ruling class. It was this very sense of interconnectedness, of being plugged into the network of influential Romans, that made an elite bishop such a great catch for a city or town. Honoratus could use his connections to intercede for his flock, to get things done.

This intercession could come in the secular world, or through the aristocrat's close connection with God. In some cases this connection was not as clear as it might have been, and near the end of the *Vita Honorati*, Hilary attempted to explain the paucity of miracles and manifestations surrounding Honoratus' life.<sup>68</sup> Those who had been close to Honoratus knew that he had worked many miracles, but Honoratus himself had deemed these the least important part of his ministry.<sup>69</sup> In fact, it was the life of Honoratus that was the manifestation of the miraculous. That an aristocrat could be turned into a holy man was indeed a substantial and significant act of power. Besides, concluded Hilary, Honoratus spent so much time talking to Christ in prayer, that he must have persuaded him to hide his miracles from the eyes of others.<sup>70</sup>

Sulpicius' two accounts of Martin's life, on the other hand, focus on his miraculous qualities. They also show him acting as an intercessor for (and patron of) the powerless on a secular level. After Magnus Maximus had mounted his usurpation in Gaul (c.383) a certain Count Avitianus seems to have been charged with rounding

<sup>67</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 32.

<sup>68</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 37.

<sup>69</sup> And this could be an allusion to Cassian's argument that tales of miracles did nothing to edify the reader (Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 7).

<sup>70</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 37.

up those who were still loyal to the Emperor Gratian.<sup>71</sup> Sulpicius noted that Avitianus arrived in Tours one day with a line of chained prisoners in tow.<sup>72</sup> Avitianus imprisoned his victims and began making preparations to torture and execute them the next day. Martin, moved to intercede for the hapless prisoners, went to Avitianus' residence. Arriving after the doors had been barred for the evening, Martin lay down on the lintel and began to pray. Soon God sent an angel to torment Avitianus. When Avitianus discovered Martin on his doorstep, he knew why he had come and immediately released the prisoners. Despite the fact that the man was remorseless in spreading carnage throughout Gaul, he never troubled anyone in Tours.<sup>73</sup> Martin was able to protect the citizens of his community.

Not only could Martin influence the elite on behalf of others, he could also draw on his connection to God to achieve positive results. Every year the district of Sens was plagued with hailstorms that destroyed the crops. One year, a delegation came to Martin and begged him to intercede on their behalf.<sup>74</sup> These men were led by a former prefect named Auspicius, whose own lands were especially hard hit. Martin accepted their request and prayed that the region would be spared. His intervention was successful, and for the next twenty years (the remainder of his life) no hailstorms struck Sens.

Martin's singular power was also demonstrated in his recorded healings and the three times he raised someone from the dead. Once again Martin showed his great worth as a patron by interceding with God to achieve things that no one else could. Moreover, a number of these healings were carried out on behalf of the elite.<sup>75</sup> Where possible, Sulpicius was always careful to validate a miracle with the rank of the beneficiary. One is left with the impression that Martin was the patron, not only for the lower, downtrodden orders, but for the best men and women of society as well.

<sup>71</sup> Identification by Hoare, *Western Fathers*, 126 n. 1. In fact, we know virtually nothing about Avitianus, other than the little that Sulpicius tells us in *Sulp.-Sev. Dial.* 3. 4 and 3. 8. He may be the same man labelled a vicarius in *Amm. Res.* 27. 7. 1, although this individual served in Africa (Hoare, *Western Fathers*, 125 n. 2).

<sup>72</sup> *Sulp.-Sev. Dial.* 3. 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Sulp.-Sev. Dial.* 3. 8.

<sup>74</sup> *Sulp.-Sev. Dial.* 3. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Healings: for Tetradius, a man of proconsular rank (*Sulp.-Sev. Mart.* 17); for Arborius, of prefectorial rank (*Sulp.-Sev. Mart.* 19); Paulinus of Nola, of senatorial rank (*Sulp.-Sev. Mart.* 19).



Martin died in 397, and once again Sulpicius was able to clothe the event in aristocratic regalia. In a letter written to his mother-in-law, Bassula, he described the great procession that greeted the bishop's body when it was returned to Tours.<sup>76</sup> The entire city poured out to meet Martin's corpse, their numbers swollen by those who made their homes in nearby towns and the countryside. Nearly 2,000 monks assembled to accompany the body on its final journey and a choir of virgins preceded the body. To what earthly spectacle might it be compared? Sulpicius claimed an imperial triumph, that most cherished of ancient Roman honours when a victorious general was allowed to parade through the streets of Rome, following his soldiers, captives, and spoils. Yet, where the general's chariot was preceded by those he had taken captive, Martin was followed by those who through his example had been led to renounce the world. Where a general was greeted with the raucous celebration of the crowds, Martin was accompanied by heavenly psalmody. And finally, highlighting the great reversal in store for those who placed their trust in the deeds honoured by the world: when the general's triumph was done and forgotten, he would be thrust into hell. Martin, on the other hand, had already ascended to heaven. Martin, born poor, entered heaven wealthy.

Sulpicius reworked the aristocratic ideology of the triumph, Rome's highest honour, and applied it to the man who had turned his back upon the world to seek even higher honours. Now Martin had taken his seat in heaven, and continued in his role of patron, praying and interceding on behalf of those whom he loved.<sup>77</sup> Unlike a Roman patron, Martin's influence and watch care would never cease.

The same was claimed for Honoratus. He spent his dying days comforting his disciples and preaching to the noble men who had gathered around his death bed.<sup>78</sup> On the night he died, many people, who had been roused by visions of Honoratus ascending to heaven, made their way to the cathedral. In the days that followed, everyone in the city of Arles came to the cathedral to view the body; on the way

<sup>76</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Ep.* 3.

<sup>77</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Ep.* 2, 3. It is a bit disappointing, however, that the people of Sens seemed to get their hailstorms back after Martin died.

<sup>78</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 30, 32.

to his final internment, it was noted that his garment had become threadbare, denuded by those who had plucked a thread for themselves.<sup>79</sup> Welcomed into heaven, Honoratus now acted as a heavenly patron, interceding for the people he had watched over in life.<sup>80</sup>

Both Hilary and Sulpicius closed their respective writings with the idea that the men who had been such successful patrons in life had now ascended to the Father where they could continue to exert influence on behalf of their clients. Their works were attractive models, mapping a new heavenly *cursus honorum*, one that did not end in death, but rather allowed the elite man or woman to grasp the highest honours for eternity. In a world where traditional prerogatives and perquisites were under siege, this presentation of an alternate career must have been extremely attractive.

The audience for these works, and the ascetic treatises of John Cassian, were drawn from a class of people who (to a greater or lesser extent) must have sensed that the elite life of their forefathers was a thing of the past. They would not be granted the opportunity to participate in the life that had brought honour to their ancestors. The world was changing, the old things passing away. What might come was still unknown.

Sulpicius Severus and Hilary argued for a bright shining path, a new career that preserved traditional positions at the top of the social order. Become serious about a church career and become a true aristocrat. Nothing need be lost and everything could be gained.

John Cassian, as the rest of this study will demonstrate, brought a vastly different model to the readers of southern Gaul. The true monk was not an aristocrat who had taken up the study of Christian *philosophia*. The true monk detached himself from the world and became a slave for the sake of the Gospel. But before we consider Cassian's radical vision (the subject of Chapter 5), let us turn to a consideration of how Cassian set out to persuade his readers to adopt his ascetic legislation.

<sup>79</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 35.

<sup>80</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 39.

## *Experientia* vs Gallic inexperience

As suggested in the previous chapter, the ascetic project in Gaul was well under way by the time John Cassian arrived on the scene. Writers such as Sulpicius Severus, and living exemplars like Honoratus, Eucherius, and the monks of Lérins were promoting versions of the ascetic life that were making inroads among an aristocratic readership. To modern readers, familiar with the impact that Cassian's work had on western monasticism, it may seem self-evident that Cassian's light from the east (*ex oriente lux*) was worth the attention of his Gallic audience.<sup>1</sup> But would this have been the view of his first readers? What right did John Cassian have to prescribe practices for a group that was flourishing without his advice?<sup>2</sup> Who gave this foreigner<sup>3</sup> the right to delimit *authentic* asceticism, to be the arbiter of Gallic monastic practices?

In fact, John Cassian, even with his wealth of experience, faced the same problem as any new writer, ancient or modern: he had to find an audience for his works. The local monastic movement predated John Cassian's arrival in Gaul. If he was going to make an impact, he would have to win a place in an increasingly crowded field. This chapter will examine one of Cassian's strategies for swaying an audience, his claim to a level of experience that trumped that of Gallic practitioners.

<sup>1</sup> On the significance of eastern practices for western monks see F. Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1965), 94–101, 471.

<sup>2</sup> For Cassian as just one of a number of sources available for fifth-century Gallic monks, see Philip Rousseau, 'Cassian: Monastery and World,' in *The Certainty of Doubt: Tributes to Peter Munz*, edited by Miles Fairburn and W. H. Oliver (Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University Press, 1995), 70.

<sup>3</sup> A term Cassian would apply to himself, at least by the parallelism of his analogy with Hiram (Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 2). See discussion below.

Cassian used a short panegyric to Bishop Castor of Apt, his patron for these works, to introduce himself and his credentials to the Gallic ascetics.<sup>4</sup> The opening lines of his literary debut offer a straightforward answer to the question of why he was addressing this audience: I write because the great Bishop Castor<sup>5</sup> has (despite my incredible deficiencies) ordered me to do so:

1. The history of the Old Testament tells how the most wise Solomon, after having received from heaven *wisdom and prudence beyond measure and a breadth of heart as uncountable as the grains of sand at the seashore*—so that, by the testimony of the Lord it is said that no one similar to him had ever existed in the past or will arise after him—wanting to erect a magnificent temple to the Lord, asked for help from the foreigner, the king of Tyre. This king sent Hiram, the son of a widow, to Solomon. Whatever magnificent thing the divine wisdom suggested to Hiram, either for the Temple or the sacred vases, he undertook and it was completed through his work and direction. 2. And so if that ruler, so much higher than all of the kingdoms of the earth, that nobler and more excellent offspring of the Israelite people, that wisdom inspired by God which surpassed the knowledge and institutes of all the easterners and Egyptians, did not disdain the counsel of a poor and foreign man, quite rightly do you, taught by these examples, most blessed Bishop Castor... judge it appropriate to summon me, an indigent man and in every way a pauper, to a share in such a great work.

1. Veteris instrumenti narrat historia sapientissimum Salomonem post acceptam diuinitus *sapientiam prudentiamque multam nimis et latitudinem*

<sup>4</sup> An earlier version of the opening section of this chapter first appeared in Richard J. Goodrich, 'Underpinning the Text: Self-justification in John Cassian's Ascetic Prefaces,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (2005), 411–36. This article offers a fuller treatment of how Cassian used the prefaces of his works to curry favour with his audience.

<sup>5</sup> Little is known about Castor aside from references to him in *De institutis* and *Collationes*. Castor's see (*Apta Iulia*, modern Apt) was in Narbonensis Secunda, and nominally under the control of the Bishop of Arles when Cassian wrote *De institutis*. Castor was still living when Cassian completed *De institutis*, and was said to have commissioned the first division of *Collationes*. He died before the first ten books of *Collationes* were completed. There are only two other reliable pieces of external attestation to the existence of Castor. The first is Pope Boniface's letter (Bonif. I. Ep. 3) written in 419, which mentions Castor among a list of Gallic bishops who are in communion with Patroclus. The second reference to Castor occurs in the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* (*Chronica Gallica a. 452*). Here, in an entry for the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Arcadius and Honorius (*Chron. Gall. 452 a. 419* [MGH aa 9: 656. 86]), the *Chronica* states that monasteries established by Honoratus, Minervius, Castor, and Iovianus, flourished in Gaul.

*cordis quasi harenam maris* innumerabilem, ita ut Domini testimonio nullus ei similis retro actis temporibus exstitisse, neque post eum surrecturus esse dicatur, illud magnificum Domino templum exstruere cupientem, alienigenae regis Tyri auxilium poposcisse. Qui misso ad se Hiram filio mulieris uiduae, quidquid divina sapientia suggerente praeclarum in templo Domini uel in sacris vasibus moliebatur, ministerio eius ac dispositione perfecit. 2. Si ergo ille uniuersis regnis terrae sublimior principatus et Israhelitici generis nobilior excellentiorque progenies illaque sapientia diuinitus inspirata, quae cunctorum Orientalium et Aegyptiorum disciplinas et instituta superabat, nequaquam pauperis atque alienigenae uiri consilium dedignatur, recte etiam tu his eruditus exemplis, beatissime papa Castor . . . egenum me, omnique ex parte pauperrimum, ad communionem tanti operis dignaris accersire.<sup>6</sup>

Cassian begins *De institutis* with an extravagant *synkrisis*,<sup>7</sup> in which Bishop Castor's desire to found a monastery is compared with King Solomon's construction of the Jewish Temple. Citing the book of Kings (3 Reg. 4:29),<sup>8</sup> Cassian noted that by God's decree, Solomon's wisdom exceeded that of anyone who would ever live. Yet, when Solomon realized that he needed skilled craftsmen to complete his project, he did not hesitate to seek aid from Hiram, King of Tyre. The King of Tyre sent another Hiram, the son of a widow, to produce the temple furnishings and ornamentation.

Cassian's explicit praise for his patron surfaces in the second paragraph of this preface. The relationship between Solomon and Hiram is mirrored in the relationship between Castor and Cassian. Solomon stands at the height of created humanity; the most blessed Castor is his worthy successor, creator of a new temple that will house men who carry the living Christ within themselves. Indeed, this latter project is superior to the work of Solomon, for where his great temple was reduced by enemies and the sacred vessels were captured and misused, Castor's new temple will be eternal and impregnable.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 1–2 [SC 109: 22. 1–24. 29].

<sup>7</sup> The beginning of a work is not the usual place for this rhetorical figure, but see Michael J. Hollerich, 'Myth and History in Eusebius' *De vita Constantini: Vit. Const.* 1.12 in Its Contemporary Setting,' *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989), 423–7, for a similar use in Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kgs. 4:29 in modern versions of the Bible.

<sup>9</sup> This contrast between the temporal Temple, which was sacked by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 1:1–3 and 5:2–4), and the impregnable and eternal temple to be formed in the monks' hearts may also have been intended as a play on the insecurity of Cassian's readers (see the discussion in Chapter 1).

The parallel between the binary pairs Solomon/Hiram and Castor/Cassian is further strengthened by the patronal decisions to seek the advice of men from a lower social class. Both Hiram and Cassian are characterized as men of no account. Hiram is a poor foreigner, the son of a widow; Cassian's self-description through an accumulation of deprecatory adjectives — *pauper*, *alienigena*, *egenus* — suggests a man with no standing in secular society. Nevertheless, just as Solomon had drafted Hiram for his project, Castor has chosen to elevate Cassian above his station by offering him a share in such a great work.

Naturally, none of this is to be taken too seriously. Cassian's stylish opening, demonstrating his mastery of Latin syntax and literary convention, points to an advanced rhetorical education that was only available to a member of the aristocratic class.<sup>10</sup> While we know absolutely nothing about Cassian's antecedents, his elegant prose suggests a childhood that had access to the best education on offer in the Roman Empire. The deftness with which he crafts his opening sentences serves as a literary calling card, an announcement that he, just like his target audience, belongs to a certain class of highly educated men.<sup>11</sup> Cassian's identification through prose lacks only an apt quotation from Virgil or a well-chosen aphorism from Terence to complete the image of a classical scholar at his writing desk.<sup>12</sup>

The self-deprecation woven through Cassian's prefaces should be understood in the context of the conventions of classical literary texts. Rather than monastic humility, these disavowals of literary ability are simply examples of *insinuatio*, the downplaying of one's

<sup>10</sup> Or possibly to a gifted young man who had a wealthy sponsor, as in the case of Augustine: Robert A. Kaster, 'Notes on "Primary" and "Secondary" Schools in Late Antiquity,' *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 113 (1974), 341. For the elite nature of Latin literature: E. J. Kenney, 'Books and Readers in the Roman World,' in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, edited by W. V. Clausen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 10.

<sup>11</sup> For literary language as an identifier of a certain class of educated men: Robert Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 88–90.

<sup>12</sup> Cassian, as opposed to writers like Jerome, normally eschewed classical quotations even though he was writing for an educated reader. Augustine varied his use of classical allusions to match the audience for his works: his sermons, for instance, intended for a rustic audience, lack these classical tags.

own talents for the purpose of winning the good opinion of an audience.<sup>13</sup> Cassian has no doubts about either his ability to write *De institutis*, or the importance of what he is writing. Nevertheless, Latin literary convention stipulated that when making an appeal to an audience of strangers, a healthy dose of *insinuatio* was a valuable ally in making a favourable first impression.<sup>14</sup>

Cassian works a thread of *insinuatio* throughout this preface. Castor stands at the summit of speech and spiritual sensitivity, but Cassian is 'inarticulate and a pauper in both speech and knowledge';<sup>15</sup> he reels before the demand that he should supply something 'from his impoverished understanding'<sup>16</sup> to fulfil Castor's request. Compounding these claims of ineptitude are the obstacles that would hinder his work: the inability of his weak mind to comprehend the teachings of the fathers, the lack of practice that has made him forget much, and the fact that other notable men have already written learned treatises on the ascetic life.<sup>17</sup> The burden that Castor had laid across Cassian's shoulders was only lightened by Castor's injunction that he should supply a tome written in 'simple words'<sup>18</sup> for the simple monks who would read it in Castor's monastery.

Cassian also employs his *insinuatio* to exaggerate the importance of his patron, Bishop Castor. He praises Castor by downplaying his own talents and relative worth. Castor has chosen to consult the inarticulate John Cassian, even though Castor is accomplished 'in all virtues and knowledge and so heavily laden with every spiritual gift that to those seeking perfection not only his speech but also his life alone would suffice as an example.'<sup>19</sup> It would seem that he did not need the works of John Cassian because his position at the summit of

<sup>13</sup> For a treatment of *insinuatio* among the later Christian authors: Tore Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1964), 124–41.

<sup>14</sup> Janson, *Latin Prose*, 129–48, for the forms of the *captatio benevolentia*.

<sup>15</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 3 [SC 109: 24. 35–6]: *me quoque elinguem et pauperem sermone atque scientia*.

<sup>16</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 3 [SC 109: 24. 37]: *de inopia sensus mei*.

<sup>17</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 3 [SC 109: 24. 43–4]: *simplici sermone*.

<sup>19</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 3 [SC 109: 24. 32–5]: *cum sis ispe cunctis uirtutibus scientiaque perfectus et uniuersis ita refertus diuitiis spiritalibus, ut perfectionem quaerentibus satis abundeque non modo tuus sermo, sed etiam sola uita sufficiat ad exemplum*.

spiritual excellence made him more than adequate to instruct the monks that he wished to gather into a monastery. Castor is mighty, while Cassian is barely able to construct a coherent sentence.

Yet, Cassian implies, from the height of his excellence, Castor sees far. Like Solomon, he realizes that a project of the scope he envisions requires the help of an authority on the monastic life. Solomon, too, despite possessing wisdom and abilities that outshone any human, past or future, understood that some tasks required specialized knowledge. An expert was required to complete the Temple, and to establish a monastery. Hiram the shaper of the temple furnishings is paralleled by Cassian, the conduit for the Egyptian institutes (*instituta Aegyptiorum*). Lesser, untrained monks, as Cassian will note in his later chapters, believed themselves sufficient to impose their own ascetic ideas on the lives of monks around them.<sup>20</sup> This is nothing more than pride and folly, and their example is set in counterpoint to that of the excellent bishop who has demanded the input of an expert.

Bishop Castor serves as a point of entry to a network of bishops and ascetics in Narbonensis Secunda. The fact that Castor had taken Cassian's work seriously lends some credence to it with the other members of his network. Cassian is (evidently) a stranger to these bishops and ascetics; until he achieves an independent reputation as an ascetic authority, he does well to emphasize Castor's role in demanding the production of *De institutis*.

We might expect that the claim to Castor's patronage would be enough to win a hearing for *De institutis* in Gaul, but, as this chapter and the two that follow will demonstrate, Cassian was not content to limit the justification of his works to the rhetoric of his prefaces. One of Cassian's most powerful arguments grows out of the claims that he set out in the early lines of his preface: Bishop Castor has selected him for this task because he can offer a level of experience that exceeded the experience of his readers. Experience (*experientia* or *experimentum*) is one of the central themes in Cassian's defence of his ascetic legislation. It is the *sine qua non* of the ascetic life. Without proper training at the hands of experienced masters, a disciple can make no progress toward spiritual perfection; those who would attempt to

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2–3. This subject is discussed in Chapter 3.



teach the life without first having undergone a lengthy course of training themselves were false teachers, blind guides who led the blind astray. The monastic life was an experienced life: imparted only at the hands of experienced men.

In justifying his right to prescribe ascetic practices for the monks of Narbonensis Secunda, John Cassian repeatedly played on the theme of experience. Not only did he emphasize his own experience, but he also claimed that the great problem of Gallic asceticism was the *inexperienced* leader who had the temerity to establish a monastery and impress fanciful ideas on those monks drawn to his foundation. This fundamental lack of knowledge had yielded a hopeless diversity of customs and practices in Gaul, none of which were suitable for the ascetic formation that led to spiritual perfection.

These themes emerge in the preface to *De institutis*. Having drawn parallels between Castor and King Solomon, Cassian buttressed his position by claiming experience as the fundamental qualification for the ascetic teacher. This line of argumentation emerges in the middle of a list of the reasons for which he is unfit to compose the work requested by Bishop Castor:

4. Because first, my merits are not the equal [of the years] of my life, that I might have confidence that I can worthily comprehend with heart and mind matters so difficult, so obscure, and so sacred. Secondly, because we are now unable to retain in its entirety those things which, from our youth, having been established among those same men and encouraged by their daily exhortations and examples, either we tried to do, or learned, or we have seen, having been removed by the passing of so many years from their company and from the imitation of their conversation, especially because an understanding of these matters cannot be taught or understood or held in the memory by idle meditation or wordy doctrines.

5. For it consists entirely in experience and practice alone, and just as these things cannot be taught except by one who has experience in them, so also they may not be grasped or understood, except by him who will have striven to grasp them by an equal amount of study and sweat. These things, if they have not been frequently discussed and refined by the continuous conferences of spiritual men, quickly melt away again through carelessness of mind. In the third place, because a rather unskilled discourse is inadequate to explain the matter itself, which we are not able to recall according to the merit of the matter, but according to our condition at the present time.

4. Primum quia nec uitae meae ita aequiparant merita, ut confidam me res tam arduas, tam obscuras, tam sanctas digne posse animo ac mente conplecti. Secundo quod ea, quae a pueritia nostra inter eosdem constituti atque ipsorum incitati quotidianis adhortationibus et exemplis uel agere temptauimus uel didicimus uel uisu percepimus, minime iam possumus ad integrum retinere, tot annorum circulis ab eorum consortio et imitatione conuersationis abstracti, praesertim cum harum rerum ratio nequaquam possit otiosa meditatione doctrinaque uerborum uel tradi uel intelligi uel memoria contineri.

5. Totum namque in sola experientia usuque consistit, et quemadmodum tradi nisi ab experto non queunt, ita ne percipi quidem uel intelligi nisi ab eo, qui ea pari studio ac sudore adprehendere elaborauerit, possunt: quae tamen si conlatione iugi spiritalium uirorum frequenter discussa non fuerint et polita, cito rursum mentis incuria dilabuntur. Tertio quia id ipsum, quod utcumque non pro merito rei, sed pro praesentis temporis statu possumus reminisci, inperitior sermo congrue non ualet explicare.<sup>21</sup>

Amid the *insinuatio*, Cassian has inserted his *curriculum vitae*, the basis for his right to prescribe ascetic practices for the Gauls. Although he downplays his own ability to either recall or understand what he had been taught, his arguments remind the reader that Cassian had something to remember. Many years separated him from his experiences in the desert, but it is the fact that he had that experience—that he had been a student of the Egyptian Fathers, one who struggled by means of the twin disciplines of study and sweat to make progress—that draws the reader's attention. Cassian hints at what is required of a true ascetic and stakes his claim to having passed through the training programme that he hopes to instantiate in Gaul. He spells out the fundamental qualifications for an ascetic teacher, while simultaneously reminding his readers that he meets these criteria.

Beyond his indirect claim to experience, Cassian advances two other arguments grouped around this theme. True asceticism is an esoteric and challenging discipline. Because it is so difficult, progress in the art requires diligent, sustained effort, an 'equal amount of study and sweat'. It is also a craft that cannot be learned outside an appropriate context: the gathering of like-minded students whose

<sup>21</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 4–5 [SC 109: 24. 47–26. 67].

training is supervised by experienced masters. The need for experienced masters is so important, according to Cassian, that spiritual progress is simply impossible without their oversight. This argument will prove useful later in *De institutis* when Cassian chastises those Gauls who believed that anyone, even those aristocratic ascetics who lacked experience entirely, could found a monastery and set himself up as an abbot over a group of disciples.

The propositions Cassian develops in the preface to *De institutis* are integral to his presentation of the monastic life. They also, if accepted by his readers, would give him a powerful claim to authority: as an experienced ascetic teacher his attempt to reshape Gallic asceticism can pass from recommendation to legislation.

## 1 A DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS DISCIPLINE

In the section of the preface that we have just discussed, Cassian highlighted his own inadequacy to write a treatise on the Egyptian *institututa* because they contained matters that were extremely difficult, obscure, and sacred. While we want to remain aware that Cassian was employing *insinuatō* to inflate the importance of what he was writing,<sup>22</sup> there is a very real component of the *institututa* that is genuinely difficult and counter-intuitive. It is the depth of exposition, the explication of the theory underlying the ascetic life that makes Cassian's works so unique in the history of early western asceticism. Cassian was able to lay bare the theoretical underpinnings of the external forms and practices. This was unprecedented: as Cassian noted later in *De institutis*, once the causes of the passions were explained, everyone understood them, but before the teachings of the fathers were applied to their root causes, no one could discern the means of breaking the hold they exercised on their practitioners.<sup>23</sup> Like Christianity itself, Cassian's version of the monastic life was filled with paradox, layers of meaning that lay beneath the simplest

<sup>22</sup> See Janson, *Latin Prose*, 98–100, for the conventional practice of magnifying the difficulty of a subject to enhance its importance.

<sup>23</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 2. 1.

disciplines. A self-taught monk could embrace an external practice such as fasting, but without an experienced teacher to explain how the practice was used to alter the inner life, his only benefit might be significant weight loss.

Cassian's exposition of the struggle with gluttony offers an excellent example of the complex nuances of a specific practice. For many of his readers, fasting would have been nothing more than a list of days and times when a person did not eat. This abstinence was used to subdue the body, to place it under the control of one's mind.<sup>24</sup> The act of denial was the good in and of itself. One did it as if merit was accumulated by rejecting the food that others ate. Consequently, we find Jerome urging Eustochium to make her companions those 'virgins who were pale of face and thin with years of fasting',<sup>25</sup> as if years of fasting was an innate good itself. Although Jerome and Cassian agreed on some of the practical recommendations about the practice—avoid fasting for two or three days if it led you to make up for it with gluttony afterwards; take food in moderation; beware of the link between a full stomach and lust—Cassian went well beyond the Bethlehem ascetic in explaining the theoretical underpinnings of the practice.

The Egyptians had a loftier discipline concerning fasting because their practice was welded to perfect discretion.<sup>26</sup> It was not that the Egyptians employed a harsher regime than anyone else; the superiority of their praxis was due to the fact that they understood the theoretical basis for the practice and how it was used to lead a monk to a higher plane. Among the Egyptians there was no universal rule that governed the times and quantities of food a monk consumed. Rather than attempting to define a universal practice, the Egyptians understood that each individual had different nutritional requirements. Some could easily go weeks without eating while others could barely make it to sunset.<sup>27</sup> Some people were satiated by six ounces of bread, while others required two pounds; some could get by on bread alone, others required vegetables. These variations were natural

<sup>24</sup> See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 219–25.

<sup>25</sup> Hier. Ep. 22. 17 [CSEL 54: 164. 16–17]: *Sint tibi sociae, quas uideris quod ieiunia tenuant, quibus pallor in facie est, quas et aetas probauit et uita.*

<sup>26</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 5. 2.

qualities of individual bodies, the function of varying rates of metabolism rather than differing levels of monastic motivation. Since this was true, Cassian noted, the universal rule was not to be located in setting a fixed provision and a regimen of prescribed fasts.

In fact, the *instituta Aegyptiorum* emphasized the internal aspect of abstinence. The monk was not to look for an external system that he could slavishly follow, but rather was to experiment with the practice to train the inner man. Fasting was a discipline designed to foster discernment through the weighing of internal urges and desires. There was a delicate inner balance to be struck, a point where enough food had been consumed to sustain the body and any more would simply be a response to the vice of gluttony. Since the judgement of desires and motivations was central to the monastic vocation, the development of a self-guided abstinence was a pivotal first battlefield for the monk.

Cassian's exposition moves the practice well beyond eating or not eating; as he noted, once a standard was set, ascetics tended either to adhere to it as a goal, or exceed it out of ill-placed enthusiasm. There were many more monks who avoided rich foods and delicacies than those who used them as concessions to necessity; there were many more who denied themselves everything out of a love for the practice of abstinence itself, than those who found the inner balance and ate in disciplined moderation.<sup>28</sup> Legalistic observance of an external form was simple; using the practice to foster discernment was a great deal more challenging.

Of course to move beyond rote performance, the disciple needed a master to illuminate the mystery hidden within the act. The master was also necessary to ensure that the zealous disciple did not go beyond the recommended asceticism and thus fall victim to Satan.<sup>29</sup> Too much enthusiasm could be just as dangerous as not enough in the monastic life; both roads led to perdition.

Not only was there a great deal more to the ascetic life than the observance of external forms, but it was also an inherently dangerous vocation. It was not something to be picked up at a whim and then

<sup>28</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 7.

<sup>29</sup> As in the case of a monk named Benjamin who extended his fasts inordinately, then gorged himself on his accumulated bread (Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 24).

abandoned at a later time if it did not work out. To become a monk was to enlist in the army of God, to become a soldier of Christ (*miles Christi*), a decision that one did not take lightly.

The seriousness of the vocation was underscored by the entrance requirements Cassian related in *De institutis* 4. 3. Once the postulant had renounced all of his possessions, he was made to lie before the front gate of the monastery for ten days. During this time, the brothers who passed through the gate would revile him, heaping insults upon his head. While this might seem a harsh introduction to the monastic life, its purpose was entirely salutary: it encouraged the petitioner to count the cost of what he proposed to do.<sup>30</sup> The experience of taunting and humiliation allowed the postulant to discover whether he had the inner steel to persevere in a difficult life.

Assuming that he had the necessary grit to gain admission, the newcomer was then placed under the oversight of the gatekeeper and made to serve those visitors who stayed at the monastery. Once again, the potential monk was assessed for his ability to humble himself, and the ignominy (especially for someone drawn from the aristocratic class) of waiting tables and cleaning up after a guest like a common slave must have been a fairly difficult trial indeed.<sup>31</sup> After a year, those monks who endured this test would pass into the community and begin a new life.

As Abba Pinufius explained in an address to a young man who had just been received into an Egyptian monastery, the barriers to entry were made deliberately high to forestall the lukewarm who would fall by the way once their initial enthusiasm waned.<sup>32</sup> The difficulty of the monastic life, as Cassian presented it, was such that only the most ardent Christians should be encouraged to seek out the perfection of the cloister. For the rest, it was better never to have vowed than to have vowed and later turned back to the things of the world.<sup>33</sup> 'For just as immeasurable glory has been promised in the future to those serving God faithfully and clinging to him according to the rule of

<sup>30</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 3. 1.

<sup>31</sup> A point I shall explore in greater detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>32</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 33. The same sort of barriers are suggested by Abba Moses' refusal to talk to Cassian and Germanus until their incessant pleading wears him down and he becomes convinced of their spiritual zeal (Cassian, *Coll.* 1. 1).

<sup>33</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 33, citing Eccl. 5. 4.

this arrangement, so, too, have the most serious penalties been prepared for those who follow it lukewarmly and carelessly.<sup>34</sup> To return to the world, having made one's vow to God to pursue the ascetic life, was no light sin.<sup>35</sup>

Not only was the monk threatened by an inner peril (the desire to stop working toward spiritual perfection), but a formidable external force was also arrayed against his success. Satan took a particular interest in monks and delighted in luring them off the path to God. The monk only entered a safe harbour with death. At any moment, prior to the last breath, Satan could act to bring about the destruction that led to eternal condemnation.<sup>36</sup> No matter how exemplary the monk's life had been, a slipped foot, even among the final steps, could earn the adverse judgement that made all the years of asceticism worthless.

This point was well-illustrated in the story Cassian told about a certain Egyptian monk named Heron.<sup>37</sup> Heron had lived among the fathers for more than fifty years and had exceeded his contemporaries in terms of the austerity and rigour of his ascetic practices. He had penetrated more deeply into the desert than any of his brethren, and even refused to eat with the rest of the brothers at the Easter celebration for fear of giving the impression that he had relaxed his fasting. Yet, for all of his self-imposed strictness, Heron had not progressed beyond the external, having made no progress in the development of discernment. He lost his reward one night when a demon appeared to him as an angel of light. Heron foolishly believed this demon when it told him that the high standard he had displayed in his ascetic practices had made him invulnerable to the perils that threatened mortals. To test the claim, Heron was convinced to throw himself into a deep well. With a great deal of effort, the brothers managed to extricate Heron from the bottom of the shaft; he died three days later, still convinced that he was going to make a full recovery from his injuries.

<sup>34</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 33 [SC 109: 170. 1–172. 5]: *Sicut namque immensa gloria fideliter seruientibus Deo ac secundum institutionis huius regulam ei cohaerentibus repromittitur in futurum, ita poenae grauissimae praeparantur his, qui tepide eam neglegenterque fuerint exsecuti.*

<sup>35</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 38.

<sup>36</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 37.

<sup>37</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 5.

Another brother was deceived by a demon that frequently appeared in his cell, again in the guise of an angel of light. This demon's radiance was said to fill the brother's cell so that he required no lamp when the demon was present.<sup>38</sup> One night, the demon convinced the brother to demonstrate that he had the faith of an Abraham by sacrificing his son, who was also living in the monastery. The son, evidently much wiser than his father, chose to flee when he saw his father whetting the edge of his knife to a keen edge with unaccustomed diligence.

A third brother was misled into circumcising himself by a demon that persuaded him to adopt Judaism after showing him visions of the future heavenly bliss of the Hebrews and the correspondingly wretched state of the Christians.<sup>39</sup> These men had all made shipwrecks of their vocations, concluded Cassian, because they had never developed discernment. A monk walked on a razor's edge, and, as these examples suggested, lived in ongoing peril. Discernment, forged through years of training and submission to an experienced teacher, was one of the fruits of the true ascetic path. Monks like Heron, despite the extremes of their ascetic practice, lacked the true training that would keep them safe when attacked by the enemy.

## 2 TRUE ASCETICISM REQUIRES AN EXPERIENCED TEACHER

The difficult and dangerous nature of the ascetic life underlined the importance of a trained teacher. As Cassian noted in his preface (and repeated throughout his works) the only way to become a monk was to serve a discipleship at the feet of an experienced master.<sup>40</sup> Since all the arts and disciplines that came from human genius required a teacher, said Abba Moses, why would anyone expect that asceticism

<sup>38</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5. This thought is developed over the course of the first four books of *De institutis*, especially in Books 2 and 3. This assertion is echoed by Germanus in Cassian, *Coll.* 19. 7, who states that there is no one more qualified to discuss a matter than the man who has pursued it over a long period and has experience as his teacher.



alone, which was invisible and hidden, and grasped only by the purest heart would not require a teacher?<sup>41</sup> Indeed, even though God was clearly able to instruct ascetics directly, He had chosen to reveal this craft exclusively through the master–disciple relationship. This was made apparent in the biblical examples, where God had instructed his people through men rather than acting directly.<sup>42</sup> The Apostle Paul set the standard for humility before his senior brothers in Christ when he went to Jerusalem to check what he had been teaching with James, Peter, John, and the rest of the church in Jerusalem, in case he was running his race in vain.<sup>43</sup> If Paul, the chosen vessel, could act in such a humble manner, what excuse could possibly cover the ascetic who had the opportunity to learn from an accredited master and did not take it?<sup>44</sup>

The place where novice and experienced master came together was the coenobium. The monastery was the nursery for ascetics, a school where the principal fruits of the monastic life — humility and discernment — were formed. It was an institution that preserved and passed on experience, but it was also the place set apart from a world that by nature was hostile to ascetic values.

Cassian schematized the initial phases of monastic training in *De institutis* 4. 3–9. As noted above, once a postulant had been accepted into the monastery by the abbot, he was made to live in the gate house with a brother who had been selected for his discernment and ability with new ascetics.<sup>45</sup> The postulant lived in the gate house for a year. During this time he was initiated into the rudiments of ascetic life and made to serve the monastery's visitors. In this way the

<sup>41</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 11. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 14–15. Cassian cites the examples of Eli teaching Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1–20) and Ananias instructing Paul (Acts 9:10–19).

<sup>43</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 15. 3, citing Gal. 2. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 15. 3. And here Cassian hints at the answer to a question he never addresses head on: lacking experienced Egyptian masters, how were the Gauls to learn authentic Egyptian asceticism? Perhaps in a situation where there were no fathers, his works coupled with a discerning elder (such as Castor, Helladius, or Honoratus) could enable some progress. See Steven Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 65–90, for the view that Cassian structured his works to recreate the interaction between master and disciple, thereby facilitating the learning of monastic praxis from a book.

<sup>45</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 7.

brother overseeing him could assess whether he had a vocation for the coenobitic life; it also gave the postulant a year to reflect on the cost of dedicating his life permanently to the monastery.

If the postulant was found to have the seeds of a coenobitic aptitude, he was admitted into the main community and placed under the care of another elder who was skilled in the training of novices.<sup>46</sup> This elder had the task of cultivating the self-abnegation required in the monastic life. To this end, he consciously probed the novice for weakness and assigned tasks that would be loathsome to the monk in order to teach him to conquer his own self-will.<sup>47</sup> In a later chapter, Cassian presented this initial ascetic formation in a medical context. The novice required the application of appropriate healing remedies<sup>48</sup> to cure the spiritual diseases that had blighted his soul. The diagnosis and treatment of these spiritual diseases required an experienced spiritual physician, one who had himself undergone the cure, otherwise he would be like the person with a beam in his eye, picking at motes.<sup>49</sup>

The new monk's training in the coenobium was also facilitated by dwelling among experienced men. The novice in the company of experienced ascetics would absorb aspects of the ascetic life through simple association with salutary examples. The lives of these men served as mirrors within which the novice could examine his own life.<sup>50</sup> The elder monks offered frequent conferences on spiritual matters. In many cases a novice would be led to a cure for his own ills simply by listening to these spiritual conferences.

This principle was illustrated in *Collationes* with a story about Abba Serapion.<sup>51</sup> According to Serapion, when he was a novice living under the direction of Abba Theonas, he had fallen prey to the sin of gluttony. At the evening meal he would secretly hide an extra biscuit in his robes, which he would later eat when he was alone in his cell. The twin sins of theft and gluttony were so shameful to Serapion that he could not bring himself to confess them to his master. One night, however, the old man who was speaking at the evening conference

<sup>46</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 13 [SC 109: 308. 4]: *congrua medicinae curatio*.

<sup>49</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 8. 5, citing Matt. 7:3–5.

<sup>50</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 11. 17. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 11. The story is told by Abba Moses, who was relating what Serapion had told him.

offered a discourse on gluttony and the tyranny of secret thoughts. Serapion was terrified, believing that God had revealed his inner condition to the old man. As he listened, a wave of compunction swept over him and he was moved to make a full and complete confession of his crimes. The old man pronounced him not only absolved of his sins, but also free of further servitude to the evil spirit that had driven him to these acts.<sup>52</sup>

The fathers were in the habit of offering spiritual conferences on diverse subjects so that the young men who listened to them would either be healed as Serapion had been, or forearmed against the tribulations they would meet as they continued in the monastic life.<sup>53</sup> These experienced masters revealed the inner causes of the passions that were so troublesome to monks. Once this aetiology was exposed, these disturbances lost much of their force. The fathers were like skilled physicians, who applied a heavenly medicine to present ills and forestalled future diseases before they could occur.<sup>54</sup>

Collateral learning was one of the great advantages of living in a coenobium, and it made possible the growth in the spiritual life that was impossible outside of it. Nevertheless, Cassian was enough of a realist to know that not all interaction within the coenobium would be positive; ascetics living in close quarters, day after day, were bound to get on one another's nerves. A significant portion of *De institutis* 8 treats the anger that can grow out of communal friction. For Cassian, like Basil, this negative energy had the potential for good: a monk could learn patience through dealing with his brothers.<sup>55</sup> In fact, it was the chafing itself that provided the opportunity to make progress in the virtue of patience. A monk who abandoned the coenobium for the silence of the desert, where no one would disturb him and provoke him to anger, simply allowed the blister of vice to persist unlanced.<sup>56</sup> Forbearance could only be learned in a situation that required the exercise of that quality.

Cassian's coenobitic structure created a context for the development of ascetic proficiency. A solitary, self-taught monk lacked a standard to serve as a gauge of progress. Those who placed themselves

<sup>52</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 11. 4. At this point a smoking, sulphurous torch emerged from Serapion's chest, which was taken to be a sign that God had confirmed the old man's words.

<sup>53</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 11. 17. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 11. 17. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Bas. *Reg. fus.* 7.

<sup>56</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 8. 16.

under the rules of a self-proclaimed abbot had a flawed standard. There was an order to the ascetic life, a guided progression toward experience. Cassian's structure placed novices under elders who had already undergone the training they imposed on their subordinates. Surrounded by exemplars of the spiritual life, the novice in an Egyptian monastery was more likely to make progress than the monk who did not have the advantage of dwelling among experienced men. The example of Serapion's triumph over gluttony suggested that spiritual progress could be acquired through osmosis when the novice was placed in a suitable context: even when he could not bear to confess his sins to his master, Serapion still received healing from the serendipitous teaching of another elder.

### 3 THE SELF-PROFESSED ABBOT

This, however, could not be said about the ascetic practices Cassian had observed in the regions surrounding Narbonensis Secunda. Cassian was extremely explicit in his diagnosis of the problems of Gallic asceticism and in the identification of those who were responsible for these problems. The blame lay with those inexperienced 'abbots' who had set up their own monasteries without first serving as monks.<sup>57</sup>

In place of knowledge, these men had substituted individualistic whim as the basis for their ascetic rules. They did what seemed right to their untrained minds rather than pursuing what was truly right. In the preface to *De institutis*, Cassian indicated the general shape of the Gallic problem:

In this also I will be diligent in satisfying your guidelines, so that if by chance I discover anything that is not in accordance with the example of the ancestors, established by the most ancient constitution, but rather, based

<sup>57</sup> Cassian claimed to have been warned against this by Abba Nesteros, who cautioned John first to receive and master the precepts of the *instituta Aegyptiorum* before attempting to teach them (Cassian, *Coll.* 14. 9. 4). See also Cassian, *Coll.* 14. 1 for the claim that an inexperienced master could not teach, and if he tried, what he offered would be useless.

on the judgement of anyone founding a monastery, has been either removed or added in these provinces, I will add or cut away in a trustworthy discourse, following [the rule] we have seen, i.e. the rule of monasteries founded in antiquity throughout Egypt and Palestine.

In eo quoque tuis praeceptis satisfacere studebo, ut, si quid forte non secundum typum maiorum antiquissima constitutione fundatum, sed pro arbitrio uniuscuiusque instituentis monasterium uel deminutum uel additum in istis regionibus conprobauero, secundum eam quam uidimus monasteriorum regulam per Aegyptum uel Palaestinam antiquitus fundatorum fideli sermone uel adiciam uel recidam.<sup>58</sup>

The Gallic rules were based on the judgement (*arbitrio*) of the individual. The importance of this charge in Cassian's thought is suggested by the fact that he repeats it in *De institutis*, where he notes that in Egypt, 'monasteries are not established based on the judgement of each person who renounces [the world], but through the successions and traditions of the fathers'.<sup>59</sup>

Lacking knowledge and *experientia*, the Gallic organizers had simply made up their own ascetic rules. Every ascetic did as he or she thought fit, following the whims that appealed to an untrained mind rather than looking to a broader framework of established practice. Without experience to guide praxis, the Gallic rules had sprouted in countless directions. Cassian illustrated this discordant diversity by detailing the varying rules for psalmody he had discovered in Gaul. Wherever he looked in Gaul, monks were doing something different. Some believed that twenty or thirty psalms ought to be said during the nocturnal office; some opted for more, while others thought eighteen was an appropriate number. Some monks prolonged the nocturnal offices with the addition of antiphons of rhythmical measures (*modulationem*). During the diurnal offices, some monks thought it best to make the number of recited psalms match the hour of the day (i.e. three psalms at Terce, six at Sext, nine at None), while others judged it best to sing six psalms at each office. In fact, stated Cassian, he had witnessed almost as many

<sup>58</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 8 [SC 109: 30. 108–15].

<sup>59</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 1 [SC 109: 60. 1–3]: *per uniuersam Aegyptum et Thebaidem, ubi monasteria non pro uniuscuiusque renuntiantis instituuntur arbitrio, sed per successiones ac traditiones maiorum.*

different practices as there were individual cells and monasteries in Gaul.<sup>60</sup> Hopeless diversity, based on a lack of understanding, was Cassian's caricature of the Gallic rules concerning psalmody.

This lack of consistency was attributed to the uninformed decisions made by the self-proclaimed abbot. The Egyptian abbot served a long discipleship under the supervision of experienced men so that he would know how to train those who might eventually be placed beneath him. The Gallic abbot, on the other hand, dared to declare himself a leader before he had received any training, and required his followers to adhere to his own ill-conceived ascetic code.<sup>61</sup> Lacking experience, the self-proclaimed abbot simply made up rules. The Egyptian system was designed to extirpate pride and self-centredness; the fact that Gallic abbots began their careers at the top demonstrated that they were already enslaved by these vices. They would rather lead than follow, would rather train than be taught.

Cassian equated the self-professed abbot with the height of pride. This view was offered in *Collationes* 4, where he discussed those monks who hoarded money under the pretext of establishing a community. If these people had ever sought the way of perfection with sincere hearts, they would have stripped themselves of both their money and their pride, and placed themselves under the guidance of an experienced master. Unfortunately, they preferred to spend their time trying to attain a high position among the brothers, rather than learning the spiritual discipline of humility. Pride had blinded them to such a degree that they saw themselves in the role of teachers, rather than students. Blind guides, they led the blind into ditches.<sup>62</sup> This judgement of Jesus, which Cassian cited at the end of his discussion in *Collationes* 4, neatly summarized his position on the folly of the inexperienced abbot. A sharper point was placed on this view in *Collationes* 14, where Cassian asserted that those who were presumptuous enough to teach before first serving as a disciple risked the fires of Gehenna.<sup>63</sup>

Cassian's charges do not appear unfounded. Examples of untrained ascetics who had started their monastic careers as leaders of ascetic

<sup>60</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 4. 20. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 14. 9. 6.

foundations are plentiful in the western sources.<sup>64</sup> The most noteworthy example in Gaul was Sulpicius Severus, who, despite his professed admiration for Martin of Tours, was not inclined to join Martin's monastery at Marmoutier for training. To the contrary, he chose to dabble in the ascetic life at his own estate, Primuliacum.<sup>65</sup> The same applied to Paulinus, who chose Nola for his foundation, rather than casting his lot with Martin. Jerome was another example. After a short amount of time spent among the Syrian monks, a period which did not agree with him, Jerome preferred the leadership of his Bethlehem monastery to a monastic life in the Egyptian desert.<sup>66</sup> It would not be surprising if Cassian had these examples in mind when he wrote this chapter.

In each of these cases, untrained men started monasteries on their own property,<sup>67</sup> set themselves up as ascetic leaders, and began to press their inexperienced innovations on anyone who joined them.<sup>68</sup> The diagnosis for this fault was pride: the untrained abbot would rather lead a monastery of his own creation than enter an established

<sup>64</sup> See the parallel observation of A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1964), 923, who, commenting on the western episcopacy, noted that there is very little evidence for western aristocrats entering holy orders as anything other than a bishop.

<sup>65</sup> See the assessment of Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 135: 'Under the influence of Martin, Sulpicius had founded his own monastery in southern Gaul. But this community, however strict its rules, resembled most of all an aristocratic spa, in which "learned men" spent their time in discussions similar to those they had once enjoyed on their estates.'

<sup>66</sup> After being driven from Rome (c.385), Jerome and Paula made a tour of Egypt, visiting Alexandria and Nitria. Paula seems to have been particularly impressed with the Desert Fathers and entertained thoughts of remaining among them (Hier. Ep. 108. 14). Jerome seemed to be less enthused. J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 127, believes that Jerome was neither willing to repeat the hardships he had endured among the Syrians, nor to surrender his influence over Paula by sharing her with the Egyptian ascetics. A scholarly, genteel form of asceticism, practised at Bethlehem seemed infinitely preferable to a gritty life of renunciation among the Egyptians. See Stefan Rebenich, 'Asceticism, Orthodoxy, and Patronage: Jerome in Constantinople,' *SPAT* 33 (1997), 358–77, for a very persuasive reconstruction of Jerome's Syrian experience which casts grave doubt on the rigour of the experiment.

<sup>67</sup> Jerome was an exception. He founded a monastery on property purchased in Bethlehem by his patroness, Paula.

<sup>68</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 5.

foundation as a novice and learn humility. Cassian illustrated this in *De institutis* 12, with his description of what happens to a monk who has been captured by the vice of pride. First, he will become reluctant to receive correction and submit to others, and unwilling to obey commands.<sup>69</sup> He then begins to rely upon his own judgement, rather than submitting to the discernment of his elders. This leads to a further downward spiral, and eventually he believes that the coenobium and the company of brothers is an obstacle on his road to spiritual perfection. He longs to live as a solitary, or even better, establish his own monastery with himself as abbot and gather in a flock for instruction. The bad disciple, noted Cassian, made an even worse teacher.<sup>70</sup> He became something that was neither monk, nor worldling, marooned through the deception of pride between the two.

One of the goals of true monasticism was to root out this pride, to learn submission and don the robe of Christ's humility.<sup>71</sup> A properly trained Egyptian monk would place the acquisition of humility over the desire to lead others, and Cassian illustrated this point near the end of *De institutis* 4, where he offered an extended panegyric to one of his personal heroes, the Abba Pinufius.<sup>72</sup>

According to Cassian, Pinufius had been the priest and abbot of a large Egyptian monastery located near the city of Panephris. All of the people in the region were in awe of Pinufius on account of his personal sanctity, his great age, and the position he held. Everyone accorded him great respect, showering him with honour and praise, leaving Pinufius unable to practice the fundamental disciplines of the monastic life: obedience, humility, and submission to others.

One night Pinufius stole away in the darkness and withdrew into the deep wastes of the Thebaid. There he exchanged his monastic habit for secular clothing, and presented himself at the gate of a Pachomian monastery. The brothers (as was their practice) reviled Pinufius for ten days in order to discourage him. Having enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, they claimed, Pinufius was only turning to the religious life because he had run out of secular options. Pinufius

<sup>69</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 12. 29. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 12. 30.

<sup>71</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 14. 9. 4–5. See also Cassian, *Coll.* 15. 7. 1–5 on the vain desire of self-promotion as opposed to the proper virtue of humility.

<sup>72</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 30. 2–6.



patiently bore their abuse, and after the time of testing had passed, they admitted him to the monastery and assigned him to work in the garden under a much younger monk.

Pinufius exulted in his new role, and practised submission and humility by carrying out both his own duties and those duties which his new brothers considered beneath them. He also, noted Cassian, rose in the middle of the night to perform additional work in secret. Three years passed in obscurity and no one in the monastery figured out that there was more to the useless old man who worked in the garden than appeared on the surface. One day, however, one of the brothers from Pinufius' old monastery near Panephris (who had been scouring the countryside in search of their leader) came to the monastery, recognized him, and carried him (against his will and with great weeping) back to his monastery, where he resumed his former position.

Cassian advanced Pinufius as a paradigm for the ideal abbot. He was presented as a man of great renown, respected and admired by both his own monks and the people who lived around the monastery. This was certainly the sort of acclaim a Gallic ascetic would seek. Yet, rather than cultivating or basking in this adulation, Pinufius found it a hindrance to his spiritual life and sought to flee it. Leadership, reputation, power over others — those ephemeral goals of the secular world — were of no interest to Pinufius. His example was intended to turn the ambitions of most (especially those of the Gallic monks who sought to lead rather than to follow) upside down. Pinufius' life of renown was a distraction that he gladly exchanged for subjection, obedience, and the cultivation of humility, the qualities Cassian placed at the core of the monastic training program.

Those who had been trained under the *instituta Aegyptiorum* would have had to master their own pride and desire for recognition before they were offered the opportunity to lead and train others. They would be able to say (as Cassian attributes to Abba John), 'I never did my own will nor taught anyone what I had not done first myself.'<sup>73</sup> The important quality of the Egyptian monasteries, according to

<sup>73</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 28 [SC 109: 236. 7–8]: *numquam, ait, meam feci uoluntatem nec quemquam docui quod prius ipse non feci*. A similar sentiment was attributed to Abba Chaeremon, who was reluctant to offer teaching to Cassian and Germanus because he was no longer able to perform the difficult asceticism he taught (Cassian, *Coll.* 11. 4. 1–2).

Cassian, was the fact that no one was allowed to lead until they had completed the course of training and were judged (by other experienced monks) qualified to take on the leadership of a monastery.<sup>74</sup> In this way they perpetuated a system that stretched back into antiquity, the certain and tried path to spiritual perfection.

Those ascetics who started their own monasteries and professed themselves abbots before first serving as disciples were fools, blind guides who led blind men. Lacking experience and even the first intimation of the goals of the ascetic life, they had promulgated a diverse collection of contradictory and useless rules, a testament to their own pride rather than an appropriate foundation for the ascetic life.

#### 4 GAULS LACK EXPERIENCE

The point of departure for Cassian's condemnation of Gallic practices was the disorder of their nocturnal psalmody.<sup>75</sup> As noted above, Cassian claimed that he had seen almost as many rules for psalmody in Gaul as monasteries. The uninformed legislation of the self-professed abbots had led to a hopeless Gallic diversity, which rested on a lack of understanding about fundamental ascetic practices. Rather than being part of an established, proven system for ascetic living, the Gauls had created rules that were 'based on a zeal for God, rather than knowledge'.<sup>76</sup>

Ignorance of the proper, divinely-mandated number of psalms to be chanted in the evening offices (twelve),<sup>77</sup> was just one example of Gallic inexperience. Another could be found in the way the Gauls chanted their psalms. In Egypt the monks did not hurry to fall to their knees at the conclusion of the psalms, as many of the monks did in Gaul.<sup>78</sup> To the contrary, the Egyptians remained standing for a

<sup>74</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 4–5.

<sup>75</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2. 1–2.

<sup>76</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2. 1 [SC 109: 58. 3], quoting Rom. 10: 2: *zelum Dei, sed non secundum scientiam*.

<sup>77</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 1–5; see the discussion of the correct number of Psalms in Chapter 4.

<sup>78</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 7. 1 [SC 109: 70. 1–4]: *ut finito psalmo non statim ad incurvationem genuum conruant, quemadmodum facimus in hac regione nonnulli*.

period of time, praying. They then lay face down on the ground for the briefest moment, before rising again to continue praying with arms outstretched.<sup>79</sup>

The Gallic monks followed a different (flawed) procedure. Although they recited a great number of psalms, it seems clear from Cassian's discussion that they had made the external form (as with fasting) the centre of their interest and had missed out on the internal goals of psalmody. Cassian's characterization of Gallic psalmody reminds one of a marathon: the monks hurry through a large number of psalms as quickly as they can in order to throw themselves prostrate upon the ground at the end. Their attention was not directed toward the prayers they intoned, but rather, was already looking ahead to the refreshment to be found at the end of the office.<sup>80</sup>

Cassian suggests that the inexperienced Gauls had adopted practices that short-circuited the entire act of corporate psalmody. Not realizing that there was an internal aspect to the external practice, they had placed their emphasis on the recitation of a great number of psalms. This lack of understanding did not lead to progress in the monastic life, but rather to spiritual apathy. With their eyes on the wrong goals, it is no surprise that the Gallic monks did not take the divine office seriously. Cassian's description of a Gallic nocturnal prayer office (which is contrasted with the pure Egyptian office) is worth citing in its entirety:

And so when they [the Egyptians] gather together to celebrate the aforementioned offices, which they call *synaxes*, everyone maintains such a great silence that even though a large number of brothers have come together as one, a person might believe that no one was present except for the monk who rises and sings psalms among them. This is especially true when the prayer is finished, in that no spittle is hawked, no phlegm makes a racket, no cough sounds among them, there is no sleepy yawning issuing from wide and gaping mouths, neither groans nor sighs are brought forth to impede those standing nearby, no voice is heard apart from the priest who concludes the prayer, unless [there might be] that noise which through a digression of the mind will have slipped past the fortress of the mouth, and which will have insensibly surprised the heart, clearly having been inflamed by a limitless and unbearable heat of spirit, while that, which the burning mind is

<sup>79</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 7. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 7. 1.

unable to keep to itself, tries to evaporate through a certain ineffable groan [which emanates] from the innermost chambers of the breast.

Cum igitur praedictas sollemnitates, quas illi synaxis uocant, celebraturi conueniunt, tantum praebetur a cunctis silentium, ut, cum in unum tam numerosa fratrum multitudo conueniat, praeter illum, qui consurgens psalmum decantat in medio, nullus hominum penitus adesse credatur, ac praecipue cum consummatur oratio: in qua non sputus emittitur, non excreatio obstrepat, non tussis intersonat, non oscitatio somnolenta dissutis malis et hiantibus trahitur, nulli gemitus, nulla suspiria etiam adstantes inpeditura promuntur, non ulla uox absque sacerdotis precem concludentis auditur nisi forte haec, quae per excessum mentis claustra oris effugerit quaeque insensibiliter cordi obrepserit, immoderato scilicet atque intolerabili spiritus fervore succenso, dum ea, quae ignita mens in semet ipsa non praeualet continere, per ineffabilem quendam gemitum ex intimis pectoris sui conclauibus euaporare conatur.<sup>81</sup>

Cassian's catalogue of unspiritual noises points to a lack of Gallic absorption in prayer. Once again, the experienced Egyptians were offered as the standard; in Egypt a monk would not dare to utter a sound that would signify that he was less than completely absorbed by his task. The monk who allowed a sound to slip out of his throat demonstrated lukewarmness; he was like those who were more intent on rushing through the office than dwelling in the presence of God. The monk who yawned, coughed, spat, or gaped open-mouthed was distracted and gained nothing from the office of prayer. His diffidence was not only an offence against the purpose of the office, but also risked the further danger of disturbing someone who had successfully entered into the act of prayer.<sup>82</sup> The Gallic lack of understanding about the ascetic life had yielded a nocturnal office that failed to engage the monk, and contributed nothing to his spiritual development.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 10. 1 [SC 109: 74. 1–17].

<sup>82</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 10. 2. The exception to this is the monk who is so caught up in a holy fervour that he loses control of his mouth and an utterance breaks out unexpectedly (Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 10. 1).

<sup>83</sup> Catherine M. Chin, 'Prayer and *Otium* in Cassian's *Institutes*, SPAT 35 (2001), 24–9, offers a complementary exegesis of this passage, suggesting that Cassian's discourse promotes the Egyptian monks as learned ascetics whose high culture allows them to pray at will, while the Gallic monks lack any culture and are forced to place themselves under a rule in order to achieve a rudimentary level of education.

Gallic inexperience threatened more than the spiritual formation of the individual monk. A lack of knowledge prevented the Gallic monasteries from thriving as corporate entities. Cassian illustrated this point on a material plane with his assertion that one reason Gallic monasteries did not endure was because the monks did not understand that they needed to work in order to support the foundation.<sup>84</sup> Work has more than an economic import in Cassian's syllabus for spiritual development,<sup>85</sup> but here his emphasis was entirely pragmatic. The monastery could only continue as long as there was money to fund it. When the money ran out, the monastery would collapse and the monks would have to seek their living elsewhere. And even in those cases where a patron could be found to support the monastery out of his or her own largesse, idleness was still the enemy of the monastic life, creating a torpor that inhibited spiritual development. Because the Gauls did not understand the true aims of the monastic life, they were not working. Consequently their monasteries neither survived nor produced monks who were on the path to spiritual perfection.

Another example Cassian offered concerned anger. The Gauls did not know that one of the goals of the ascetic life was the elimination of anger from the soul.<sup>86</sup> To the contrary, Cassian stated that some monks in Gaul were defending the vice of anger. They maintained that anger with a brother was permissible because God was also said to be angry with those who did not accept or know Him.<sup>87</sup> According to Cassian, this was a fallacious understanding of both the nature of Divine wrath and the spiritual life. The goal of the monk was to allow anger no place in his life. Unfortunately, because the Gauls had misunderstood the spiritual life, and believed that anger was permissible, they cherished it and allowed it to burden their hearts.<sup>88</sup> This lack of understanding poisoned the relationships between the monks in the community, disrupting and disturbing the fellowship.<sup>89</sup>

Once again, the problem was not necessarily that the Gallic monks became angry with each other, but rather, they did not understand

<sup>84</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 10. 23.

<sup>85</sup> See the discussion of manual labour in Chapter 5.

<sup>86</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 8. 2–4.

<sup>87</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 8. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 8. 11.

<sup>89</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 16. 6. 5–8, 15, 19.

that one of the goals of the spiritual life was to eliminate strife. Anger was not to be excused or rationalized away. Lacking experienced teachers, the Gallic monks were in no position to understand these things.

## 5 CASSIAN'S JUDGEMENT OF THE GAULS

How was this deplorable situation to be emended? Cassian claimed that he had spent time poking his head into the ascetic nooks and crannies of Gaul. The principal result of his inquiry was the conclusion that in Gaul, everyone was doing what they thought best. Untrained monks were shepherded by inexperienced abbots down the broad road that led to ruin. Self-professed abbots were starting their own monasteries, rather than entering established foundations as novices. The ascetic foundations of Gaul fostered pride rather than humility, substituted vainglory for obedience and submission. What was to be done about this lamentable state of affairs?

Cassian's recommendation was both clear and non-negotiable. Gallic asceticism must be standardized around the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. This fundamental premise emerges in the preface to his work where Cassian stated his primary presupposition: nothing found in Gaul could surpass the *instituta Aegyptiorum*.<sup>90</sup> Cassian cast himself in the role of an ecclesiastical auditor. He would correct any Gallic practice that was not in accordance with the most ancient constitution of the fathers. Those things that had been added by the whims of inexperienced men were to be rooted out. The unchecked, unregulated overgrowth of Gallic asceticism would be pruned back to a spare shape from which a useful plant could grow. The practices of the Gauls were at variance with the canonical rule, by which Cassian meant the *instituta Aegyptiorum*.<sup>91</sup> Cassian's remedy was to extirpate these practices and replace them with the universal and perfect standard (which he, an experienced monk would provide).

Cassian's plan for Gaul was not one of gentle emendation of a programme already under way. Cassian did not propose to reform

<sup>90</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 8.

<sup>91</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2. 2.

existing Gallic practices; he argued for replacement. He offered a blanket condemnation of what he had observed in Gaul. Any practice that failed to conform to the *instituta Aegyptiorum* was to be eliminated. Nor was opposition by the Gallic monks to be taken into account in Cassian's renovation. His position on this was clear:

to these institutes and rules, we ought to give undoubting faith and unshakeable obedience. [This faith and obedience should be given] in all respects, not to those [rules] introduced by the will of a few, but to those that can claim great age and which countless numbers of the holy fathers have passed on, by unanimous agreement, to those who followed.

Illis enim debemus institutis ac regulis indubitata fides et indiscussa oboedientia per omnia commodare, non quas paucorum uoluntas intulit, sed quas uetustas tantorum temporum et innumerositas sanctorum patrum concordia definitione in posterum propagaui.<sup>92</sup>

The whole-hearted adoption of the *instituta Aegyptiorum* was a signal that a monk (or group of monks) had begun to cultivate the fundamental virtue of obedience. Rather than offering allegiance to the ill-informed, idiosyncratic rules foisted on them by untrained men, the Gallic ascetics were supposed to humbly reorientate themselves to the larger, universal rule. Those who would not submit to this formulation demonstrated that they had yet to make progress in obedience, a virtue that was a certain prerequisite for progress toward spiritual perfection. Since the untrained Gallic monk lacked the spiritual discernment to appreciate the *instituta Aegyptiorum* on their own terms, Cassian stated that a beginning should be made by simply obeying them. Or, as he later has Abba Theonas state in *Collationes*, 'even when we have not grasped the reason behind a practice, it will be to our benefit to yield to the authority and customs of the ancient fathers, which have endured for so many years; and that which has been handed down from antiquity ought to be kept with unrelenting care and reverence'.<sup>93</sup>

By contrasting the inexperience of the Gallic practices with the centuries of experience embodied in the Egyptian *instituta*, Cassian

<sup>92</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 2. 4 [SC 109: 42. 39–43].

<sup>93</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 21. 12. 1 [SC 64: 86]: *Oportet quidem nos auctoritati patrum consuetudinique maiorum usque ad nostrum tempus per tantam annorum seriem protelatae etiam non percepta ratione cedere eamque, ut antiquitus tradita est, iugi obseruantia ac reuerentia custodire.*

placed himself in a particularly strong position. He was the experienced monk, the man who could deliver the true teachings of the ascetic life. Significantly, this line of argument emerged in the opening lines of *De institutis*. As discussed above, Cassian chose to open his work with a *synkrisis* that compared Bishop Castor of Apt to King Solomon. This comparison was based on a quotation from 3 Kings 4:29,<sup>94</sup> a text that established the wisdom and prudence of the Hebrew king. This was followed by allusions to 3 Kings 3:12 (God tells Solomon that no man will ever possess greater wisdom), 3 Kings 7:13–14 (Hiram, the son of a widowed woman is sent to assist Solomon in building the Temple), and Daniel 5:3 (a reference to the desecration of the Temple by the Babylonian king).

Cassian's analogy proposed two important parallels between the Gallic and Hebraic situations. The first was the connection between the act of founding a new monastery and the construction of the Temple. While it stood, the Temple served as the centre of the Hebraic cult, the place where God dwelled among his people.<sup>95</sup> In a similar way, suggested Cassian, Castor wanted to emulate Solomon by building a monastery that would house men devoted to the service of God, a holy place set apart from the world. God would dwell in the hearts of Castor's monks as He had once filled the Holy of Holies. The 'most-blessed' bishop was a man who had been instructed by Solomon's example,<sup>96</sup> and like the ancient king, wanted to erect a spiritual edifice dedicated to the worship of God. He would build a temple, not of insensate brick, but rather, of living stone.

The second similarity propounded in Cassian's analogy drew on the fact that this holy work was not a project for amateurs. Like Solomon, Castor had been forced to seek a highly trained craftsman in order to carry out his ambition.<sup>97</sup> Although inspired by divine

<sup>94</sup> 1 Kgs. 4: 29 in modern versions of the Bible.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 7. <sup>96</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 2 [SC 109: 22. 18].

<sup>97</sup> When Solomon, the wisest of kings wished to build the Temple, he solicited help from Hiram, the King of Tyre (LXX. 3 Ki. 5: 2–6). Solomon's request was for a 'skilled man' who could 'work in gold, silver, brass, and iron, and in purple, scarlet, and blue, and one who knows how to work together with the craftsmen who are with me in Judea and Jerusalem, the materials prepared by David, my father' (LXX. 2 Ch. 1: 7). King Hiram responded to this request by sending a skilled craftsman, also named Hiram. This second Hiram, according to the accounts in 3 Kings and 2 Chronicles, was in charge of the Temple project and the creator of the furnishings which adorned the interior.



wisdom, King Solomon did not scorn the counsel of a 'poor and foreign man'.<sup>98</sup> Likewise, when Bishop Castor realized that he needed help to establish his monastery, he solicited the assistance of Cassian, an 'indigent man and the poorest in every respect'.<sup>99</sup> Cassian, at least by analogy, casts himself in a role that is broadly equivalent to Hiram's position.

Cassian's *synkrisis* established the premise that asceticism was a highly skilled craft. The reader is intended to understand that like Hiram, Cassian was a specialist of unparalleled expertise. Hiram was 'a worker of bronze, filled with all wisdom, knowledge, and learning for the task of making every object from bronze';<sup>100</sup> Cassian the expert in the field of monastic science. Both men sat atop their respective disciplines, as is attested by the fact that they were both imported for that holiest of construction projects, the creation of a sacred space where God would dwell.

Moreover, their knowledge surpassed that of the local people. Solomon would not have asked the King of Tyre to send someone to work with his craftsmen had those artisans been capable of carrying out their commissions. The implication of his appeal to King Hiram is that the skill and knowledge required to create the sacred metalwork of the Temple (at least to the standard required for this holiest of places) was lacking within Israel. Likewise, Cassian's analogy suggests that the skill and knowledge required to found a monastery did not exist in Narbonensis Secunda. Ascetic craftsmen of a sort might reside there, but true expertise must be imported. The equation of himself with Hiram suggests Cassian's position on indigenous Gallic monasticism: if what passed for asceticism in Gaul was suitable for the creation of a Temple of living souls devoted to the service of the Lord, if skilled craftsmen existed in Gaul, then Castor would not have summoned Cassian. The fact that Cassian had been given a commission by Castor implied that this knowledge was missing.<sup>101</sup> A monastic mason was required to dress the living stones.

<sup>98</sup> Cassian, *Inst. Pref.* 2 [SC 109: 22. 16]: *pauperis atque alienigenae*.

<sup>99</sup> Cassian, *Inst. Pref.* 2 [SC 109: 24. 27–8]: *egenum me omnique ex parte pauperrimum*.

<sup>100</sup> Vulg 3 Reg. 7. 14 [Fischer et al. (1994): 468]: *artificem aerarium et plenum sapientia et intellegentia et doctrina ad faciendum omne opus ex aere*.

<sup>101</sup> It may also be possible that Cassian is linking his work to a request from Castor in order to validate his right to be considered a teacher. The seventh canon of the Council of Saragossa had stated that only those who had been granted the right

With the opening lines of his preface, Cassian asserted that he was the experienced master who could teach a Gallic audience. In the lines that follow (quoted and discussed at the beginning of this chapter), Cassian drives this point home through the counter-intuitive use of *insinuatio*. Cassian claimed to have forgotten much, but in doing so he implied that he had something to forget. The reader is reminded that unlike the other voices contending for a hearing in Gaul, Cassian had actually lived among the Egyptian Desert Fathers from his youth.<sup>102</sup> Although Cassian's assertions are cloaked in *insinuatio*, they are intended to remind his readers of his formidable credentials.

As we have seen, Cassian's presentation polarizes asceticism into two groups: the experienced who had been trained in an ancient system by experienced masters; and those who were engaged in promoting novel, often malformed, ideas that lacked root or substance. The diverse and contradictory practices of the Gallic ascetics needed to be extirpated, replaced with a single unified code that would standardize observance and guide monks onto the road that led to spiritual perfection. In the main this meant placing experience at the heart of the ascetic project. Formation occurs in the context of an experienced community. A postulant is accepted into the monastery and immediately placed in the hands of an experienced teacher. When the initial training under the oversight of the gate keeper was concluded, the monk was transferred to a second teacher who would build on this foundation. An orderly progression was maintained, and no one advanced in the monastery until they had learned to extinguish their own self-centredness. Humility was to replace pride and self-will; the monk was to place the good of the community over his own needs and desires. This was essential for corporate life, according to Cassian.<sup>103</sup> The elimination of self-will preserved concord and allowed the brothers to function as a body. Moreover,

(presumably by a bishop) were allowed to teach in the church (see discussion of Canon 7 in Virginia Burrus, 'Ascesis, Authority, and Text: The Acts of the Council of Saragossa,' *Semeia* 58 [1992], 101). However, for the idea that a work has been solicited as a literary topos, see Janson, *Latin Prose*, 117–20.

<sup>102</sup> A point he makes again in the preface to the first set of *Collationes* (Cassian, *Coll.* Pref. 1. 6).

<sup>103</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 8.

he also attacked the source of the idiosyncratic Gallic customs, the self-professed abbot who dared to lead monks before he had first served as a disciple.

Naturally this agenda placed Cassian in a strong position. Who was the man who could tell the ascetics of Narbonensis Secunda how to arrange their monasteries? Who was to serve as the conduit for the *instituta Aegyptiorum*? Clearly John Cassian. There was, however, one other problem: Cassian was not the first writer to offer ascetic advice to the Gauls. Even if native Gallic examples were not to be trusted, why could one not simply adopt the writings of Jerome or Rufinus to serve as a foundation for ascetic life? An examination of how Cassian positioned himself in relation to these other writers will be the subject of the next chapter.

### 3

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## *Experientia* vs other builders

The preceding chapter focused on one of Cassian's strategies for winning a hearing for *De institutis*: the claim to a level of experience that trumped indigenous Gallic practitioners. There was, however, an obvious objection to be made: why should Cassian be allowed to set the agenda in Gaul? Even if the native Gallic experiments were unreliable, there were other sources available. Why not employ the ascetic writings of Basil, which Rufinus had translated into Latin? Or the *Rule of Pachomius* (*Regula Pachomi*), as mediated by Jerome? Why not, in fact, let Jerome, himself a famous ascetic, serve as teacher and guide?

One of the great difficulties of writing history, claimed Livy, was the challenge of making one's work stand out in a crowded field.<sup>1</sup> Nearly five centuries later, Cassian also faced the difficult task of separating his work from the rest of the pack. Established and well-known writers — Jerome, Rufinus, and Sulpicius Severus — had produced treatises on the ascetic life; how was Cassian, a first-time author, to compete with these luminaries? Why should his advice be allowed to displace the work of other, respected authorities?

Experience was once again the central plank in Cassian's argument. There was a fundamental distinction to be drawn between his discourse and the treatises of his ascetic competitors: their works relied on eloquence, while Cassian offered the plain, unvarnished truth, a truth that was obtained only through experience.<sup>2</sup> He proposed a fundamental polarization of the world of ascetic writers, a division along the

<sup>1</sup> Liv. Pref. 3.

<sup>2</sup> On the use of rhetoric to denounce the use of rhetoric by other writers, see George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 134. The claim to simplicity is a commonplace among writers of this period.

line of experience. There were those who knew what they were writing about and those who were merely writing. The works of Cassian's competitors were flawed because they had written about what they had heard, rather than what they had witnessed and experienced.

Cassian's preface to *De institutis* stands as a textbook example of how to craft an authoritative voice. Cassian set out what made him uniquely qualified to offer advice on the ascetic life, while simultaneously undermining the works of his contemporaries. In doing so, he simply followed a rhetorical model that dated back to Aristotle, who counselled writers to introduce themselves in the beginning of their works, to show their potential readers what sort of person they were, and to do all of this inconspicuously.<sup>3</sup> Cassian followed Aristotle's dictum to the letter; in fact, he was so inconspicuous that the combative quality of *De institutis* has gone largely unappreciated. Cassian introduced both himself and his opponents in the preface to *De institutis*. He employed a common rhetorical device to suggest that his competitors had made up for their lack of experience with eloquence. This eloquence was contrasted with what he purported to offer: the pure truth in a rough, unornamented style. Having laid the foundation for a comparison of his work with his predecessors, Cassian then systematically undermined his competitors, a subtle campaign pursued throughout *De institutis*. While Cassian rarely offered direct criticism of the work of another writer, he did emend and correct the views and ascetic accounts of his contemporaries, which again (inconspicuously, as Aristotle had suggested) served to bolster his own claim of *experientia*.

## 1 ELOQUENTIA vs EXPERIENTIA

We have seen how Cassian used the claim to *experientia* to buttress his right to prescribe an institutional structure for the ascetics of

<sup>3</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 3. 16. See Harold Gotoff, 'Oratory: The Art of Illusion,' *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 95 (1993), 289–313, for a comparable account of Cicero's use of rhetoric to shape audience perception of his own persona. The preface was the usual place in historical writing for the author to establish his character (John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 128–33), and since an audience's perception of the

Narbonensis Secunda. A large part of his argument rested on the claim that asceticism could not be learned apart from the oversight of an experienced teacher, nor could it be learned from 'wordy doctrines'.<sup>4</sup>

His attack on other ascetic writers came early in the preface to *De institutis*, framed by two zones of rhetorical self-deprecation. Cassian began by noting that his own unskilled discourse was barely adequate for the task of passing on the lofty teachings of the Desert Fathers. He then compared his own literary ineptitude with the incredible eloquence of his fellow writers:

Added to this is the fact that concerning this matter, men both noble in life and distinguished for their speech and knowledge, have already sweated out many minor works: I speak of Saint Basil, Jerome, and some others. The former of these, when questioned by the brothers upon various institutes or questions, responded not only by speaking eloquently, but also with a discourse abounding in the testimonies of the divine Scriptures; the other not only brought forth books which were composed by lamplight from his own ingenuity, but also he translated works arranged in the Greek language into eloquent Latin.

Huc accedit, quod super hac re uiri et uita nobiles et sermone scientiaque praeclari multa iam opuscula desudarunt, sanctum Basilium et Hieronymum dico aliosque nonnullos. Quorum anterior sciscitantibus fratribus super diuersis institutis uel quaestionibus non solum facundo, uerum etiam diuinarum Scripturarum testimoniis copioso sermone respondit, alius uero non solum suo elucubratos ingenio edidit libros, uerum etiam Graeca lingua digestos in latinum uertit eloquium.<sup>5</sup>

Who were Cassian's competitors? A Gallic audience surely would have recognized the two famous authors Cassian mentions here, Basil of Caesarea and Jerome. A first reading of the text suggests that Cassian had a very positive view of these writers. They were 'noble

veracity of an account was usually linked to this estimation of character, a Roman historian took great care to make the best first impression.

<sup>4</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 4 [SC 109: 26. 57]: *doctrinaque uerborum*. Cassian illustrated the futility of trying to convey spiritual truths to men who lacked experience with the analogy of attempting to describe the taste of honey to men who had never eaten anything sweet (Cassian, *Coll.* 12. 13. 1). See also Cassian, *Coll.* 12. 16. 3, where Chaeremon states that experience, rather than words, had been his teacher in the battle for chastity, and that while his teaching might earn the derision of the indolent, spiritual (i.e. experienced) men would recognize the truth of his words. Another contrast between vain talk and experience is offered in Cassian, *Coll.* 13. 18. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5 [SC 109: 26. 68–76].

in life', 'distinguished for their speech and knowledge', and 'eloquent'. This literary excellence was then contrasted with the miserable drivel Cassian hoped to produce:

And after such exuberant rivers of eloquence from these men, not undeservedly could I be reproached for presumption if I had been tempted to produce some dripping moisture of this sort, were it not that this confidence of your sanctity encouraged me and the assurance that either these trifles, whatever their quality, would be acceptable to you or that you might consider commending them to the congregation of brothers sojourning in so new a monastery: who, if by chance something may have been less cautiously expressed by me, may both dutifully read it and endure it with rather kind indulgence, requiring honesty in my discourse rather than the grace of style.

Post quorum tam exuberantia eloquentiae flumina possem non inmerito praesumptionis notari, si aliquid stillicidii huius inferre temptassem, nisi me haec fiducia tuae sanctitatis animaret et sponsio, quod uel tibi hae nugae forent acceptae qualescumque sunt, uel eas congregationi fratrum in nouello tantum monasterio commorantium deputares: qui, si quid a nobis minus forsitan caute prolatum fuerit, et pie relegant, et cum uenia indulgentiore sustentent, fidem potius mei sermonis quam uenustatem eloquii requirentes.<sup>6</sup>

Basil, Jerome, and (unnamed) others received lavish praise for the eloquence of their work while Cassian downplayed his own meagre literary gift. Yet the reader must be warned not to take this too seriously. Claims to inelegance and a crude writing style are an extremely common literary topos in both classical and patristic writing.<sup>7</sup> A fine patristic example of this practice may be found in the preface to Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* (*Adversus Haereses*). Here the author begs the indulgence of his audience, stating that he feared for the reception of his work because he had no practice or training in writing. Furthermore, his treatise was bound to be flawed because he lived among the Celts and almost always employed their barbarous dialect.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 6 [SC 109: 28. 77–86].

<sup>7</sup> Examples include: Gr. Nyss. *V. Macr.* 1; Pall. *Hist. Laus.* Prol. 4; Hier. *Ep.* 1. 1; Vinc.-Lir. *Comm.* 1. 3. See discussion in Tore Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1964), 120–1, 124.

<sup>8</sup> Iren. *Haer.* Pref. 3.

The denigration of one's own writing allowed the author to make a connection between an unornamented style and the truth. By claiming literary clumsiness, the author portrayed himself as someone who had nothing but honesty to offer to a reader.<sup>9</sup> The eloquent, with their rhetorical tricks, could make falsehoods seem plausible, but the writer with truth to offer could rely on an unadorned simplicity. The connection between unsophisticated prose and truth may be found, for instance, in the anonymous account of the life of Emperor Probus in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*. Here the author suggested that he would not imitate the eloquence of a Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, or Trogus, but rather would follow the example of those who wrote with truthfulness rather than eloquence.<sup>10</sup> The obverse of this sentiment can be found in Cassius Dio, who, in the preface to his histories, expressed the hope that although he had employed a beautifully-wrought style, no one would suspect him of untruthfulness.<sup>11</sup>

The connection between an unadorned style and truthfulness was also used by Christian authors to discredit their opponents. Rufinus, in his *Apology Against Jerome* (*Apologia ad Hieronymum*), suggested that while his readers might find his defence composed in an uncouth style, they should excuse him because his purpose was not to amuse his audience, but rather to set out the truth.<sup>12</sup> Those who desired eloquence were advised to consult the works of his adversary (Jerome), a writer unduly concerned with that quality. Eloquence was unnecessary for the writer who sought only to present the facts.<sup>13</sup>

Irenaeus hewed the same line against the disciples of Valentinus. These writers used clever words to deceive the innocent, adorning their lies with rhetorical finery. The inexperienced were led astray by their eloquence. They were unable to separate fact from fiction, just as the untrained could not distinguish between an emerald and cleverly-cut glass, or tell that brass had been mixed with gold. In countering these deceptive writers, Irenaeus pledged that he would offer the simple truth in plain words. Truth required no gilding.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Carey discusses this use of rhetoric in his survey of the rhetorical tactics for winning the favour of an audience. He notes: 'Simplicity, manifested in inexperience of public speaking and ignorance of law courts offers the promise of unadorned fact.' Christopher Carey, 'Rhetorical Means of Persuasion,' in *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action*, edited by Ian Worthington (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 37.

<sup>10</sup> SHA. Probus 2. 7.

<sup>11</sup> D. C. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Ruf. Apol. 1. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ruf. Apol. 1. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Iren. Haer. Pref. 3.



The suggestion that eloquence was simply a means of masking lies may also be found in Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium*. In the preface to this work, Gregory wrote that Eunomius had arranged his heretical arguments extremely eloquently. After surveying Eunomius' inventory of rhetorical tricks, he concluded that when reading Eunomius one could almost hear the rhetor beating the time as the rhythmic lines fell out of his mouth. Despite this eloquence (which was employed to mask heresy), Gregory opted to follow the Apostle Paul and use truth as the only ornament for his work. Perhaps for those who do not possess truth, noted Gregory, it was an advantage to varnish their falsehoods with an attractive style.<sup>15</sup>

Not only was eloquence a mask for untruthfulness, but many eloquent writers were not concerned with truth at all. These authors wrote only to demonstrate their mastery of eloquence.<sup>16</sup> The subject and point of view were immaterial; their treatises were composed to win praise. Salvian of Marseilles levelled this charge against unspecified writers in the preface to *De gubernatione Dei*. His work, to the contrary, with its simple style, could be counted on to truthfully argue an important point.<sup>17</sup>

Cassian's praise for the eloquence of his ascetic contemporaries, as well as the denigration of his own abilities, must be read within this established literary convention. Cassian placed his praise of his fellow writers in a block of text that listed all of the reasons that he was not fit to carry out Castor's commission. If we read those lines as conventional self-deprecation, then surely there is reason to be doubtful that this praise represents Cassian's true view of his competitors. Appearing in a section of the text that Cassian surely intended his readers to disbelieve, it seems more likely that Cassian was simply employing a common literary topos to cast doubt on what had been written before *De institutis*.

Cassian's conventional denigration of his own literary skill is evident from the opening lines of his preface. Like Irenaeus, he

<sup>15</sup> Gr. Nyss. *Eun.* 1. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Jerome, for instance, had to defend himself against the charge that his letter written to a Gallic mother and daughter (*Hier. Ep.* 117) was nothing more than an exercise in eloquence and a demonstration of Jerome's own rhetorical and declamatory skills (*Hier. Vigil.* 3).

<sup>17</sup> Salv. *Gub.* Pref. 1–2. Cf. Janson, *Latin Prose*, 157.

pleaded that he lacked the talent to carry out the task that Castor had set for him. He described himself as ‘an inarticulate man, a pauper in speech and knowledge’.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, he was worried because his ‘unskilled discourse’<sup>19</sup> might not suffice to convey the deep spiritual truths contained in the teaching of the Egyptian Fathers. In comparison with the literary excellence of his fellow ascetic writers, the ‘exuberant rivers of eloquence’, what could Cassian hope to produce except ‘dripping moisture’?<sup>20</sup>

This *insinuatio* is paralleled by the effort he made to highlight the eloquence of the works of his competitors. Basil’s responses to those who questioned him about the monastic life were eloquent (*facundus*);<sup>21</sup> Jerome’s translations from Greek into Latin were eloquent (*eloquium*).<sup>22</sup> These men had produced works that were exuberant rivers of eloquence. How could Cassian’s artless doggerel, his slow dripping moisture, hope to compete?

Cassian employs this rhetorical device to cast doubt on the work of his predecessors. Yes, their works are eloquent, but are they true? Jerome, in particular, is made the target of doubt. He was a particularly eloquent writer, but his ascetic works were drawn from his own ingenuity (*ingenium*). His teachings were the product of his fertile mind, rather than the fruit of *experientia*. In fact, this seems to be the point of Cassian’s praise. Just as the earlier lines of his preface set the stage for a contrast between his *experientia* and the inexperience at the root of Gallic practices, these lines drew a comparison between Cassian and his competitors: Cassian, the inarticulate (but experienced and by extension truthful), arrayed his work against the eloquent (but inexperienced) works of his predecessors.

<sup>18</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 3 [SC 109: 24. 35–6]: *me quoque elinguem et pauperem sermone atque scientia*.

<sup>19</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5 [SC 109: 26. 67]: *inperitior sermo*. This line evokes the similar phrase (*et si inperitus sermone sed non scientia in omnibus autem manifestus sum vobis*) employed by Paul in 2 Cor. 11: 6, where the Apostle was certainly not being modest (cf. Janson, *Latin Prose*, 139).

<sup>20</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 6 [SC 109: 28. 79]. The word Cassian uses, *stillicidium*, carries with it the sense of water that falls drop by drop.

<sup>21</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5 [SC 109: 26. 72–4]: *non solum facundo, uerum etiam diuinarum scripturarum testimoniis copioso sermone respondit*.

<sup>22</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5 [SC 109: 26. 75–6]: *uerum etiam graeca lingua digestos in latinum uertit eloquium*.

This was a particularly fruitful criticism to make. Jerome and Basil were both self-taught monks.<sup>23</sup> Neither had ever served as a novice under the direction of an experienced master. This same criticism could be extended to Sulpicius Severus, whose ascetic training seems to have consisted of a handful of visits to Martin of Tours.<sup>24</sup> It is significant that Sulpicius, while professing deep admiration for Martin's monastery, never actually entered it himself. Like Basil and Jerome, he preferred the life of a leader, establishing his own foundation at Primuliacum.<sup>25</sup> None of these writers had undertaken a rigorous course of training under an experienced master. Lacking a proper ascetic education, what could they be expected to produce?

Even the term that Cassian used to praise the works of his competitors was backhanded at best; their works are labelled *opuscula*, 'little works, treatises, trifles'.<sup>26</sup> It would be possible to make too much of Cassian's selection of this word to describe the oeuvre of others. His choice is interesting and has a condescending tone about it but it certainly cannot carry the argument by itself. In fact, near the end of the preface, he referred to *De institutis* as an *opusculum*.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, it has been observed that Cassian freely engaged in self-deprecation in this preface. His use of the term *opusculum* to describe *De institutis* might be nothing more than the continuation of his *insinuatio*. This conjecture is borne out by an examination of the other places in his written works where he used the term. In the second preface of *Collationes*, he labelled *De institutis* and *Collationes* 1–10 as 'our former little work' (*praeteritis nostris opusculis*).<sup>28</sup> In this reference, Cassian expressed his hope that whatever was obscure in his former treatises might be explained in his second set of *Collationes*. A similar reference closes the second set of *Collationes*, where Cassian apologizes for the ineptitude of his writing, and hopes that those who find good in his *opuscula* will attribute the good to the excellence of the fathers rather than any

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 3 for Cassian's views concerning the self-taught abbot.

<sup>24</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 25; Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Absolute anathema to Cassian — see Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 3–5 and the earlier discussion in Chapter 2.

<sup>26</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5 [SC 109: 26. 69].

<sup>27</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 9 [SC 109: 30. 121].

<sup>28</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* Pref. 2. 2 [SC 54: 99. 13].

merit of his own.<sup>29</sup> Further on, Cassian felt obliged to repeat some material about Abba Pinufius since his former *opusculum* (*De institutis*) might be so obscure that many of his readers would not have heard of it.<sup>30</sup>

There does seem to be a close link between literary self-deprecation and Cassian's use of the term *opusculum*. Indeed, when he is not intent on running down his own reputation, Cassian uses words that are less derogatory to refer to *De institutis*.<sup>31</sup> This makes it likely that his use of *opusculum* in *De institutis* Pref. 9, is nothing more than *insinuat*io. Moreover, by repeatedly using the word in self-deprecatory contexts, Cassian signals that the word is to be understood in a negative sense. He is an inarticulate man and the reader should only expect an *opusculum* from his pen. But what force does the word convey when applied to those writers who are eloquent and noble like Jerome and Basil? The contrast between Basil and Jerome's *eloquentia* and the limited achievement implied by *opuscula* does seem intentional.

The merit of Cassian's work was not its uninformed *eloquentia*, but rather its honesty and fidelity to the truth. This judgement is substantiated by the statement that closes *De institutis* Pref. 6: Castor could expect to find truth in Cassian's work, rather than the charm of eloquence.<sup>32</sup> By implication, the works of his predecessors were long on eloquence, but, lacking experience, had fallen short of the mark. Cassian's competitors had employed literary artistry to paper over the gaps in their knowledge. Cassian would return to this rhetorical contrast between truth and eloquence in *Collationes*, where he had Abba Nesteros caution his listeners not to rush into teaching the ascetic life, inspired by the example of those who, through their eloquence, were able to persuade their readers that they had something worth offering.<sup>33</sup> Experience, not eloquence, brought substance to teaching.

<sup>29</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 17. 30 [SC 54: 284. 4].

<sup>30</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 20. 1. Similar uses of the term *opusculum* may be found in Cassian, *Incarn.* Pref. 2; 7. 31. 2 [CSEL 17: 236. 14; 389. 28].

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Cassian, *Coll.* 1 Pref., where he describes *De institutis* as his *prioribus libris*, his *uoluminum... duodecim libellis*, and *superioris operis*.

<sup>32</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 6 [SC 109: 28. 85–6]: *fidem potius mei sermonis quam uenustatem eloquii requirentes*.

<sup>33</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 14. 9. 7.

The idea that Cassian was making a subtle attack on his competitors, highlighting their use of eloquence to compensate for a lack of truthfulness and experience, is confirmed by a line in *De institutis* Pref. 7. As treatises suitable for monastic training, the works of his predecessors were tainted by a fatal flaw. Cassian's competitors had 'attempted to describe things that they heard rather than what they experienced'.<sup>34</sup> The contrast between Cassian's artless (but honest) prose and the eloquent but inexperienced work of Jerome and Basil is emphasized by Cassian's duplication of the *potius...quam* construction. In *De institutis* Pref. 6 he begs his readers to excuse his artless prose, hoping that they will demand faithful words rather than (*potius...quam*) the charm of eloquence.<sup>35</sup> In the next sentence, he criticizes his predecessors who had attempted to describe what they had heard rather than (*potius quam*) what they had experienced.<sup>36</sup> This parallelism links the two clauses, emphasizing the distinction between himself, the experienced monk, and those who lacked experience. He downplays the value of their works by noting that although what he will deliver lacks eloquence, it will prove a strong drink for 'those who are, in truth, thirsting'.<sup>37</sup> There would be no thirsty monks in Gaul if his predecessors had written useful guidelines. Since they have not (and how could they have, Cassian implies, as they have no direct experiential knowledge of these matters), Cassian the inarticulate would step into the breach and sate the thirst of his Gallic audience.

Furthermore, Cassian would make it a point not to concern himself with an 'account of the miracles and wonders of God'.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 7 [SC 109: 28. 91–2]: *utpote qui audita potius quam experta describere temptauerunt.*

<sup>35</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 6 [SC 109: 28. 85–6]: *fidem potius mei sermonis quam uenustatem eloquii requirentes.*

<sup>36</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 7 [SC 109: 28. 91–2]: *qui audita potius quam experta describere temptauerunt.* Cf. Gr. Nyss. V. *Macr.* 1. 17–20, who after claiming literary ineptitude, justified his right to tell his sister's story because he, unlike others, would not rely on hearsay about Macrina. Personal experience had been his teacher. For Gregory's presentation of Macrina, see Francine Cardman, 'Whose Life Is It? The *Vita Macrina* of Gregory of Nyssa,' *SPAT* 37 (2001), 36. For the argument that first-hand knowledge of a subject was the ideal for a classical historian: Gary Miles, *Livy: Reconstructing Early Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 9–10.

<sup>37</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 7 [SC 109: 28. 92–3]: *in ueritate sitientibus.*

<sup>38</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 7 [SC 109: 28. 93–4]: *Nec plane mirabilium Dei signorumque narrationem studebo contexere.*

This was not because Cassian had no knowledge of such things, he hurried to assure his readers, but rather because his predecessors, by displaying an inordinate interest in miraculous feats had failed to confine their narratives to those things that contributed to the spiritual formation of the monk.<sup>39</sup> Cassian did not plan to entertain his readers with tales of the supernatural, but proposed to offer a serious plan for spiritual growth. By implication, Cassian's predecessors had missed the mark by spending too much time on miracle stories. Once again this was the hallmark of inexperience, a sign of a writer who had nothing substantial to offer.

Cassian's discussion of his predecessors must be read with care; these lines should not be understood as a case of monastic humility, or awe at what Basil, Jerome, and others had already produced. In fact, when examined in the light of a long-standing rhetorical tradition, it becomes evident that Cassian was actually doing nothing more than employing standard literary conventions to cast doubt on the works of his predecessors. Cassian's claim to a lack of literary ability promises the unvarnished truth. His backhanded praise for the eloquence of his competitors suggested the insubstantiality of what they offered their readers. Beneath the rhetoric was a reworking of his claim to experience. Although Cassian characterized himself as an inarticulate old man who had forgotten much, his readers were not allowed to forget that he had received his training at the hands of the Desert Fathers. His work rested solidly on the bedrock of *experientia*. Eloquent words that lacked the foundation of *experientia* were without value. In Cassian's opinion, the works of his predecessors fell short because *they attempted to describe things that they heard about, rather than what they experienced*.

## 2 THE COMPETITION

Having noted Cassian's artful handling of the reputations of his predecessors in the preface of *De institutis*, I will now consider the rest of this work in order to see how Cassian dealt with his fellow ascetic writers. As the preceding discussion has suggested, Cassian

<sup>39</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 7.

preferred an elliptical attack on the work of his fellow writers to direct confrontation.<sup>40</sup> He does not challenge any of his competitors directly, but rather offered a programme of subtle correction. Much of what he writes could be misread as praise and approbation. For a modern reader, many years removed from fifth-century Gaul, the process of separating accolade from antagonism can be a difficult proposition.<sup>41</sup> His primary audience would have been more attuned to Cassian's allusions and in a better position to appreciate his rhetorical deftness. In this respect Cassian's method bears a strong resemblance to his predecessor Sulpicius Severus, whose *Dialogi* stand as a masterful exercise in mocking the views and persona of a well-known figure (Jerome) while appearing to praise him.<sup>42</sup>

It would be a mistake to confuse Cassian's subtle approach with approval. The modern reader must always try to locate Cassian's 'praise' in a larger historical context, sifting his words carefully to see if they ring true. An excellent illustration of Cassian's subtlety may be found in *Collationes* 10. This book, which concerns prayer, opens with a vignette on that 'foolish heresy', anthropomorphism.<sup>43</sup> Underlying Cassian's discussion was the controversy over the teachings of Origen, the heated debate that disrupted the church at the end of the fourth century.<sup>44</sup>

Cassian and his contemporary, Palladius, found themselves on the losing side of this squabble. Significantly, both writers continued to

<sup>40</sup> John McGuckin, 'Does Lactantius Denigrate Cyprian?' *JTS* n.s. 39 (1988), 119–24, notes a parallel situation in Lactantius' handling of Cyprian, namely damning Cyprian's copious output with faint praise and making denigrating allusions to those works that would have resonated with a late antique Christian audience.

<sup>41</sup> On the similar problem of reading Sidonius: Jill D. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407–485* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 11; for the idea that oblique attack and literary indirection were a commonplace in classical literature: David Ahl, 'The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome,' *American Journal of Philology* 105 (1984), 174–208.

<sup>42</sup> I have argued for this interpretation of *Dialogi* in Richard J. Goodrich, 'Vir maxime catholicus: Sulpicius Severus' Use and Abuse of Jerome in *Dialogi*,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (forthcoming).

<sup>43</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 10. 2: *contra ineptam quoque Anthropomorphitarum haeresim*. Cassian also denounces the claim that God has human limbs, features, or passions as a wicked thing in Cassian, *Inst.* 8. 3.

<sup>44</sup> See Peter Brown, 'The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy Between East and West,' in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 210; Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 11–42, offers an excellent overview of the controversy.

fight the Origenistic corner long after the principal battle had cooled. Palladius' *Lausiaca History* (*Historia Lausiaca*) was an extended treatment of Palladius' sojourn in Egypt which portrayed Origenism as the monastic norm.<sup>45</sup> Cassian, as has long been recognized, offered an ascetic system that rested squarely on the Origenistic formulation of his master, Evagrius.<sup>46</sup> Where the two men differed was in the subtlety with which they handled their subjects. Palladius did not seem capable of writing Bishop Theophilus' name without invective (Theophilus was 'like a dog that bites in secret';<sup>47</sup> he arrived in Constantinople 'like a beetle loaded with dung').<sup>48</sup>

Cassian, in the one instance he mentioned the bishop, handled Theophilus in an entirely different manner. In *Collationes* 10, he shaped Theophilus' role in the Anthropomorphic controversy so that the bishop became the leading exponent of the Origenistic cause. This was accomplished by relating only a portion of the story; in Cassian's version, the bishop sent a solemn festal letter to all the churches in Egypt, which not only countered the foolish heresy of anthropomorphism, but destroyed it with elegant arguments.<sup>49</sup> Theophilus carried the standard for Origen in this account. His enlightened views were opposed by the rustic and demon-possessed monks, but those who saw clearly supported their bishop and eventually (Cassian implies) prevailed over ignorance. Cassian neglected to mention that Theophilus had abruptly switched from being a supporter of Origen,

<sup>45</sup> Palladius wrote a version of history that featured (and portrayed as normative) prominent Origenistic monks. Among these monks were those persecuted by Theophilus and driven out of the desert. Cassian also will write in glowing terms about Origenistic monks. One example is the reference to the most Holy Isidore, priest of the community of Scetis before Paphnutius (Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 15. 3). The precise identification of this Isidore is uncertain (Palladius mentions three Isidores in the *Historia Lausiaca*), but he is probably to be identified with the 'great' Isidore, priest of Scetis mentioned in Pall. *V. Chrys.* 19. 9–11. Cassian shows some sympathy with Palladius' agenda by offering similar praise of the priest. This is also reflected in his offering the names of Moses, Paphnutius, and the two Macarii as examples of those who had achieved perfection in both coenobitic and anchoritic living (Cassian, *Coll.* 19. 9. 1).

<sup>46</sup> The work of Salvatore Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico: dottrina sulla carità e contemplazione* (Rome: Herde, 1935) offers the most complete exposition of this dependence.

<sup>47</sup> Pall. *V. Chrys.* 6 [SC 341: 134. 76–7]: καθάπερ λαθροδάκτης κύων.

<sup>48</sup> Pall. *V. Chrys.* 8 [SC 341: 158. 36–160. 38]: Οὕτως ὁ Θεόφιλος παραστάς, καθάπερ κάνθαρος πεφορτωμένος τῆς κόπρου.

<sup>49</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 10. 2. 2.



to one of his most passionate adversaries, eventually driving all of the pro-Origen monks out of the Egyptian desert.

Cassian's use of Theophilus works three ways here: those who knew what happened in the Egyptian desert and supported the Anthropomorphic campaign would be discomfited by a reminder of the bishop's volte-face; those who supported the Origenists would have been amused by the views Cassian attributed to Theophilus, and possibly greatly satisfied by the knowledge that Theophilus' scurrilous conduct was again under scrutiny; and those who knew nothing of the controversy might have been persuaded that anthropomorphism was a vile heresy of the uninformed — after all, that was the position of the noted bishop of Alexandria. Cassian's story concluded with the Origenist monks triumphing over the rustic Coptic monks, a resolution that does not square with other accounts of the event, but does serve to support a pro-Origen interpretation of the monastic life.

As this story suggests, Cassian's treatment of his opponents could be extraordinarily subtle. He was not above misrepresenting an adversary's view to strengthen his own argument. In the case of Theophilus, this certainly could not be attributed to ignorance, but rather represents a deft, highly selective portrayal of the event. It is a salutary reminder that caution and care need to be employed when reading Cassian's works.

The following question will serve as the basis for the rest of this chapter: what was Cassian's position on his fellow ascetic writers? As has already been noted, Cassian was aware that he was competing for the attention of Gallic ascetics. Having concluded an examination of how he played the card of *experientia* to strengthen his claim on authority, the following sections will consider how Cassian positions himself with respect to the other authors who would have been known to his Gallic audience.

## Jerome

One of the loudest voices promoting asceticism in the late fourth and early fifth centuries belonged to Hieronymus Stridonensis.<sup>50</sup> Jerome's

<sup>50</sup> For Jerome's connections to the ascetic brotherhood of southern Gaul, see E. D. Hunt, 'Gaul and the Holy Land in the Early Fifth Century,' in *Fifth-Century*

relentless self-promotion of himself as a master of the ascetic life created a body of work that endures to this day.<sup>51</sup> As has been noted by Steven Driver, Jerome had disseminated a version of asceticism centred on an heroic ascesis, a version that Cassian implicitly and subtly corrected.<sup>52</sup>

Cassian certainly had good reasons to despise Jerome on a personal level.<sup>53</sup> Jerome had been one of the more vocal supporters of Bishop Theophilus in his purge of Origenistic monks from Nitria, and the eventual deposition of John Chrysostom in Constantinople. The monks who had been Cassian's teachers in the desert were scorched

*Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* edited by John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 264–74. On Jerome's self-promotion and crafting of a literary persona, see Mark Vessey, 'Jerome's Origen: The Making of a Christian Literary Persona,' *Studia Patristica* 28 (1993), 135–45, who concludes that Jerome tried to portray himself as a new Origen in his correspondence, a venture that ran into shoal water when the Origenist controversy broke out. See also Stefan Rebenich, 'Asceticism, Orthodoxy, and Patronage: Jerome in Constantinople,' *SPAT* 33 (1997), 358–77, for an examination of the role of patronage in Jerome's success as an ascetic writer.

<sup>51</sup> There is something incredibly ironic (in view of the evidence I will offer in this section) about the use, on the dust jacket of the most recent English translation of Cassian's *Collationes* (Boniface Ramsey, *John Cassian: The Conferences* [New York: Newman Press, 1997]), of a picture of Jerome, entitled 'Saint Jerome in his Study' which was taken from an illustration in the Bible of Borso d'Este. One wonders what Cassian would think to see the image of his nemesis adorning his work.

<sup>52</sup> Steven Driver, 'From Palestinian Ignorance to Egyptian Wisdom: Jerome and Cassian on the Monastic Life,' *American Benedictine Review* 48 (1997), 308, contrasts Jerome's version of the heroic ascetic life with the more balanced description proposed by Cassian. One of the points that will be demonstrated in this section is that, contrary to Chadwick's claim that there is 'no extant evidence [that] shows Cassian's opinion of Jerome,' (Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950], 11), ample evidence for enmity toward Jerome can be found in *De Institutis*.

<sup>53</sup> And perhaps more personal than documented in the following text. The accepted biography of Cassian has him leaving his monastery in Bethlehem before Jerome arrived with Paula (after 386). Karl Suso Frank, 'John Cassian on John Cassian,' *SPAT* 33 (1997), 428–9, disputes the traditional view that Cassian did not know Jerome in Bethlehem and cites the usual reasons given ('that Cassian devotes friendly words to the later bitter enemy of Origen, that he fails to criticize Jerome, and above all was so little influenced by his writings') as unconvincing. Unfortunately, Frank offers no positive evidence for an earlier association between Jerome and Cassian, although the possibility that Cassian had known Jerome in Bethlehem and witnessed his version of asceticism first-hand is extremely interesting. Moreover, it would explain some of Cassian's contempt for the institutes of the Palestinians (see Chapter 4).

by Jerome's vitriol. In his *Epistle* 133 to Ctesiphon, Jerome described Cassian's teacher, Evagrius, and his companions (Ammonius, Eusebius, Euthymius, Evagrius, Or, and Isidore) as those who gave bitter wormwood to children in cups smeared with sweet honey.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Cassian's master, Evagrius, preached a doctrine of *apatheia*, which, according to Jerome, would lead to a monk's mind turning into a god or a rock.<sup>55</sup> Cassian may have been among those monks who were led from the Egyptian desert by the Four Tall Brothers,<sup>56</sup> and he was certainly on hand for the tragic aftermath which saw John Chrysostom driven from his bishopric in Constantinople. His strong identification with the anti-Theophilus party is cemented by his presence in the delegation sent to Rome to appeal for Innocent's support against the bishop of Alexandria.<sup>57</sup>

Cassian would indeed have to possess great charity if he did not feel some of the anger that drove his contemporary Palladius to defame Jerome. Nevertheless, it is instructive to compare Cassian's method with that of Palladius. Palladius attacked Jerome twice in the *Historia Lausiaca*. In one story, Jerome is said to be a great scholar, but his evil temper had eclipsed the good of his other gifts. His envy was so corrosive that no monk would live near him, and the monk Posidonius prophesied that Paula would die before Jerome so that she would be released from the burden of Jerome's temper.<sup>58</sup> At a later point in his work, Palladius returned to the subject of Paula and stated that while she was a distinguished lady, she had been held back from reaching her full spiritual potential by Jerome's jealousy.<sup>59</sup> Palladius disparaged Jerome by twice offering backhanded praise of his work, but then obviated this praise by suggesting that the man

<sup>54</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 133. 3. Evagrius was also listed in a chain of heresiarchs that led to Pelagius in the preface to Book 4 of Jerome's *Commentary on Jeremiah*.

<sup>55</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 133. 3.

<sup>56</sup> The traditional view locates Cassian among the party of monks led out of the desert by Ammonius the one-eared monk and his brothers (but see the caution advanced by Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 12). Chadwick suggests that Cassian's departure from Egypt was connected with the Anthropomorphite controversy, but doubts if Cassian travelled with the Four Tall Brothers (Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968], 36).

<sup>57</sup> Pall. *V. Chrys.* 3.

<sup>58</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 36. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 41. 2.

was so poisoned by envy and jealousy that he was a blight on the lives of all those around him. Jerome, for his part, was aware of Palladius' antipathy, and referred to him as a villainous slave.<sup>60</sup>

Cassian's attack on Jerome foreshadowed his later handling of Theophilus. His direct reference to Jerome in the preface to *De institutis* seems complimentary: Jerome is praised for his erudition, he has brought forth numerous works from his own *ingenium*, and has translated many Greek works into eloquent Latin.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, there is a great deal of ambiguity in this introduction. Although his name is linked to Basil (*sanctum Basilium et Hieronymum*),<sup>62</sup> it is not clear that the adjective 'saint' (*sanctum*) was meant to apply to both men. It could mean St Basil and Jerome, who was less than a saint. This studied ambiguity permeates Cassian's references to Jerome and we would do well not to take the praise he offers here literally. Even in these few lines, Cassian's genial veneer masks two potent attacks on Jerome.

The first attack is an allusion to one of Jerome's controversial works. Cassian noted that Jerome had written his books by lamplight (*elucubratos*), a claim that evokes the image of the Bethlehem scholar toiling over his desk through the night.<sup>63</sup> One of the most famous parallels to this statement can be found in Jerome's *Against Vigilantius* (*Contra Vigilantium*), a tract Jerome claimed to have dashed off in a single evening, working by lamplight (*lucubratio*).<sup>64</sup> Jerome drew the attention of his readers to his brisk productivity in order to suggest both the unworthiness of his opponent (Jerome did not want to waste more than a single night in replying to him), as well as to produce awe at his ability to produce a polished work in such a short time.

Cassian's reference has a satirical edge to it. It could be nothing more than a sly allusion intended to draw a chuckle from his readers, or it could be following Sulpicius Severus' suggestion that Jerome had a long history of meddling in Gallic affairs. Gaul had been the recipient

<sup>60</sup> Hier. *Pelag.* Prol. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5 [SC 109: 26. 75].

<sup>62</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5 [SC 109: 26. 70].

<sup>63</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5 [SC 109: 26. 74–5]: *uero non solum suo elucubratos ingenio edidit libros.*

<sup>64</sup> Hier. *Vigil.* 17 [PL 23: 368A]: *unius noctis lucubratione dictavi.*

of many Hieronymic assaults.<sup>65</sup> Jerome's derogatory remarks about Gallic bishops in *Contra Vigilantium* may have engendered hostility among Jerome's Gallic readers. Indeed, a Gallic view is expressed in Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi*, when Gallus states that, 'He [Jerome] is, in truth, only too well-known to us: for five years earlier, I read a certain book of that man, in which our entire nation of monks was vehemently harassed and cut to pieces by him.'<sup>66</sup> Later, in the same work, after Postumianus had recited a litany of the failings of the Gallic clergy, Gallus claimed that Postumianus had not left much more for Hieronymus to say in a future tract.<sup>67</sup> These examples suggest a certain level of resentment in Gaul over Jerome's self-appointed role as the conscience and corrector of the Gallic Church. It may not be too far-fetched to find Cassian playing on that resentment, reminding his readers of past attacks.<sup>68</sup>

The second attack is on the value of Jerome's experience. Cassian attributed Jerome's works to his own *ingenium*.<sup>69</sup> This, as discussed above, was not complimentary in the context of the contrast that Cassian had drawn between eloquence and experience. In fact, with that distinction in mind, Cassian seems to be hinting that Jerome made up his ascetic teaching. Jerome's ascetic works were the product of a fertile mind. Like a Gallic abbot, Jerome had fabricated his own idiosyncratic version of the ascetic life. Cassian casts a shadow of doubt over Jerome's work by suggesting that Jerome's inexperience made these works unreliable.

In retrospect, this was a very fruitful line. Despite a sustained literary attempt to promote himself as the east's leading authority on the monastic life, Jerome surely lacked the thing Cassian asserted

<sup>65</sup> For accounts of Jerome's influence on Gallic monasticism see Driver, *Palestinian Ignorance*, 298–309. Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 11–42, has documented the proliferation and dissemination of Jerome's anti-Origen works to a wide audience. Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 120–2, discusses Jerome's growing interest in Gaul.

<sup>66</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 8 [CSEL 1: 160. 3–6]: *Nobis uero, Gallus inquit, nimium nimiumque conpertus est. nam ante hoc quinquennium quendam illius libellum legi, in quo tota nostrorum natio monachorum ab eo uehementissime uexatur et carpitur.*

<sup>67</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 21.

<sup>68</sup> But see Goodrich, *Vir maxime*, for the view that these attacks were largely manufactured by Sulpicius for his own rhetorical purposes.

<sup>69</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5 [SC 109: 26. 75].

was essential for a monk: experience. Jerome's monastic 'training' in the Syrian desert consisted of no more than two or three years,<sup>70</sup> and it was a very strange form of asceticism at that.<sup>71</sup> Jerome's 'monastic cell' housed his library as well as copyists. He seemed to spend much of his time reading his books, requesting books from his acquaintances, or improving his language skills.<sup>72</sup> Letters flowed in and out of his cell, carried by his dutiful friend, Evagrius;<sup>73</sup> those correspondents who delayed or wrote brief responses to Jerome were soundly chastised.<sup>74</sup> Jerome's letters, although repeatedly trumpeting the fact that he had withdrawn from intercourse with the world, were designed to ensure that the world did not forget him. Jerome's vigour in letter writing and self-promotion found its antithesis in Cassian's story of a monk, who upon receiving a bundle of letters from family and friends, burned the letters fearing that news from the world would distract him from the cultivation of perfection.<sup>75</sup>

One is left with the impression that Jerome's monastic experiment was closer to a Syrian version of *otium* than an attempt to cut himself off from society in order to acquire monastic knowledge through intense study and sweat under the direction of an experienced teacher. After abandoning his Syrian 'cell', Jerome portrayed himself as an ascetic master, first among the Roman ladies, and later at the 'monastery' he founded in Bethlehem with Paula. Nevertheless, despite his fervent championing of the ascetic life, he showed no inclination to prolong the one contact he had with the Desert Fathers which occurred during the visit he made to Egypt with Paula. Nor did he seek training among them, although he grudgingly admitted that

<sup>70</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 48; J. H. D. Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus: A Commentary on Jerome, Letter 60* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 3, only allows Jerome 'a year or so' in the desert. See Rebenich, *Asceticism, Orthodoxy, Patronage*, 362–4, for the extremely likely view that Jerome's Syrian desert was tucked away on an estate owned by his patron, Evagrius, located approximately 30 miles from Antioch.

<sup>71</sup> Kelly, *Jerome*, 48: 'For all the reality and severity of his mortifications, his self-imposed seclusion must have had some highly unusual features.'

<sup>72</sup> Kelly, *Jerome*, 49–50. Kelly believes Jerome improved his Greek, possibly learned some Syriac, and began his study of Hebrew.

<sup>73</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 7. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 7. 2; Hier. *Ep.* 8. 1; Hier. *Ep.* 9.

<sup>75</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 32. 1–3. See Chapter 5 for an extended discussion of this passage.

Paula would have liked to remain.<sup>76</sup> It is quite possible that Cassian had Jerome in mind, when he has Abba Piamun speak against those men who come from Palestine to make tours of the Egyptian monasteries.<sup>77</sup> These ascetic sightseers had no interest in learning the monastic life, but came only to meet celebrated ascetics. Characterized by obstinate, stubborn minds, they refused to learn anything nor did they stay long in Egypt.<sup>78</sup> Naturally, this describes Jerome's visit perfectly, and significantly comes in a description of the three types of monks, which probably represents a correction of Jerome's version of the three categories of monks laid out in his *Epistle* 22.34 (see discussion below).

Whether or not Jerome is the target of *Collationes* 18.2, it is unlikely that Cassian would have been overawed by Jerome's training.<sup>79</sup> In stating that Jerome's works were the product of his *ingenium*, Cassian effectively highlighted the conspicuous void at the centre of Jerome's teaching. Jerome's ascetic writings flowed out of his own cleverness; they certainly were not the product of training under an experienced monk, the absolute prerequisite for one who would be qualified to speak or write on the subject.<sup>80</sup>

Cassian's approach to the problem of Jerome was to correct the errors that had cropped up because of Jerome's inexperience. Cassian never attacked Jerome directly (*contra* Palladius), but rather he undermined him before the same audience that Jerome had sought to capture with his tales of Egyptian asceticism. He relied on subtle

<sup>76</sup> A description of Paula's enthusiasm for Egyptian monasticism can be found in Hier. *Ep.* 108. 14. Likewise, his sourness (perhaps at being eclipsed in Paula's affections by the desert monks [Kelly, *Jerome*, 27]) comes through in his *Apologia ad Rufinum*, in which he justified his lack of enthusiasm for remaining among the Egyptians by claiming that Nitria had been awash with Origenistic vipers (Hier. *Ruf.* 3. 22).

<sup>77</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 2. 2. Cf. Driver, *Palestinian Ignorance*, 313.

<sup>78</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 2. 3.

<sup>79</sup> A precedent for an attack on Jerome's lack of training may be found in Ruf. *Apol.* 2. 12. Here Rufinus responded to Jerome's claim that unlike *some people* (which Rufinus interprets as an attack), Jerome had not been his own teacher. Rufinus states that to the contrary, he had actually spent six years learning from Didymus of Alexandria (as opposed to Jerome's thirty days), and then two more years with the Desert Fathers (Serapion, the two Macarii, Isidore, and Pambo), men whom Jerome did not even know by sight. The only teaching Jerome had received came from the Jews and Porphyry who taught Jerome to revile Christians.

<sup>80</sup> Driver, *Palestinian Ignorance*, 312.

allusion and implicit correction to promote his (accurate) version of asceticism over the version offered by Jerome. An example of this approach may be found in *De institutis* 1. 1. Here Cassian explicitly corrects the account of the origins of the monastic life that Jerome had offered in his *Life of Paul* (*Vita Pauli*). In this fable, written either while Jerome was still experimenting with the monastic life in Syria (c.375–6) or shortly thereafter in Antioch,<sup>81</sup> Paul was promoted as the originator of the eremitic life. Jerome wrote:

Many often wonder, who was the first monk to inhabit the desert? Certain people, looking back too far, suppose a beginning was made by the blessed Elijah and John. Of course we consider Elijah to have been more than a monk, and John began to prophesy before he was born.

Inter multos saepe dubitatum est a quo potissimum monachorum eremus habitari coepta sit. Quidam enim altius repetentes, a beato Elia et Joanne sumpsere principium; quorum et Elias plus nobis videtur fuisse, quam monachus: et Joannes ante prophetare coepisse quam natus sit.<sup>82</sup>

Jerome then declared that other people favoured Antony as the progenitor of the anchoritic life. These people were also mistaken, for as Jerome proposed to illustrate, it was his hero, Paul, who had inaugurated this lifestyle.

As Kelly noted, the *Vita Pauli* was one of Jerome's most popular works, translated shortly after its publication into six different Greek versions, as well as versions in Coptic, Syriac, and Ethiopic.<sup>83</sup> Its circulation in Gaul is attested by a reference to it in Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi*.<sup>84</sup> Evidence for Cassian's familiarity with the book may be adduced from two references to Jerome's hero in *Collationes*: Cassian noted that the system of coenobitism which had been established by the apostles endured right up to the time of Paul and Antony;<sup>85</sup> furthermore, Paul and Antony were given credit as the originators of the anchoritic life.<sup>86</sup>

In Jerome's account of the origins of monasticism, three answers are offered to the question, who was the first monk in the desert?

<sup>81</sup> Kelly, *Jerome*, 60.

<sup>82</sup> Hier. *Vit. Paul.* 1 [PL 23: 17A].

<sup>83</sup> Kelly, *Jerome*, 60.

<sup>84</sup> Sulpicius has Postumianus claim to have visited Paul's cell in the desert (Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 17).

<sup>85</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 5. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 6. 1.



Certain people (according to Jerome) considered Elijah and John to have been the first monks.<sup>87</sup> There is no indication who these certain people might be. This literary strawman is quickly demolished. Immediately after his claim that some people advocated this point of view, Jerome refuted it: they were obviously wrong because Elijah was more than a monk, as was John, who prophesied before his birth.<sup>88</sup> There is nothing to this argument in Jerome's opinion; he advances it only to discount it. Next, Jerome advanced the belief in common circulation at that time, that Antony was the first monk in the desert. This view had been put forward in the *Vita Antonii*.<sup>89</sup> It was a position that Jerome attempted to correct with his *Vita Pauli*.<sup>90</sup> In his version, it was Paul, not Antony who had been the first ascetic in the desert.

In *De institutis* 1. 1, Cassian counters Jerome's foundation myth. First he returns Elijah and John to the genealogy of Egyptian monasticism. Although he does not assert that Elijah was a monk, he does claim that the Prophet laid down the earliest beginnings of the monastic way of life, as the Scriptures made clear.<sup>91</sup> In describing Elijah's role, he uses *fundo*, a verb that expresses the idea of laying a foundation for a building or a keel for a ship. Elijah established the foundations of the monastic life, a base that supported the teaching of subsequent generations. Additionally, Elijah prefigured the monks. Where Jerome had dismissed Elijah and John as non-monastic, Cassian placed them at the root of the ancestral tree.

<sup>87</sup> And I am using Jerome's word, *monachus* here. He does not distinguish between the coenobite and the anchorite in his discussion.

<sup>88</sup> A reference to John leaping in Elizabeth's womb when the pregnant Mary came to visit her (Luke 1: 44).

<sup>89</sup> This document has been traditionally ascribed to Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, but see T. D. Barnes, 'Angel of Light or Mystic Initiate? The Problem of the *Life of Antony*,' *JTS* n.s. 37 (1986), 353–68, for the argument that the *Vita* was first composed by an unknown Coptic monk and later translated into Greek by an Alexandrian editor. For the purposes of this discussion, the authorship of the *Vita* is immaterial, although I am personally inclined toward the traditional view.

<sup>90</sup> Steven Driver, 'The Development of Jerome's Views on the Ascetic Life,' *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 62 (1995), 50. Jerome's motivation for writing the work is uncertain, although in part he may have wanted to achieve the same sort of reputation that Athanasius had earned by writing *Vita Antonii*. Jerome may have sought to bolster his own standing by proffering his own ascetic exemplar. See Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, 133, 135.

<sup>91</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 1. 2.

Secondly, Cassian disagreed with Jerome's claim that Paul was the original monk. According to his exposition in both *De institutis* and *Collationes*, the coenobitic life was the earliest form of monasticism. Originating with the apostles,<sup>92</sup> it endured until the time of Paul and Antony.<sup>93</sup> The coenobites, not Paul, were the first monks in the desert.

It is interesting to note that while Cassian pairs Antony with Paul, he does not endorse Jerome's creation.<sup>94</sup> An element of disbelief on Cassian's part is suggested by the way he justifies Paul's place in his account of the beginning of the anchoritic profession. In *Collationes*, writing about Paul, Cassian noted 'the former of whom (Paul) is said to have entered the desert out of necessity, while he was avoiding the plots of his neighbours during the time of persecution'.<sup>95</sup> Two things are striking about this statement. The first is that unlike Antony, whose place in monastic history required no substantiation, Cassian felt a need to expand his reference to Paul. Nor does he simply assert that Paul had entered the desert, but rather, he qualifies the statement with the passive form of *dico* (*dicatur*). The sense conveyed by Cassian's statement is not one of certainty: '*it is said* that Paul...' The claim for the priority of Paul has been advanced, but it certainly was not an unquestionable fact. Cassian's phrase raised the spectre of doubt — he does not endorse Jerome's myth of Paul.

The second point is the nature of his qualification. Antony, as Cassian's readers would have known, had turned his back on a modest inheritance.<sup>96</sup> He had taken up his cross and followed Christ out of his own volition. In Cassian's words, Antony and Paul 'entered the desert out of a desire for loftier progress and divine contemplation'.<sup>97</sup> However, having offered this accolade to Jerome's hero,

<sup>92</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 1; Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 5. 1–3.

<sup>93</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 5. 4.

<sup>94</sup> The question of whether Paul was a real person or a figment of Jerome's imagination was a real issue, as is suggested by Jerome's defence of the *Vita Pauli* in his second biography, concerning the life of Hilary (Hier. *Vit. Hil.* 1). Chadwick offers the following judicious conclusion: 'There appears to be no good reason for doubting that an early hermit named Paul existed. There appears to be every reason for supposing that Jerome knew nothing about him' (Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 5).

<sup>95</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 6 [SC 64: 17. 9–11]: *licet eorum prior necessitatis obtentu, dum tempore persecutionis adfinium sudrum deuitat insidias, heremum penetrasse dicatur.*

<sup>96</sup> Ath. *Vit. Anton.* 1–3.

<sup>97</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 6 [SC 64: 64. 17. 6–7]: *sed desiderio sublimioris profectus contemplationisque diuinae.*

Cassian immediately denatures it with an ‘although’ (*licet*). For unlike Antony, as Cassian points out, the former (Paul) was said to have fled persecution out of necessity. Antony sought perfection out of his own free choice, turning his back on a life of comfort. Paul was driven by circumstance into an ascetic life — he was hiding from persecution. Yet, in *De institutis* 4. 3, Cassian claimed that those who hoped to enter the coenobium were forced to remain outside its gates for ten days. While they waited, the brothers would pass by and heap derision upon them, claiming that they sought entrance into the monastery not out of religious conviction, but out of necessity.<sup>98</sup> One way to insult a monk was to claim that he had been forced to take refuge in a monastery because he had exhausted his secular options.

This sentiment resurfaces in a later story about Abba Pinufius. When Pinufius (in order to strengthen his great humility) entered a Pachomian monastery as a postulant, Cassian noted that the brothers heaped scorn upon him:

At last he was admitted with great contempt, because he was clearly a decrepit old man. Having lived all of his own life, he expected to enter the monastery now that he was no longer able to gratify his own pleasures. They said that he sought to enter the monastery not for any religious reason, but from the constriction of hunger and by the necessity of poverty.

Cumque multo despectu tandem fuisset admissus, quod scilicet decrepitu senex et qui omnem suam peruixisset aetatem ingredi coenobium postulare, quo tempore iam ne deservire quidem suis uoluptatibus praeualeret, ac ne hoc ipsum quidem causa religionis expetere eum adsererent, sed famis et inopiae necessitate constrictum.<sup>99</sup>

Cassian’s comment about Paul should be located in this context. Whereas the great ascetic heroes went willingly into the desert in order to seek God, Paul fled there to avoid death. He did not remain in the world to suffer persecution as so many martyrs had, but sought concealment out of necessity. This was an ignoble motivation for entering the ascetic life. It was a basis for insults and derision, not something to be praised. Significantly, it is this point that Cassian chooses to emphasize about Jerome’s monastic progenitor.

<sup>98</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 3. 1. Later Cassian amended this position (Cassian, *Coll.* 3. 4. 4–6) to suggest that a monk could advance to spiritual perfection even from an unpromising beginning like necessity.

<sup>99</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 30. 3 [SC 109: 166. 27–33].

Cassian also knew and countered one of Jerome's most widely read works, his *Epistula 22 ad Eustochium*. This letter, written in 384, was intended to offer direction in the ascetic life for Paula's daughter (and undoubtedly a much wider audience).<sup>100</sup> The letter offers, in the words of one commentator, 'a complete account of his opinions on asceticism at that stage of his life'.<sup>101</sup> This ascetic vision was circulated widely, as the letter's readership spread well beyond its addressee. Indeed, penetration of Jerome's remarks into Gaul is suggested by a reference to the letter in Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi*.<sup>102</sup>

A discussion of the practices and customs of the Egyptian monks lay at the heart of Jerome's letter.<sup>103</sup> Jerome offered his expert account of how the Egyptians conducted their lives, a singularly interesting discussion as, before 384, Jerome had never been to Egypt. Surely these chapters reflect a triumph of *ingenium* over *experientia*. Jerome poses as an experienced ascetic, passing on the wisdom of the desert, but at best he can only have received this information second-hand.

Cassian, on the other hand, was in a much better position to comment on the practices of the Egyptians. Consequently in *De institutis* 1–4 there are subtle emendations of Jerome's description of Egyptian praxis. This practice begins with Cassian's earliest chapters of Book 1, his description of the monastic garb.<sup>104</sup> In *De institutis* 1. 3

<sup>100</sup> See Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus*, 13–15 for a discussion of how Jerome wrote certain letters (and Scourfield cites *Ep. 22* among his examples) with an eye on a wider audience than simply the addressee. For the wide circulation of some of these letters: Catherine Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41–6.

<sup>101</sup> Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, 108.

<sup>102</sup> Gallic readers of the *Epistula* are said to have grown angry after reading Jerome's comments concerning the gluttony of the Gauls in Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi* (Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 8).

<sup>103</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 22. 33–7.

<sup>104</sup> The subject that Cassian treats in Book 1 of *De institutis*—the monastic garb—has always seemed an odd place to begin an exposition of the monastic life. Certain modern commentators have wondered whether Cassian really intended his audience to wear the garb he stipulates. Chadwick, for instance, noted that an able monastic legislator 'would not have confused his readers by these irrelevant details' (Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 1st ed., 60–1). Cassian's purpose in writing the chapters was 'because he delighted in allegorical interpretations'. To the contrary, the more fundamental issue here is that these chapters on dress allow Cassian to highlight his *experientia*. Cassian knows what monks wear because he has lived among them. This thought is suggested by the opening line of *De institutis* 1. 10: 'These things have been

Cassian offered a discussion of the monastic hood, the *cucullus*. Whereas his master Evagrius had emphasized the hood as a symbol of humility, Cassian chose to focus on it as a sign that the monk had returned to a state of infancy in Christ.<sup>105</sup> Cassian wrote:

For in fact, by day and night they use very small hoods which drop to the boundary of the neck and shoulder, which hide only their heads, so that they might be continually reminded to keep the innocence and simplicity of children through the imitation of their garment itself. Who, having reverted to an infancy of Christ, at all hours with feeling and virtue they sing: *Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor are my eyes lifted up.*

Cucullis namque perparuis usque ad ceruicis umerorumque demissis confinia, qui capita tantum contegant, indesinenter diebus utuntur ac noctibus, scilicet ut innocentiam et simplicitatem paruulorum iugiter custodire etiam imitatione ipsius uelaminis commoneantur. Qui reversi ad infantiam Christo cunctis horis cum affectu ac uirtute decantant: Domine, non est exaltatum cor meum, neque elati sunt oculi mei.<sup>106</sup>

Cassian's emphasis on the childlike nature of the Egyptians can be read as a deliberate refutation of the comments Jerome made in *Epistula* 22. Here, reviling the ascetic 'pretence' of certain Roman

written so that no one will think we have omitted anything from the dress of the Egyptians.' Cassian can treat the monastic garb in some detail because he is familiar with it, and this familiarity is made evident for his readers.

It could be argued that Cassian's decision to begin *De institutis* with clothing was merely an imitation of his master, Evagrius. Evagrius' *Epistula ad Anatolium* seems to have provided a schematic framework for the order of Cassian's presentation of clothing (Adalbert de Vogüé, 'Les sources des quatre premiers livres des Institutions de Jean Cassien. Introduction aux recherches sur les anciennes règles monastiques latines,' *Studia Monastica* 27 (1985), 381–403; Jean Claude Guy, *Jean Cassien: Institutions cénobitiques*, SC 109 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965], 36–55), and in later manuscripts was attached as a preface to Evagrius' *Praktikos* (John Bamberger, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* [Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981], 12 n. 1). This would not explain Cassian's decision to begin with dress, however. It is my view that in addition to the advantages of providing a display of *experientia*, Cassian has schematized his presentation of monastic life to proceed from the external (dress, prayer, rules for communal living) to the internal (the eight principal vices). Dress, the most external aspect of a monk, the visible sign of separation from the world, becomes the logical starting point.

<sup>105</sup> Contra Vogüé, *Les sources*, 390, I believe that Cassian made a deliberate choice not to follow Evagrius, and, rather, developed the theme of *infantiam Christi* in response to Jerome.

<sup>106</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 3 [SC 109: 42. 5–44. 12].

women, Jerome wrote, 'There are others who put on sackcloth and having fashioned hoods (*cucullis*), so that they might be carried back to their infancy, resemble night owls and horned owls.'<sup>107</sup> Jerome equated the wearing of the *cucullus* with childishness, and further derided it as a deplorable example of false asceticism.

Jerome's comments should not be considered a carefully deliberated position on the role of the *cucullus* in monastic dress.<sup>108</sup> Jerome simply targeted an obvious facet of the women's clothing and made a snide remark about it. Nevertheless, the wide dissemination of this letter ensured that his comment on the *cucullus* reached a large audience. Those who might have missed the original remark were granted a reprise when Rufinus quoted this passage as an illustration of the slanders Jerome had placed in *Epistula* 22.<sup>109</sup> In Rufinus' opinion, this notorious letter had given the enemies of Christianity ample ammunition for their attack. Indeed, 'all the pagans and enemies of God, apostates and persecutors, and whoever else hated the Christian name, were struggling with one another to copy it, because everywhere in that book (through his loathsome attacks) he defamed the class of Christians, every grade, every profession, as well as the entire church.'<sup>110</sup>

With Jerome's well-publicized comment in the background of a Gallic reader's mind, Cassian's comments on the *cucullus* take on a second level of meaning. Although Cassian had been following Evagrius' description of the spiritual significance of the monastic garb,<sup>111</sup> he deviated here in order to take issue with Jerome. Not only *do* the Egyptian monks wear the *cucullus*, but they wear it because they *want* to be reminded of the laudable simplicity and innocence of

<sup>107</sup> Hier. Ep. 22. 27 [CSEL 54: 184. 18–20]: *sunt, quae ciliciis uestiuntur et cucullis fabrefactis, ut ad infantiam redeant, imitantur noctuas et bubones.*

<sup>108</sup> He has nothing negative to say about the *cucullus* in his later works which mention it as an item of dress. Jerome's ascetic hero Hilarion wears a *cucullus* (Hier. Vit. Hil. 47), and it is mentioned as a component of the dress of the Pachomian monks (Hier. Reg. Pachom. Pref. 4; Hier. Reg. Pachom. 38).

<sup>109</sup> Ruf. Apol. 2. 5.

<sup>110</sup> Ruf. Apol. 2. 5 [CSEL 20: 20. 86. 2–7]: *omnes pagani et inimici Dei, apostatae persecutores et quicumque sunt, qui Christianum nomen odio habent, certatim sibi describebant, pro eo quod omnem ibi Christianorum ordinem, omnem gradum, omnem professionem, uniuersamque pariter foedissimis exprobrationibus infamauit Ecclesiam.*

<sup>111</sup> As found in Evagr. Pont. Ep. Anat. 1.

children. The state that Jerome condemns is the blessed infancy commended by Christ. The *reversi ad infantiam*, scorned by the ill-informed, was the goal of the true monk, the mark of their profession. Cassian's comments would suggest two things to his Gallic readers: first, that Jerome did not know much about Egyptian monastic dress; and second, that he did not understand the motivations and goals of the ascetic life. In other words, Jerome lacked *experientia*.

A similar sort of correction may be found in Cassian's description of monastic footwear:

Rejecting shoes as having been forbidden by evangelical precept, they protect their feet with sandals only when the weakness of their bodies or the morning cold of winter, or the burning heat of midday requires it, explaining that the use of them has been sanctioned by the Lord's permission, inasmuch as if we are not able in this world to be settled free from the care and solicitude for our flesh, nor are we strong enough to be thoroughly released from it, at least we may arrange for the needs of our bodies with as little preoccupation and as shallow an entanglement [with the world as possible], and we should not allow the feet of our soul, which ought always to be ready to set out on the spiritual race and to announce the peace of the Gospel—with which, *after the fragrance of the perfume of Christ we run*, and concerning which David said: *I have run in thirst*, and Jeremiah: *I have not worked following you*—to be entangled in the deadly cares of this world, meditating on those things, which do not pertain to the satisfaction of natural needs, but to superfluous and harmful pleasure. We will thus satisfy it if, following the Apostle, we have not taken care of the flesh with respect to its desires. Although they use these things lawfully, as sandals have been permitted by a mandate of the Lord, by no means do they permit them to stick to their feet when they approach to celebrate or to take the sacred mysteries, as they believe that ought to be kept following the letter, which was spoken to Moses or to Joshua, son of Nun: *Loosen the lace of your shoe: for the place upon which you stand is holy ground*.

Calciamenta uero uelut interdicta euangelico praecepto recusantes, cum infirmitas corporis uel matutinus hiemis rigor seu meridiani aestus feruor exegerit, tantummodo gallicis suos muniunt pedes, hoc interpretantes usu earum uel dominica permissione signari, ut, si in hoc mundo constituti cura et sollicitudine carnis huius omnimodis exuti esse non possumus nec ab ea penitus praeualemus absolui, saltim occupatione leui et inplicatione tenui necessitatem corporis explicemus, neue animae nostrae pedes, qui expediti ad spiritualement cursum et praedicandam euangelii pacem semper esse debent

parati—quibus *post odorem unguentorum* Christi currimus et de quibus David: *Cucurri, inquit, in siti*, et Hieremias: *Ego autem non laboravi te sequens*—morticinis saeculi huius curis patiamur inuolui, de his scilicet cogitantes, quae non ad supplendam necessitatem naturae, sed ad superfluum noxiamque pertinent uoluptatem. Quod ita inplebimus, si secundum Apostolum *carnis curam* non fecerimus *in desideriis*. Quibus tamen gallicis quamquam licito utantur utpote Domini mandato concessis, nequaquam tamen pedibus eas inhaerere permittunt, cum accedunt ad celebranda seu percipienda sacrosancta mysteria, illud aestimantes etiam secundum litteram custodiri debere quod dicitur ad Moysen uel ad Hiesum filium Nave: *Solue corrigiam calciamenti tui: locus enim in quo stas, terra sancta est.*<sup>112</sup>

In his *Epistula* 22, Jerome had supported a convoluted argument for the priority of virginity with the following lines:

Moses and Joshua were told to strip their feet bare before standing on holy ground. When the disciples were selected to preach the Gospel, they were not to be burdened with sandals (*calciamentorum*) or shoelaces; when the soldiers were casting lots for a share of Jesus' clothing, he did not have sandals (*caligas*) which they could carry away. For the Lord would not possess what he had forbidden to his servants.

quod Moyses et Iesus Naue nudis in sanctam terram pedibus iubentur incedere et discipuli sine calciamentorum onere et uinculis pellium ad praedicationem euangelii destinantur; quod milites uestimentis Iesu sorte diuisis caligas non habuere, quas tollerent. nec enim poterat habere dominus, quod prohibuerat in seruis.<sup>113</sup>

There are some obvious points of contact between Jerome's *Epistula* and Cassian's chapter on monastic footwear. Both offer interpretations of three passages from the Gospels, as well as the passage where Moses stands before the burning bush.<sup>114</sup> In the New Testament, a distinction is made between the sandals allowed in Mark 6:9 (the sandals that are tied on, *ὑποδεδεμένους σανδάλια*)<sup>115</sup> and the sandals (*ὑποδήματα*) forbidden in both Matt. 10:10 and Luke 10:4.<sup>116</sup> Jerome has missed the subtle distinction between the *calciamentum*

<sup>112</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 9. 1–2 [SC 109: 48. 1–50. 26].

<sup>113</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 22. 19 [CSEL 54: 170. 1–6].

<sup>114</sup> Exod. 3: 5.

<sup>115</sup> Translated as *calciates sandaliis* in the Vulgate.

<sup>116</sup> Translated as *calciamentia* in the Vulgate.



and the *caligas*. He also offers a fallacious argument from silence: since sandals were not listed among Christ's clothing, he must not have worn them.<sup>117</sup>

Cassian's discussion of monastic footwear is a correction of Jerome's flawed exegesis.<sup>118</sup> *Calciamentia* had been forbidden by evangelical precept,<sup>119</sup> but the sandals (*σανδάλια*), which he translated with the Latin term *caliga/gallicus*, were permitted by the mandate of the Lord.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, rather than being an argument for going about barefoot (as Jerome advocates), Moses and Joshua prove that sandals could be worn. This use is carefully qualified by the observation that like Moses, the monks always removed their sandals in the presence of the holy. Cassian's monks did not permit their sandals 'to stick to their feet' when approaching the numinous. By this practice, Cassian's Egyptians demonstrated a correct (as opposed to Jerome's flawed) understanding of the passage cited from Exodus. Moreover, Cassian not only highlights the fact that the most famous exegete of his day had offered a mistaken interpretation of a passage, but he also implies that Jerome did not know that the Egyptians wore *caligae/gallici*.<sup>121</sup>

Nor, apparently did Jerome know the correct names for the three types of monks found in Egypt. In *Epistula* 22 he listed them as the coenobites, anchorites, and those who were called the *Remnuoth*. This last category, an inferior and despised order, was the chief sort found in Jerome's home province. They lived in groups of two and three following their own made-up rules.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Although an equally valid counter-argument would have been John the Baptist's claim that he was not worthy to untie Christ's *calciamentia* (Matt. 3: 11; Luke 3: 16).

<sup>118</sup> For examples of Jerome doing much the same thing to Ambrose, see Neil Adkin, 'Jerome on Ambrose: The Preface of the Translation of Origen's Homily on Luke,' *RevBen* 37 (2001), 5–14.

<sup>119</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 9. 1 [SC 109: 48. 1–2]: *Calciamenta uero uelut interdicta euangelico praecepto recusantes*.

<sup>120</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 9. 2 [SC 109: 50. 20–1]: *Quibus tamen gallicis quamquam licito utantur utpote Domini mandato concessis*. In the critical edition (SC 109: 48), Guy prefers the variant *gallicis*, although, as he makes clear in the apparatus, three major manuscripts (including the ninth-century *Sessorianus* 66) have the reading *caligis*.

<sup>121</sup> There may also be a connection here to the Priscillianist heresy. The followers of Priscillian were said to have gone barefoot in the winter in a literal observance of Matt. 10: 10. Henry Chadwick, 'The Ascetic Ideal in the History of the Church,' in *Monks, Hermits, and the Ascetic Tradition*, edited by W. J. Sheils (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 15 n. 60 notes that the Council of Saragossa (380) condemned this behaviour. Augustine also wrote against it in Aug. *Haer.* 68.

<sup>122</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 22. 43.

According to Cassian, there were three types of monks in Egypt: the coenobites, anchorites, and those who are called in the Egyptian language, the Sarabaites.<sup>123</sup> The Sarabaites were by far the largest type of monks in the provinces outside of Egypt.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, they lived in groups of two and three, following their own rules.<sup>125</sup>

The verbal parallels between these two texts make it almost certain that Cassian is modifying Jerome's account. What is significant here is that he hints that Jerome does not know the correct name for the third type of monk. Moreover, Jerome's categorization of the types of monks is further emended by Cassian's note that in fact there is a fourth class of monk, the lukewarm monk who cannot endure the strictures of the coenobium.<sup>126</sup>

This programme of correction continued as Cassian moved beyond clothing and classification. Jerome had stated that the coenobites 'lived separately, in adjoining cells'.<sup>127</sup> The reality of the situation, according to Cassian, was that the monks lived either alone, or 'with at most one other, who will be united for fellowship in work or discipleship for the instruction of discipline, or certainly one who a similarity of virtues has made a companion, or again, [a companion who] celebrates with more eagerness the same duty of prayer as their own sacrifice'.<sup>128</sup>

Despite the fact that Jerome's coenobites lived alone, he stated that they did enjoy a daily period of pious fraternization. 'Until the hour of None, this is what has been established: no monk may visit another except for those deans of whom we spoke... after dinner they return to their cells and there they talk with one another until the hour of Vespers'.<sup>129</sup> This intercourse was anathema in Cassian's

<sup>123</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 4. 2; Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 7. 2.

<sup>124</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 7. 8. <sup>125</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 7. 4.

<sup>126</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 8. 1–2.

<sup>127</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 22. 35 [CSEL 54: 197. 20]: *manent separati, sed iunctis cellulis.*

<sup>128</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 12. 3 [SC 109: 80. 25–30]: *unusquisque ad suam recurrens cellulam quam aut solus aut cum alio tantum inhabitare permittitur, quem scilicet societas operationis uel discipulatus et disciplinae imbutio copulauit uel certe quem similitudo uirtutum conparem fecit, idem rursus orationum officium uelut peculiare sacrificium studiosius celebrant.*

<sup>129</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 22. 35 [CSEL 54: 197. 20–199. 4]: *Usque ad horam nonan quasi iustitiam est: nemo pergit ad alium exceptis his, quos decanos diximus... ibi usque ad uesperam cum suis unusquisque loquitur.*

formulation. The Egyptian coenobites absolutely did not enter into conversation with one another, no matter how pious the talk: when the psalms were finished and the monks had been released, they returned to their cells without speaking. Here they would remain unless they were called to assemble for some urgent duty.<sup>130</sup>

Even extraordinary work was performed in absolute silence, 'each man repeating from memory a psalm or a certain scripture, [so that] he might not share any opportunity or time for guilty conspiracies or depraved purposes, not even for idle discussions, as the service of the heart and mouth are equally occupied in unending spiritual meditation'.<sup>131</sup> Failure to maintain this silence or to solicit the company of other monks resulted in a stern punishment, the suspension from prayer.<sup>132</sup> Jerome's monks may have been allowed to gather together for gossip, but among the true Egyptian monks, this sort of discourse was banned.

These examples suggest that Cassian was aware of Jerome's more famous ascetic works, and though he never explicitly singles them out for contradiction, *De institutis* features a pattern of implicit correction of Jerome's views.<sup>133</sup> Jerome had promoted himself as an authority on Egyptian practices; Cassian challenged that authority. Jerome composed works out of his own *ingenium*, writing about what he had heard rather than experienced. Cassian's corrections noted above suggest an attempt to discredit the 'great' ascetic authority. Cassian contrasts his *experientia* with Jerome's *ingenium* and implicitly asks his readers whom they will trust.

<sup>130</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 15. 1 [SC 109: 84. 1–7].

<sup>131</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 15 [SC 109: 84. 8–13]: *sed sic unusquisque opus exsequitur iniunctum, ut psalmum uel scripturam quamlibet memoriter recensendo non solum conspirationi noxiae uel consiliis prauis, sed nec otiosis quidem conloquiis ullam copiam uel tempus impertiat, oris pariter et cordis officio in meditatione spiritali iugiter occupato.*

<sup>132</sup> Outlined in Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 15–16.

<sup>133</sup> Another possible point of contact might be found in Jerome's letter to a young Gallic ascetic named Rusticus (Hier. *Ep.* 125). In this letter Jerome advocated moderate fasts, but justified them by stating that the reason was physical — fasts carried to excess weakened the stomach and promoted indigestion. Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 9 stated that harsh fasts often led to compensating gluttonous excesses, which undermined the practice. Jerome also wrote that it was permissible for Rusticus to see his mother (Hier. *Ep.* 125. 7). Cassian, to the contrary, would forbid this act, requiring a monk to sever all ties to his family, a point that is explored further in Chapter 5.

## Pachomius

Another source of competition for Cassian in the west was the collection of rules attributed to the Egyptian monk Pachomius. This legislation was the fullest expression of a plan for coenobitic organization to be found in its day. By the death of its founder (c.346), the Pachomian federation contained nine monasteries for men, two for women, and may have ordered the lives of as many as 5,000 monks.<sup>134</sup> It was the most successful coenobitic system of its time, and it is not surprising that Pachomius is often labelled the father of coenobitism.<sup>135</sup>

The *Regula Pachomii* reached the west through the good offices of Jerome. He translated the rules into Latin from a Greek version in 404.<sup>136</sup> Jerome stated that he had been asked to make the Latin translation on behalf of some brothers in the Pachomian monastery of Metanoia who were unable to read Greek.<sup>137</sup> The provenance of Jerome's Greek manuscripts is disputed, and some modern scholars question whether they represent original Pachomian teachings.<sup>138</sup> In

<sup>134</sup> Palladius claimed that there were 7,000 monks in the Pachomian federation (Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 32. 8). The anonymous author of the *Historia monachorum* claims 3,000 monks for Ammon's foundation in the Thebaid (*Hist. mon.* 3. 1). Cassian asserted that the federation contained 5,000 monks (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 1).

<sup>135</sup> Although, as Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 55, notes (quite rightly) Pachomius was not the *inventor* of coenobitism, as other coenobitic communities were present in the east during his lifetime. Nor, as Rousseau notes, should we take claims in Pachomian literature that Pachomius had created something that was unknown when Antony went to the desert too seriously, as these declarations were certainly untrue (Philip Rousseau, 'Orthodoxy and the Coenobite,' *Studia Patristica* 30 [1997], 242). J. C. O'Neill, 'The Origins of Monasticism,' in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, edited by Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 273–4, provides a list of references in Pachomian legislation that refer to other monks, which he believes points to parallel coenobitic organizations.

<sup>136</sup> Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia II: Pachomian Chronicles and Rules* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 9; Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 48.

<sup>137</sup> Hier. *Reg. Pachom.* Pref. 1. Jerome may be relating an accurate account of his reasons for translating these rules, although it should be noted that Rufinus had recently finished translating the *Regula Basili* (c.397), and there is always the possibility that the ever-competitive Jerome might have been countering Rufinus' work with his own entry.

<sup>138</sup> See Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 38, 49, who is dubious about the prospect of separating the original Pachomian rules from the accretions built up in the fifty-eight years between Pachomius' death and Jerome's translation.

addition to Jerome's translation of the Rule, it is possible that another rule based on Pachomius' legislation, the *Regula Orientalis*, may have been available in Gaul during the early part of the fifth century.<sup>139</sup>

In *De institutis* 4. 1, Cassian made a point of telling his readers that some of the rules he was going to offer for the organization of the coenobia would be drawn from the rules used to guide the Pachomian monasteries. The Pachomian monastery in the Thebaid was:

the largest of all, just as the rigour of its rules is the strictest of all, since in it, more than 5,000 of the brothers are ruled by one abbot, and so great is their obedience, that all of the number of monks are constantly subject to their elder, [rendering] an obedience that no one among us is able to offer to one, or to obey for even a short time, or to order [from others].

quorum Thebaide est coenobium, quantum numero populosius cunctis, tanto conuersationis rigore districtius, siquidem in eo plus quam quinque milia fratrum ab uno regantur abbate tantaque sit oboedientia hic tam prolixus numerus monachorum omni aevo seniori suo subditus, quanta non potest apud nos unus uni uel oboedire pro modico tempore uel praeesse.<sup>140</sup>

Cassian's claim to knowledge about the Pachomian monks raises some interesting questions. Chief among these is the issue of what contact he actually had with Pachomian foundations.<sup>141</sup> The resolution of this question is not germane to this study, whose interest is not how much Cassian did or did not know about Pachomius, but rather, how he positions his *instituta* with respect to the Pachomian legislation that was available to his Gallic audience. The important point, regardless of whether Cassian actually drew his account of

<sup>139</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 56.

<sup>140</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 1 [SC 109: 122. 8–15].

<sup>141</sup> For the most recent negative appraisal of Cassian's first-hand experience of Egyptian monasticism, see Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 74, who suggests that Cassian's knowledge of Pachomian (and indeed all eastern communal) monasticism may have been gained by 'cobbling together information from a variety of written sources which could be read in the west and which he probably used when founding his own communities in southern Gaul'. This opinion would certainly be in step with the view offered by Frank, *John Cassian*, 431, who sees Cassian as being a visitor to the Egyptian desert rather than a long-term resident there. In my view, Cassian's deep and intimate knowledge of the theoretical aspects of asceticism could hardly have been drawn from the works available to him; this knowledge requires an extended sojourn in the east.

Pachomian legislation from Jerome's translation, is the fact that Cassian claimed to know the rules which guided the Pachomian monks. Once again he emphasizes his *experientia*, suggesting that unlike other western ascetic advisors, he was well-acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of the Pachomian rules.

Cassian characterized Pachomian monasticism as a system of unremitting severity. This point is first made in *De institutis* 4. 1, where he noted that the Pachomian system was so difficult that 'no one among us (the Gauls)' would be able to aspire to that standard.<sup>142</sup> Cassian restated this point in *De institutis* 4. 2 and 4. 11.<sup>143</sup> Once again Cassian gives with one hand while taking away with the other; as he praises the ascetic rigour of the Pachomian monks, he repeatedly declares that the system is unsuitable for a Gallic audience. Cassian's message concerning the *Regula Pachomii* is unambivalent: it will not work in Gaul — do not use it.

When Cassian began to discuss the *instituta* of the Tabennesiotes, he drew a distinction between the Pachomian monks and the Egyptian monks who had been the source for his work up to the beginning of *De institutis* 4. In the material that was to follow, wrote Cassian, certain rules of the Egyptians were to be mixed with rules from the Pachomians.<sup>144</sup> Why does Cassian distinguish between the Desert Fathers and Pachomius' followers? Were not the Pachomian monks also Egyptians?

Cassian suggested that the Pachomian system was unsuitable for the Gallic monks, while the *instituta Aegyptiorum* (as mediated by Cassian) was the orthodox formulation that the Gauls should follow. The versions of the *Regula Pachomii* extant in Gaul should be ignored, while Cassian's *instituta Aegyptiorum* deserved complete allegiance. Secondly, there was the question of the nature of the monks produced by each system. Although Cassian does praise the humility and perseverance of the Pachomians,<sup>145</sup> a later story seems to relativize these accomplishments when compared to the example of a true

<sup>142</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 1; see preceding quotation for Latin text.

<sup>143</sup> The Pachomian system was so demanding that he could not recall anyone from our (presumably Gallic) monasteries, keeping the discipline for a full year (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 2); the monks of Gaul would not be able to endure eating Pachomian fare (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 11).

<sup>144</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 1.

<sup>145</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 2.

Egyptian Abba. This emerges in *De institutis* 4. 30, where Cassian tells the story of Abba Pinufius' great humility.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Pinufius, the famous Egyptian abbot, spent three years as a despised old man in a Pachomian monastery in order to cultivate humility. His sojourn there came to end when one of the monks from his old monastery visited and recognized the Abba. He threw himself at Pinufius' feet, an act that the Pachomians did not understand because Pinufius was a novice who had only recently come out of the world. After they were told his name, however, they begged forgiveness for their earlier ignorance, for they had considered him to be no better than a child.<sup>146</sup>

Cassian's point was not very subtle. The Pachomians did not compare with Abba Pinufius, a true Egyptian Abba. He exceeded them in humility, enduring three years of ill-treatment, assigned to duties that they felt were beneath them. He was also capable of greater effort than the Pachomians; he rose in the night to perform additional work in secret, he rejoiced at taking on the tasks that the Pachomian monks thought were beneath them. And finally, for all their rigour, not a single monk among them possessed enough spiritual discernment to see that Pinufius was more than a wicked old man fleeing the world.<sup>147</sup> This last point is strengthened by the

<sup>146</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 30. 6.

<sup>147</sup> Cassian liked this story so much that he told it again in Cassian, *Coll.* 20. 1. 2–5 (although see Chadwick's warning that the story may have been copied from *De institutis* into *Collationes* by a later editor (Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 48–9). This story is very similar to the one Palladius recounted about Abba Macarius, who hearing rumours about the superior Pachomian way of life, went to Pachomius' foundation at Tabennesi to test them. After convincing Pachomius to let him in, Macarius began his asceticism, fasting for 40 days in a corner, until the other monks begged Pachomius to drive Macarius out because they were jealous of his abilities. Macarius' identity was revealed to Pachomius, who then thanked the Abba for coming and chastising his followers so that they would not be arrogant, then sent him on his way (Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 18. 12–16). Both stories play on the theme of the superiority of an Egyptian Abba over the Pachomian monks. But as was noted in my earlier discussion of the treatment of Bishop Theophilus, Palladius and Cassian differ in degrees of subtlety. Palladius' point is obvious to all readers: the Pachomian monks cannot endure the asceticism of a Desert Father. Cassian makes the same point in a more understated manner: the Pachomian monks were stupefied when it was revealed that the man they had treated so poorly for so long was a famous Desert Father. It was Pinufius' humility, not his asceticism that proved the marvel. Palladius emphasizes the external, while Cassian promotes an inner, deeper virtue.

story which followed in the next chapter: Pinufius fled again and went to Bethlehem where he met Cassian and Germanus. Both of these young monks recognized his great qualities, and sought him when they travelled to Egypt.<sup>148</sup> Cassian and Germanus quickly discerned the superior qualities that had gone unnoticed in the Pachomian monastery after three years of close association.

Cassian's presentation of the Pachomian system emphasized its unsuitability for Gallic monks, and implies that it is unlikely to produce the same quality of monk as the Egyptian system. For all its commendable rigour, it still fell short of the *instituta Aegyptiorum*.

### Basil and Rufinus

The relationship between Cassian and Basil (as mediated by Rufinus) is not as straightforward as Cassian's relationship with Jerome.<sup>149</sup> In 397, after his return to Italy, Rufinus had translated an early version of Basil's Greek *Asceticon* into Latin, the *Rule of Basil* (*Regula Basili*). The purpose of this work, was to provide an account of Basil's *instituta* for western monks, who lacked definitive legislation to guide their lives.<sup>150</sup> Cassian's familiarity with this work can be deduced from the verbal parallels between the two works,<sup>151</sup> Cassian's appropriation of Basil's ideas and biblical proof texts, and Cassian's allusion to Basil's work.<sup>152</sup> Judging by the extent of his borrowings, Cassian certainly would seem to approve of Basil's legislation. In addition to this, Cassian must have had more sympathy for Rufinus than he did for Jerome; moreover, Basil had been an important, influential bishop, whose work offers a profound insight into the ascetic life.

But this does raise an obvious problem. If Cassian approved of Basil's monastic legislation, why would he write his own version? Why not

<sup>148</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 31–2.

<sup>149</sup> On Basil, see Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Rufinus is not as well served, but a lucid and useful account of his later life may be found in C. P. Hammond, 'The Last Ten Years of Rufinus' Life and the Date of his Move South from Aquileia,' *JTS* 28 (1977), 372–429.

<sup>150</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 11. A translation of this preface may be found in Chapter 4, which considers the similarities between Cassian and Rufinus in their use of the term *instituta*.

<sup>151</sup> Vogüé, *Les sources*, 378, 380.

<sup>152</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5.



simply direct Castor to Rufinus' extant translation? One possible explanation is that Cassian did not wholeheartedly approve of Rufinus' *Regula Basili*. Cassian seems to have felt that his ascetic work was not an appropriate basis for the ascetic life. Of course this idea must be held in tension with the observation that had Cassian simply responded to Castor by telling him to use the *Regula Basili* for his monks, he would have had no reason to write *De institutis* and place his own stamp on Gallic asceticism. Cassian could only promote his own unique status as a monastic legislator by implying that there is something wrong with the works of his contemporaries. Implicit in his failure to endorse Basil's *Regula* is the suggestion that the work falls short as a basis for monastic life. It is not as evident as it was in the case of Jerome and Pachomius, however, why Cassian might have taken exception to Basil's work.

Cassian groups Basil and Jerome together as eloquent writers. As noted above, this was not intended to be complimentary. These eloquent writers lacked experience; they had written about what they had heard rather than what they had experienced. This objection holds true in Basil's case. Like Jerome, Basil had not undertaken any significant period of monastic training. After his education in Athens, Basil had followed his hero Eustathius of Sebaste to Egypt. What he found in Egypt evidently did not appeal to his sensibilities, for after a short sojourn, he returned to his family estates at Annisi in order to withdraw from the secular world. Rousseau has quite rightly described this experiment as closer to the philosopher's ideal of *otium* than the asceticism of Egypt.<sup>153</sup>

The brief sojourn in Egypt, his contact with Eustathius of Sebaste, and the retreat at Annisi were Basil's principal monastic qualifications. It would not be surprising if Cassian, who had stressed the need for a long discipleship under the guidance of an experienced master, was dubious about these credentials. Basil was, like Jerome, a self-educated ascetic, an entity that Cassian strongly opposed.

There are two other direct references to Basil in *De institutis*. In both instances the Bishop is quoted to support Cassian's arguments.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 70–6.

<sup>154</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 6. 19, quoting Basil as having said that he never knew a woman, yet was not a virgin; and Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 19, where Cassian quotes a saying of Basil in which Basil allegedly chastises a senator for not making a complete renunciation of his wealth. Neither of these quotes are found in any of Basil's extant works.

Neither of these points reflect unfavourably on Basil. There is, however, a reference to the Cappadocian monks in *De institutis* 4. 17 that could be construed as criticism. This occurs in Cassian's discussion of the monastic practice of listening in silence to spiritual reading while eating. The custom, according to Cassian, originated with the Cappadocian monks, not the Egyptians. The practice had been established because the Cappadocian monks were unable to resist chattering and starting arguments while they ate together. In fact, an enforced silence was the only way they had to keep squabbles from erupting over the dinner table.

It goes without saying, noted Cassian, that among the Egyptians, and especially the Pachomian monks, there was no need for this custom, for no one would think to break the holy silence that enfolds even the largest company of monks.<sup>155</sup> The fractious and spiritually immature Cappadocian monks were unfavourably contrasted with the Egyptians who did not even notice what (or how much) their companions were eating. Cassian does not specify the source of the contention among the Cappadocians, but the sentences that close this chapter (commenting on how the Egyptians pay no attention to what their companions eat) suggest that the Cappadocians may have been bickering about food. Cassian's claim that these arguments could only be ended by a ban on speech places the Cappadocians in an unflattering light, especially when immediately contrasted with the loftier standard of the Egyptian monks.

Ultimately, the most important difference between Cassian and Basil might have been their conceptions of the role of the ascetic in the church and world. It is important to note, as Rousseau has argued, that Basil's ascetic works may not have originally been intended for monks.<sup>156</sup> Basil's ascetic works cannot, Rousseau writes, 'be taken as symptomatic of some ordered and completed monastic system, presided over by the bishop himself'.<sup>157</sup> To the contrary, the *Regula Basilii* seems to have been composed with the entire church in mind. The rule was part exhortation and part guide to a more serious life, reflecting Basil's thought that all Christians were called to an ascetic life. This sense of a universal call was opposed to the formation of an

<sup>155</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 17.

<sup>156</sup> Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 190–201.

<sup>157</sup> Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 192.

elite group that would divide the church into a threefold caste system: clerics, ascetics, and worldly people (κοσμικοί).<sup>158</sup>

The *Regula Basili*, according to Rousseau, although certainly featuring elements of an institutional structure, was in fact intended to lay a framework for all Christians.<sup>159</sup> A hint of this can be found in the Greek preface to Basil's rule, which set the scene for the ensuing discussion. This preface describes a gathering of people who sought the same end as Basil himself, the 'life of piety'. This group had come together with the Bishop in a quiet place in order to solicit his answers to their questions concerning Christian living. The *Rule* takes the ancient form of a question and answer session.<sup>160</sup> Running through the work is an emphasis on how the Christian (Χριστιανός) rather than the monk ought to live.<sup>161</sup>

Rousseau notes that this work had taken on a 'specifically monastic, indeed [an] elitist interpretation' by the time of Rufinus. In the preface to his translation, Rufinus claimed that Basil had written the *Regula Basili* in response to questions asked by his 'monks'.<sup>162</sup> Rufinus had translated Basil's work for a Latin audience so that order might be brought to the monastic experiments of the west.<sup>163</sup> In Rufinus'

<sup>158</sup> In trying to find terms to describe the different types of Christian one might meet in the late antique world, I have chosen to use the word κοσμικός as a label for someone who would have considered themselves a Christian, but was not a full-time ascetic or cleric. Naturally there is a significant danger of oversimplifying a complicated situation by the selection of this term. It was, however, a term used by the Desert Fathers to describe a person who was a 'lay' Christian (*Apophth. Patr.* Arsenius 4; Macarius the Great 1; Pambo 7), and was understood to be different from the term used to describe those of the world who were non-believers (ἐλλήν). See *Apophth. Patr.* Epiphanius 1; *Apophth. Patr.* Macarius the Great 13; Psenithaisius I). Brown has argued that the distinction between κοσμικός and μοναχός lay primarily in the 'virgin body of the monk' (Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1988], 243). Sexuality served to distinguish the full-time ascetic from the married Christian who undertook ascetic practices such as fasting and abstinence during certain times of the liturgical year (Brown, *Body and Society*, 245).

<sup>159</sup> Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 199.

<sup>160</sup> The *Regula Basili* is posed as a series of questions and answers. In this, it bears a much stronger resemblance to the *Apophthegmata patrum* than a formal monastic rule (Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 354).

<sup>161</sup> Indeed, neither the word μοναχός, nor any of its synonyms appear in the *Regula Basili*.

<sup>162</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 6.

<sup>163</sup> A short discussion of Rufinus' goals in translating this work, and the parallels with Cassian's aims may be found in Chapter 4.

opinion, the *Regula Basili* was the best extant rule for monastic living available for a western audience. By adopting it as their own, the western monks could follow the example of the Cappadocians.<sup>164</sup> Rufinus narrowed the original scope of Basil's vision, using the *Regula Basili* to draw a line between the worldly person (κοσμικός) and the monk.<sup>165</sup>

Rousseau's view, that Basil emphasized an undivided Christian body, is borne out admirably in Basil's two chapters on clothing, a discussion which emerges in response to the question: What clothing is suitable for a Christian?<sup>166</sup> According to Basil, it is the vain who strive to have rich, beautiful clothing. Why should the Christian, who has chosen the path of humility and abasement, pursue the trappings of vanity? Who should be a role model for the Χριστιανός, asks Basil? Those who live in kings' houses and wear soft clothing, or the man who announced the Lord's advent (John the Baptist)? Paul supplied an answer to this question: 'Having food and covering, let us be content.'<sup>167</sup> Moreover, since God clothed Adam to ward off the shame of his nudity, anything more than simple covering was to be rejected.

Basil then offered a rule of dress suitable for all Christians, one aimed at a uniform standard that would serve to identify the Christian in the secular world, forcing that person to maintain a higher standard of conduct than if his dress blended in with the non-Christians. Basil notes that no one would take much notice of a plebeian 'giving or receiving blows in public, uttering indecent words, or sitting in taverns',<sup>168</sup> but a marked Christian would be chastised for such behaviour by all observers (Christian and non-Christian). The adoption of a universal Christian garb would force the weaker brethren, even against their desires, to maintain decorum.

<sup>164</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 11.

<sup>165</sup> On the other hand, Rufinus does follow Basil by avoiding the term *monachus* in the body of the rule. The word occurs twice in his preface, but not in his translation. Despite asserting that this work was a monastic rule, Rufinus preserved Basil's term *Christianus*.

<sup>166</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* 11.

<sup>167</sup> 1 Tim. 6: 8: ἔχοντες δὲ διατροφάς καὶ σκεπάσματα, τούτοις ἀκρεσθσόμεθα.

<sup>168</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* 11. 23 [CSEL 86: 86. 55]: aut vapulantem publice vel turpiter proclamantem aut in taberniis aliisque.

This brief exegesis of Basil's chapter on dress suggests the validity of Rousseau's observations about the overall character of the *Regula Basilii*. Basil was advocating a style of dress for all who professed to follow Christ. Of course, in retrospect, Basil was fighting a rearguard action. The sun had long been up on the monastic movement by the time Basil wrote, and the division of the body of Christ into κοσμικός and *monachus* was a foregone conclusion. Indeed, Basil seemed to surrender to the inevitable near the end of his life.<sup>169</sup>

The opening sentences of Cassian's *De institutis* 1. 1 — his book on monastic dress — reflect this new reality. Although borrowing many ideas from Basil, Cassian used clothing to erect a barrier between the monk and the world. While Basil eschewed the use of the word monk (μοναχός), Cassian signalled the specificity of his interest by stating his intention to focus 'on the habit itself of the monks'.<sup>170</sup> Whereas Basil drew the line between *Christianus* and non-Christian, Cassian placed it between *monachus* and non-monk. *De institutis* presupposes a spiritual elite, a group separated from the world on the other side of the wall.

That Cassian differentiated between the monk and the κοσμικός is best illustrated by considering the tripartite division of souls he offered in *Collationes*.<sup>171</sup> Humanity, according to Cassian was arrayed into three major divisions, the *animalis*, the *carnalis*, and the *spiritualis*. The *animalis* was a person who was utterly insensate to the things of God. He was, citing Paul, 'unable to receive the spiritual gifts of God because they are foolishness to him; they are discerned spiritually'.<sup>172</sup> These souls, according to Cassian, were hopelessly lost. Time spent ministering to them was the equivalent of planting seed in soil that is barren, unfruitful, and choked with noxious thorns.<sup>173</sup> No amount of effort will alter their fate.

The *carnalis* were the second category of souls. These are the immature Christians, those whose attachment to the things of the world prevent them from moving to the next higher level. They

<sup>169</sup> Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 205.

<sup>170</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 1. 1 [SC 109: 34. 2–3]: *ex ipso habitu monachorum*.

<sup>171</sup> The following exposition is based on Cassian, *Coll.* 4. 19. 1–7.

<sup>172</sup> 1 Cor. 2: 14 [UBS 4: 572]: οὐδέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ· μωρία γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ δύναται γῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται.

<sup>173</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 4. 19. 7.

are like the members of the Corinthian Church, who, unready for spiritual meat, still require the milk fed to infants.<sup>174</sup> Sheltering under the umbrella of the *carnalis* are the *saecularis*, Cassian's equivalent of *κοσμικός*, the *gentilis*, and the *paganus*. Although he makes a distinction between the *saecularis*, the *gentilis*, and the *paganus*, Cassian does offer hope that all three of these groups may move up to the next level. On the other hand, the *saecularis* and his concern with the things of the world is represented as being a distinct step down from the *monachus* in Cassian's thought.<sup>175</sup>

The final category of soul was the *spiritalis*. In one sense this is more of a goal than a category. The renunciation (*renuntiatio*) of the world was the first step, one which lifted a soul out of the realm of the *carnalis*. The *spiritalis* is characterized by an ever-ascending climb toward the height of perfection (*summam perfectionis*).<sup>176</sup> Because perfection is not possible in this life, the *spiritalis* is seen as ever-travelling, never arriving. This is in contrast to the *tepidus*, who having made a renunciation of the world, considers himself perfected and does not press on toward perfection. The fate of the lukewarm (*tepidus*) is to be spat out of God's mouth,<sup>177</sup> a fate shared with the *animalis*.

For Cassian then, the world is divided into those who have made their *renuntiatio*<sup>178</sup> and those who have not. Among other things, *renuntiatio* means that the monk has sold all of his possessions, given the proceeds away, and entered a monastery. While it is important to avoid the trap of thinking in terms of later Benedictine abbeys, it would be an error in the opposite direction to insist that Cassian did not use the idea of a monastery to denote a gathering of brothers, set

<sup>174</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 1–2.

<sup>175</sup> Monks are not allowed to meet with relatives or friends from the world (*parentum quempiam uel amicorum saecularium* without the steadying presence of a superior (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 16. 2 [SC 109: 142. 20]); A monk who refuses to fight against the 'noontime demon' (*accedia*), and entangles himself in worldly affairs (*implicet se negotiis saecularibus*), is like a soldier who deserts from the army (Cassian, *Inst.* 10. 3 [SC 109: 390. 16], citing 2 Tim. 2: 4).

<sup>176</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 4. 19.

<sup>177</sup> Rev. 3. 15.

<sup>178</sup> *Renuntiatio* is a key word in Cassian's thought. It divides the monk from the rest of the world and is the subject of a large portion of *De institutis* 4. An extended consideration of this concept will be offered in Chapter 5.

apart from the world, based on a clear institutional structure.<sup>179</sup> In *De institutis* 1–4, the institutional structure of a monastery is never out of sight. A preoccupation with the definition of structure is evident in Cassian's opening declaration of his intent to provide an account of the *instituta Aegyptiorum* to guide the monasteries Castor wants to establish in his provinces,<sup>180</sup> and does not finish until his closing exhortation directed toward the monk who is about to enter a monastery.<sup>181</sup> While Cassian's monastery might not have been the High Mediaeval cloister, he clearly has an institutional structure in mind for his monks. For Cassian, monks (at least in the early part of their spiritual journey) lived in a monastery.<sup>182</sup> While Basil envisages the possibility that some of the weaker brethren might frequent taverns or be involved in fisticuffs, Cassian places his monks in a community that has closed its doors to the world.<sup>183</sup> In effect, he shares the view of Eucherius of Lyons, who, writing in the early 420s about the monks of Lérins, noted, 'They want to dwell apart from sinners, and so they do.'<sup>184</sup> Cassian's use of the term *monachus*, with

<sup>179</sup> My reading of Cassian's aims differs from that of Conrad Leyser, who holds the view that Cassian's thought 'does not gel' at the level of prescribing an institutional structure for monks (Conrad Leyser, 'Lectio Divina, Oratio Pura, Rhetoric and the Techniques of Asceticism in the "Conferences" of John Cassian,' in *Modelli Di Santità e Modelli di Comportamento*, edited by Giulia Barone, Marina Caffiero, and Francesco Barcellona [Torino: Rosenberg and Sellier, 1994], 82) and that Cassian exhibited a 'reluctance to commit to a specific structure' (Leyser, *Lectio Divina*, 83). Leyser's claim that 'Cassian's project was not to institute coenobitic monasticism in the western Mediterranean' does not rest comfortably with the institutional structure Cassian sets out in *De institutis* 1–4. It seems odd that a writer whose priority was to 'establish the ascetic's mental priorities rather than his corporate affiliation' (Leyser, *Lectio Divina*, 82), would spend so much time outlining the appropriate garb for a monk (*De institutis* 1), the proper method of corporate prayer (*De institutis* 2–3), and the various rules governing life in a monastery (*De institutis* 4).

<sup>180</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 3.

<sup>181</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 32–43.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Inst.* 8. 18. Now see Philip Rousseau, 'Cassian, Contemplation and the Coenobitic Life,' *JTS* n.s. 26 (1975), 126, who sees *De institutis* as 'the blueprint of the coenobitic life, [providing] a framework of organization and discipline, within which the spiritual (and contemplative) ideals of Conferences would have the freedom to develop in practice.'

<sup>183</sup> Again we are reminded of his strict injunctions to avoid the affairs of the world, as well as the clear attempt to limit a monk's contact with the world as expressed in Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 16. 2–3.

<sup>184</sup> Eucher. *Laud. her.* 43 [CSEL 31: 193. 16–17]: *itaque dum optant a peccatoribus segregari, iam segregati sunt.*

all of its connotations of separation from the world, draws a circle around the monastery, a barrier that situates the monk in a symbolic (if not literal) 'desert'.

The sense that the monk is a higher form of Christian than the *carnalis* or *saecularis* is reinforced by Cassian's use of the term 'soldier of Christ' (*miles Christi*)<sup>185</sup> to describe the monk.<sup>186</sup> The terms *monachus* and *miles Christi* appear as synonyms in Cassian's works, and are never used as references to the *saecularis*.<sup>187</sup> Implicit in both of these terms is the idea of heightened discipline, special training, and a single-minded focus on a task that is beyond the ordinary

<sup>185</sup> Cassian uses *miles Christi* throughout *De institutis* and *Collationes*. See, for example, Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 1; 1. 2; 1. 11.

<sup>186</sup> The term *miles Christi* had a long history in Christian writing. The concept of Christian life as a battle against an unseen foe can be traced back to Paul (Eph. 6: 10–12). The Apostle advocates donning spiritual armour to meet the enemy (Eph. 6: 13–17). This metaphor was also used by the author of 2 Timothy, who noted that every Christian was a warrior and should suffer hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (καλὸς στρατιώτης Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ) (2 Tim. 2: 3). Moreover (providing a precedent for thinkers like Cassian), this author also noted that no soldier involved himself in the affairs of everyday life, but rather focused his attention on pleasing the one who had enlisted him (2 Tim. 2: 4). Jerome used the term in his *Vita Pauli* to describe a heroic martyr who was thrown into a pleasure garden and tempted by a beautiful prostitute. Bound hand and foot, the poor man was at the mercy of the seductress, who threw her arms around his neck and began *manibus attrahere virilia*! About to be overcome with lust, this brave *miles Christi* conceived of the dire stratagem of biting off his tongue and spitting it at the courtesan. The sudden pain conquered the anguish of lust and he regained his senses (Hier. *Vit. Paul.* 4). Jerome's use of the term here suggests that the martyr was a bite above the average Christian.

St Martin (we are told) asked the Emperor Julian to release him from military service, claiming that he had served Julian as a soldier, but now wanted to become a *miles Christi* (Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 4. 2). As Martin had already been baptized, his request seems to imply a transition to a more serious calling, a step Cassian would describe as the move from the *carnalis* toward the *spiritalis*. A similar linking of *miles Christi* to the monastic state can be found in the sentiment expressed by an ex-soldier who has become a monk. Since his wife had a similar sense of dedication to Christ's higher calling, the monk petitioned Martin that he and his wife might be allowed to live together as spiritual brother and sister. 'I am,' noted the monk, 'a soldier of Christ' (Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 11). It was not enough of an assurance to convince Martin to let the pair cohabit. Paulinus of Nola, repeatedly uses *miles Christi* to describe both his and Sulpicius Severus' ascetic vocation (writing to Severus, he notes, *tu vero miles Christi* [P.-Nol. *Ep.* 1. 9]). While waxing rhapsodic about his ascetic vocation, he describes himself as a fellow soldier (*commilito*) (P.-Nol. *Ep.* 24. 13) with Sulpicius Severus, who will launch an attack on the 'princes of darkness and the columns of night' (P.-Nol. *Ep.* 24. 14).

<sup>187</sup> He also uses the term *athleta Christi*, evoking 1 Cor. 9: 24–5.



ability of the mediocre masses. Monks and soldiers both face an enemy on the battlefield, one in the spiritual realm, one in the temporal. The military aspect of monastic life was emphasized by the writer of the *Historia Monachorum*, who noted that the towns and villages of Egypt had been surrounded by hermitages, as if by walls.<sup>188</sup> With the 'triumph of Christianity', Satan and his demons had been chased into the desert. The monks marched out to engage the enemy there. Cassian's choice of the military metaphor reinforces the line between monk and world.<sup>189</sup>

Basil's programme of social outreach, of ascetics who engage with the world in service of the church, has no place in Cassian's thought. Where Basil discouraged the formation of an elite in the church, Cassian presupposed this division. This fundamental difference in conception of the ascetic life may account for the fact that unlike Rufinus, Cassian was not eager to embrace Basil's ascetic rule.

### Sulpicius Severus

The only Gallic writer to offer a vision for the ascetic life before Cassian was Sulpicius Severus, who composed two works centred on Martin of Tours, *Vita Martini* (c.396) and *Dialogi* (c.404–6). If both Jerome and Basil were essentially self-taught 'monks', those who had not served a long apprenticeship under an experienced master, then this same criticism could be extended to Sulpicius Severus. Sulpicius' lack of ascetic formation was even more painfully obvious. His monastic training was limited to several interviews with Martin; when the time came to embrace the ascetic life, he chose to establish his own monastery at Primuliacum, rather than entering Martin's monastery at Marmoutier. Like Basil and Jerome, Sulpicius preferred the life of a leader.

<sup>188</sup> *Hist. mon.* Prol. 10.

<sup>189</sup> The difference between the *saecularis* and those who were committed to the Christian life (clerics and monks) can be seen in the reception of visitors to the Pachomian monasteries. Newly arrived clerics and monks have their feet washed and are lodged in the guest house (*Hier. Reg. Pachom.* 51). Seculars, the infirm, and weaker vessels (women) are lodged in a separate place, cut off from the community (*Hier. Reg. Pachom.* 52).

Sulpicius Severus is never mentioned directly in *De institutis*, and the evidence for Cassian's familiarity with his work is circumstantial at best. Nevertheless, familiarity with the Gallic writer's work is more probable than ignorance. Both the *Vita Martini* and *Dialogi* enjoyed a wide circulation. The *Vita Martini* was said to have travelled around the Mediterranean basin by 404.<sup>190</sup> A reference to *Dialogi* in Jerome's *Commentary on Ezekiel*,<sup>191</sup> suggests an even wider dispersion. It would be odd if Cassian, a man whose works demonstrate an acquaintance with a wide variety of Greek and Latin ecclesiastical authors, had not read Sulpicius Severus.

Sulpicius was a natural member of the unnamed others (*alios*) who had written about asceticism for a Gallic audience.<sup>192</sup> This impression is strengthened by the way Cassian compares his work to the writings of his contemporaries in his preface:

Nor to be sure will I make it my concern to weave together a narrative of the miracles and signs of God. Not only have we heard many things that are beyond belief from our elders, but we also have seen these things fulfilled before our eyes. Nevertheless [I shall] omit all these things, which to the readers contribute nothing more than amazement to the formation of the perfect life.

Nec plane mirabilium Dei signorumque narrationem studebo contexere. Quae quamuis multa per seniores nostros et incredibilia non solum audierimus, uerum etiam sub obtutibus nostris perspexerimus inpleta, tamen his omnibus praetermissis, quae legentibus praeter admirationem nihil amplius ad instructionem perfectae uitae conferunt.<sup>193</sup>

<sup>190</sup> Although it should be noted that this claim is made by Sulpicius Severus himself, Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 23; Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 26; Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 17.

<sup>191</sup> Hier. *Ezech.* 11. Jerome lists Sulpicius among those who had misinterpreted Ezekiel 36: 1–15. Clare Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 297–8, notes two other negative remarks which might refer to Sulpicius. The likelier of the pair dates from 408–10, and is a reference to Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 3. 1–2. Here, in Hier. *Is.* 16. 58. 8, Jerome notes that Christ did not command that a cape was to be cut in two and half given away to curry popular opinion.

<sup>192</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5.

<sup>193</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 7 [SC 109: 28. 93–9]. This sentiment is reiterated in Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 1. 3, where, writing about the extraordinary qualities of Abba Piamun, Cassian states that he will not offer an account of Piamun's miracles and deeds because he intends to offer his readers only what is essential for the life of perfection rather than stories which contribute to a sense of wonder but offer no correction of faults.

Cassian's preface presses an indictment against unnamed texts that have circulated in Gaul. These accounts spice up simple accounts of the monastic life with wild tales of God's miraculous intervention in the affairs of men. Cassian does not object to the miraculous; to the contrary, he is quick to tell his readers that he has first-hand knowledge of many extraordinary occurrences. What Cassian does oppose is the way in which certain ascetic writers have made the miracles, rather than the hard work of becoming a monk, the focus of their writings.

Sulpicius Severus was an obvious and likely target for this criticism.<sup>194</sup> Severus' stories included the raising of the dead,<sup>195</sup> the exorcism of demons (which included episodes of levitation),<sup>196</sup> conversations with saints and apostles,<sup>197</sup> and what may be the only account recorded in Christian literature of the Gospel being preached to Satan.<sup>198</sup> These would have been primary examples of accounts that had an unhealthy fascination with the miraculous, writings that offered little more than amazement. While impossible to prove with absolute certainty, the balance of probability favours Cassian's familiarity with these works.

The most widely accepted allusion in Cassian's work to Sulpicius is the story of the monk who waters a stick. In *Dialogi*, Sulpicius Severus has Postumianus, his protagonist, tell a story about a monk who was ordered by his superior to water a stick that had been driven into the ground. The monk carried water for the stick every day from the Nile, which was two miles distant. After three years of this marvellous obedience, the stick sprouted and grew into a tree which Postumianus claims to have seen.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>194</sup> So Stewart, *Cassian*, 17; Nora Chadwick, *Poetry and Letters in Early Christian Gaul* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1955), 231–2; Vogüé, *Les sources*, 448; and Adalbert de Vogüé, 'Les débuts de la vie monastique à Lérins,' *Revue d'histoire des religions* 88 (1993), 11; cautiously optimistic include Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 1st ed., 46–7. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, 182, doubts if we can be certain about Cassian's knowledge of Sulpicius' work.

<sup>195</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 7; Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 8; Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 4.

<sup>196</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 6.

<sup>197</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 13.

<sup>198</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 22.

<sup>199</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 19. Another version of this story (which preserves Sulpicius' emphases) may be found in the *Apophthegmata patrum* (*Apophth. Patr.* John the Dwarf 1).

A similar story is found in *De institutis* 4. 23.<sup>200</sup> Cassian's account of the monk who watered a stick conforms to the general outline of Sulpicius' account. Both stories present the obedient monk who follows his superior's instructions to the letter. The difference is in the ending: in *De institutis*, the abbot asks the monk if the stick has sprouted roots. When it was discovered that the stick had not been recalled to life, the abbot tossed the stick aside and commended the monk for his obedience. Cassian also inserted details that Sulpicius omitted: in *De institutis*, the monk has a name, John of Lycopolis.<sup>201</sup> In Postumianus' version, the monk has no name.

Cassian's version of the stick story, set in exactly the same context of obedience but with a very different ending, counters Sulpicius Severus' anecdote. Cassian knows that obedience is what is truly important about this story and he places his emphasis on that quality. His knowledge of the monk's name substantiates his version and contributes to his claim of *experientia*. He writes about what he has seen, rather than about what he had heard.

Cassian also seems to be correcting Sulpicius in a note about two old men.<sup>202</sup> Postumianus claims to have met two men who had lived forty years in a monastery. One of them 'the sun never saw feasting, the other [the sun never saw] angry'.<sup>203</sup> Cassian relates a nearly identical story, but again in his account the two men are given names: Paesius and John. In Cassian's story, John, who was the abbot of a monastery, decided to visit his old friend Paesius. The pair had not seen each other for forty years. When he found the old man, Paesius said, 'the sun has never seen me eating.' John replied, 'nor me angry'.<sup>204</sup> The important correction that Cassian makes is moving the pair out of a monastery and giving them names. It may seem an innocuous detail, but the parallels are otherwise so sharp

<sup>200</sup> Stancliffe, *St. Martin*, 51–2, postulates that the three extant versions of this story (found in Cassian, Sulpicius Severus, and the Greek *Apophthegmata patrum*) are independent of one another. Vogüé, *Les sources*, 448–50, offers a convincing case for Cassian's dependence on and knowledge of Sulpicius' version of this story.

<sup>201</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 23.

<sup>202</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 12. Once again the men are not named.

<sup>203</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 12 [CSEL 1: 163. 24–6]: *quod unum eorum sol numquam uidisset epulantem, alterum numquam uidisset iratum.*

<sup>204</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 27 [SC 109: 236. 6–8]: *numquam me sol, ait, reficientem uidit. Et ille, nec me, inquit, iratum.*

between the two stories that it seems difficult to believe that Cassian was unaware of Sulpicius' account. Again, Cassian fills in the details that have eluded Sulpicius Severus.

Another possible reference to Martin (as transmitted by Sulpicius Severus) may be found in Cassian's discussion of the monastic robe. Having established a general rule for the robe (it ought to be simple, inexpensive, and inconspicuous),<sup>205</sup> Cassian then turned his attention to those who had deviated from this guideline by wearing a covering of sackcloth, a garb Cassian deems inappropriate. A number of instances of ascetics wearing sackcloth can be adduced from Gallic sources. The most notable example, according to Sulpicius Severus, was Martin of Tours.<sup>206</sup> Sulpicius also refers to the garments of sackcloth he wore,<sup>207</sup> as well as the robe of sackcloth worn by his friend Postumianus.<sup>208</sup> Sackcloth also seems to have been worn by Sulpicius' friend and correspondent, Paulinus of Nola.<sup>209</sup>

Cassian, however, was intractably opposed to the use of sackcloth as a covering. In his view, sackcloth was an ostentatious display. Its use puffed up the monk with pride, rather than humbling the spirit. Nor was it something that had been sanctioned by the Egyptian Desert Fathers. In fact, stated Cassian:

Even though we have heard that certain respectable men have existed who have wrapped themselves in this clothing, we are not to sanction a rule for the monasteries from their example, nor are the ancient decrees of the holy fathers to be upset, because a few men, taking for granted the privilege of other men's virtues (which were not even their own), were believing, that these things which did not follow the catholic rule and were employed by them, were not to be censured. Certainly the opinion of a few must not be preferred or favoured over the universal constitution of all.

<sup>205</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 2. 1.

<sup>206</sup> Martin is reported to have worn sackcloth while praying for divine assistance in overthrowing a heathen temple (Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 14); threads plucked from the sackcloth garment worn by Martin were said to heal the sick (Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 18); Martin's sackcloth garment was one of the weapons he used to overcome Valentinian (Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 5) as well as the demons (Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 6).

<sup>207</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 1.

<sup>208</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 2.

<sup>209</sup> Paulinus wrote a letter thanking Sulpicius for the gift of sackcloth robes (P.-Nol. *Ep.* 29. 1), and stated that this was a necessary gift because he needed to lament his sins.

Quodsi quosdam hoc amictu circumdatos audiuimus probabiles exstisise, non ex eo nobis est monasteriorum regula sancienda uel antiqua sanctorum patrum sunt proturbanda decreta, quod pauci praesumentes aliarum uirtutum privilegio ne in his quidem, quae non secundum catholicam regulam ab eis usurpata sunt, reprehendi debere creduntur. Generali namque omnium constitutioni paucorum non debet praeponi nec praeiudicare sententia.<sup>210</sup>

Martin (or those who imitated his example) may have been commendable, but Cassian discredits him as a precedent for a usage that contradicts the established practices of the east.<sup>211</sup> Again, it is not completely certain that this passage should be read as a reference to Martin, but it certainly stands as a very strong allusion to Sulpicius' version of the man.

Finally, much of what Cassian writes about Gallic monks makes very good sense when Martin's monks of Marmoutier and Sulpicius' foundation at Primulacium are seen as the object. This is especially pointed in Cassian's chapters on the Gallic monks who retain their possessions and do no work.<sup>212</sup> As Stewart notes, 'The *Institutes* are inescapably a critique of the native monastic tradition associated especially with Martin of Tours.'<sup>213</sup> On balance, as has been detailed here, the probability that Sulpicius Severus was among the *alios*, seems quite high.

The underlying presupposition of this chapter is that Cassian wrote for an audience that already had views and opinions about how the ascetic life was to be conducted. The Gauls had a home-grown ascetic tradition that stretched back at least as far as Hilary and Martin. Moreover, the Gauls had been the recipients of ascetic advice from Jerome and Rufinus, and had been exposed to the rules of Pachomius and Basil. Cassian wrote among a crowd of writers.

Cassian was aware of this competition when he began to compose *De institutis*. Consequently, one of the first things he did (in the preface to his work) was to establish his position vis-à-vis these other ascetic writers. His premise was simple: they lacked *experientia*, a quality that he possessed in abundance.

<sup>210</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 2. 3 [SC 109: 40. 30–42. 38].

<sup>211</sup> There is much more to be said about this line of reasoning, but the discussion will be deferred to Chapter 5, which considers how Cassian created authority for his work.

<sup>212</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 10; Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 4–6.

<sup>213</sup> Stewart, *Cassian*, 17.

What is extremely interesting is the great subtlety Cassian employed to disarm his opponents (especially, as has been demonstrated, in the case of Jerome and Sulpicius Severus). There was ample precedent in ecclesiastical writing for simply demolishing an opponent;<sup>214</sup> Cassian, however, attacked his opponents indirectly, methodically suggesting to his audience that their views were in error, and consequently, not to be trusted.

<sup>214</sup> Jerome's attacks on Rufinus, Vigilantius, Jovinianus, et. al. certainly offered a contemporary precedent.

## *Instituta* as independent authority

As we have seen, John Cassian utilized a claim to experience as a strategy for winning a hearing for his work. This experience separated him from the nascent Gallic abbots, as well as from other western ascetic writers. But for experience to have any value, it must be rooted in some form of knowledge or discipline. This chapter will investigate Cassian's final strategy for supporting his work: the creation of an independent basis of authority for his ascetic code. Cassian's claim to authority centres on one key word, *instituta*. Coupled with a qualifier (usually *Aegyptiorum*, but occasionally *coenobiorum* or *seniorum*), Cassian developed the claim that the *instituta* were an enduring body of legislation, which, by virtue of their antiquity and centuries of use, possessed an unparalleled authority for the monastic life. This stood in stark contrast to the Gallic practices that deserved to be curtailed as superfluous and unprofitable, because they were:

neither from the saints of old who laid the foundations of this profession, nor from the fathers of our times, who in our day constantly guard their institutes through succession.

Et idcirco haec quae nec a veteribus sanctis qui huius professionis fundamenta iecerunt, neque a Patribus nostri temporis, qui eorum per successiones instituta nunc usque custodiunt, tradita videmus exempla, ut superflua et inutilia nos quoque resecare conveniet.<sup>1</sup>

Cassian's *instituta* originated (he would claim) in the Hebrew prophets and had been refined by the early church. This legislation, faithfully guarded in the east, had been the normative standard for

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 2. 2 [SC 109: 40. 19–23].



four centuries of monks. It had deep historical roots, having been passed from master to disciple; it was the highest expression of the ascetic path.<sup>2</sup>

Cassian portrayed himself, not as the source of this body of legislation, but rather as a trustworthy transmitter, a conduit for knowledge. He claimed that he could render an account of the Egyptian *instituta*, fulfilling the request of Bishop Castor, who wanted 'to lay the foundation for the rules and customs of the eastern and most especially the Egyptian monks in a province lacking monasteries'.<sup>3</sup> Cassian was not going to make up a set of guidelines for Castor; he would relate the one true path for the ascetic life, the *instituta* laid down by the earliest monks of the apostolic church. His work was not a novel formulation cobbled together out of his own *ingenium*, but rather a reliable account offered by a man who had himself been trained under this system. As a report of what was practised throughout the east, Cassian's *instituta* rested on a much deeper stratum than anything guiding ascetic practices in Gaul. The *instituta* transcended their reporter, their existence was independent of their advocate.

The ostensible purpose of the first four books of *De institutis* was the exposition of the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. *De institutis* 1 begins with the phrase, 'As we are going to speak concerning the institutes and rules of the monasteries, from where will we make a better beginning, by the grace of God, than from the monk's habit itself?'<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the opening sentences of *De institutis* 5 look back to a completed task, the work that had already been written in 'four books which have set in order the institutes of the monasteries'.<sup>5</sup> Between these two brackets lay Cassian's account of the *instituta Aegyptiorum*, a collection of

<sup>2</sup> It also stood against the recent claims to authority rooted in the self-fashioning biographies of notable figures like Martin of Tours, Clarus, and Melania the Elder, as practised by Sulpicius Severus and Paulinus of Nola (cf. Dennis E. Trout, 'Amicitia, Auctoritas, and Self-Fashioning Texts: Paulinus of Nola and Sulpicius Severus,' *SPAT* 28 [1993], 123–9).

<sup>3</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 3 [SC 109: 24. 30–1]: *In prouincia siquidem coenobiorum experti Orientalium maximeque Aegyptiorum uolens instituta fundari.*

<sup>4</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 1. 1 [SC 109: 34. 1–3]: *De institutis ac regulis monasteriorum dicturi unde competentiùs donante Deo quam ex ipso habitu monachorum sumemus exordium.*

<sup>5</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 1 [SC 109: 190. 1–3]: *Nam post quattuor libellos, qui super institutis monasteriorum digesti sunt.*

guidelines that are presupposed by the rest of Cassian's works. The *instituta* are not helpful recommendations, something to be accepted or rejected by the individual, but rather the gateway through which the monk passes into the ascetic life. Any other path, especially one formulated by an inexperienced leader was doomed to lead one astray.

## 1 THE NATURE OF THE *INSTITUTA*

We begin our consideration of Cassian's argument with a natural question: what precisely are *instituta*?<sup>6</sup> Cassian suggests that they are a body of Egyptian legislation that have been passed down, master to disciple, from the first monks to the present generation. Against the disorder of ad hoc Gallic rules, Cassian claimed Egyptian homogeneity and universality. All Egyptian monks, with the exception of the Pachomians, adhered to the *instituta Aegyptiorum*.<sup>7</sup> The Egyptians prayed the same way, they ate the same food at the same hours, and they had the same rules governing their monasteries.

There are two problems with this assertion. The first is that other sources for Egyptian monasticism do not support Cassian's claim of uniformity. The *Historia monachorum*, *Apophthegmata patrum*, and Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca* all offer evidence of considerable variation in the practices that Cassian ascribed to the inviolable and universally-held *instituta Aegyptiorum*. In fact, these sources tend to suggest a fluid, developing situation that does not appear different, in many respects, to the variation Cassian condemns among the Gauls.

The second problem is that Cassian's *instituta Aegyptiorum* is a synthesis of a number of different ascetic practices. The primary

<sup>6</sup> Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 29, describes Cassian's use of *instituta* as 'a collective term for the teachings, customs, and structures of monastic life'. I would argue that this definition does not go far enough in bringing out the authoritative or legal force that Cassian brought to the word.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance, Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2. 2 [SC 109: 60. 20–1]: 'which until now are kept throughout all of Egypt by the servants of God' (*quae nunc usque per totam Aegyptum a Dei famulis custoditur*).

Table 1: The monastic garb

Chapter	Topic	Source
1	The Monk's Girdle	Ruf. <i>Basil. reg.</i> 11. 32–8
2	The Robe	Ruf. <i>Basil. reg.</i> 11. 1–31
3	The Hood	Evagr. Pont. <i>Ep. Anat.</i> 2
4	The Tunic	Evagr. Pont. <i>Ep. Anat.</i> 3 (Implied)
5	The Cord	Evagr. Pont. <i>Ep. Anat.</i> 5
6	The Scapular	Evagr. Pont. <i>Ep. Anat.</i> 4
7	The Goatskin	Evagr. Pont. <i>Ep. Anat.</i> 6
8	The Staff	Evagr. Pont. <i>Ep. Anat.</i> 7

source for Cassian's legislation was not the ancient church, but rather the teaching of Evagrius Ponticus.<sup>8</sup> While I will not restate the dependence that Marsili has documented at length, a simple example may be proffered to suggest Cassian's debt to his master:

Table 4.1 compares Cassian's exposition of the monastic habit (in *De institutis* 1) to that of his sources. Cassian's first two chapters (the girded loins and the robe) follow Basil, but thereafter he adheres to the order and arrangement of the monastic garb found in Evagrius' *Epistula ad Anatolium* (although he reverses the cord and the scapular). The monastic habit that Cassian attributes to the *instituta Aegyptiorum* is actually drawn from Basil and Evagrius. On a much larger scale, the systematization of the principal vices that interfere with the ascetic life (the eight principal vices) that make up books 5–12 of *De institutis* are also based on the work of Evagrius.<sup>9</sup> The teachings Cassian ascribes to the *instituta Aegyptiorum* are largely those of Evagrius. Other additions are drawn from a wide range of authors, including Basil, Pachomius, Jerome, and Palladius.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Salvatore Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico: dottrina sulla carità e contemplazione* (Rome: Herde, 1935), followed by Pierre Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en Occident de Macrobe à Cassidore* (Paris: Boccard, 1943), 213. See also Adalbert de Vogüé, 'Les sources des quatre premiers livres des Institutions de Jean Cassien. Introduction aux recherches sur les anciennes règles monastiques latines,' *Studia Monastica* 27 (1985), 241–311, for a complete and methodical identification of the sources Cassian drew upon to create *De institutis* 1–4.

<sup>9</sup> See Evagr. Pont. *Prak.* 6–14, for the description of the eight principal vices and Evagr. Pont. *Prak.* 15–49, for the remedies for these vices.

<sup>10</sup> Again, the most thorough account of this may be found in Vogüé, *Les sources*. See also Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 222.

In fact, Cassian's *instituta Aegyptiorum* are actually a rhetorical construct, a device used to buttress the authority of what he prescribed for Gaul. Although Egyptian monastic practice was not as uniform, ancient, or binding as Cassian asserted, this did not prevent Cassian from stitching together a code of legislation which he then used to correct the Gauls.

The word he used as a framework for his ideas, *instituta*, is a plural form of the noun *institutum* — *arrangement, plan, mode of life, practice, ordinance or regulation*.<sup>11</sup> The noun is derived from the verb *instituo* — *to institute, found, establish, organize*.<sup>12</sup> The word was often used to describe the customs or practices that guided groups of people.<sup>13</sup> It also appears as the title of legal works intended to explain the basic principles of law to budding jurists.<sup>14</sup>

Although Cassian could have looked to the earlier classical (and especially the juridical) writers as a precedent for his use of the term *instituta*, it should be noted that there was an ascetic precedent to be found much closer to home: Ambrose, the fourth-century bishop of Milan, was the first Latin writer to employ the term *instituta monachorum*. In a letter describing his initial resistance to ordination, Ambrose wrote about Eusebius of Vercelli who was the first bishop in the west to combine life as a priest with a life that conformed to the institutes of the monks (*instituta monachorum*).<sup>15</sup> Ambrose suggested that patience took root in Eusebius, through the customs of the monasteries.<sup>16</sup> Two things stood at the pinnacle of Christian devotion, the duties of the cleric and the institutes of the monks.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Charlton Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), s.v.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis and Short, s.v. II.

<sup>13</sup> The idea of ancient guidelines that dictated current practices may be found in Liv. 42. 31. 2 and Suet. *Aug.* 98. Tertullian (*Tert. Nat.* 1. 10) links the word to the customs and practices that guide pagan worship, as do Minucius Felix (*Minuc. Oct.* 18) and Augustine (*Aug. Ciu.* 4. 26).

<sup>14</sup> Jill D. Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18. Works by this name (or the cognate *Institutiones*) were composed by Florentius, Ulpian, Paulus, Callistratus, Marcian, and Gaius (Harries, *Law and Empire*, 18 n. 55).

<sup>15</sup> Ambr. *Ep.* 63. 66.

<sup>16</sup> Ambr. *Ep.* 63. 71 [CSEL 82.3: 273. 736]: *Haec igitur patientia in sancto Eusebio monasterii coaluit usu.*

<sup>17</sup> Ambr. *Ep.* 63. 71 [CSEL 82.3: 273. 739–40]: *clericorum officia et monachorum instituta.*

Both are *disciplinae*: the duties of the cleric are a discipline that produce pleasantness and morality; the *monachorum instituta* produce abstinence and patience.<sup>18</sup> Ambrose's use of the term *instituta monachorum* set a precedent for Cassian, even though the bishop did not define the nature or source of these *instituta*.

A work that set an even stronger precedent for Cassian's use of the term *instituta* was Rufinus' Latin translation of the *Rule of St Basil* (*Regula Basili*). This translation, produced in 396,<sup>19</sup> was (according to Rufinus) drafted at the request of a certain Ursacius, said to be the abbot of a monastery in Italy.<sup>20</sup> One of the most interesting features of this translation is the way Rufinus uses the word *instituta* in his preface, attaching a meaning and authority to the word that clearly foreshadows Cassian's work:

We were very glad, most dear brother Ursacius, when, having come from the eastern regions, and at that time longing for the customary fellowship of the brothers, we entered your monastery. . . . And there we were greatly delighted, because, you had diligently enquired, not as is the custom of some concerning either the places or the wealth of the east, but you asked what observance had been kept there by the servants of God, what virtues of soul, what institutes were kept in the monasteries. To this, lest I might expound something less worthy to you (I do not speak of what is done, but what should be done), I produced the institutes of the monks of Saint Basil, bishop of Cappadocia, a man famous for his faith and works, and every kind of sanctity, who [laid down these *instituta* as], so to speak, responses on a sacred law to the questions of the monks. When you were admiring his definitions and opinions, you earnestly demanded, that I might translate this work into Latin, promising me that throughout all the monasteries of the western regions, if these holy and spiritual institutes of a saintly and spiritual man were made known, all the progress of the servants of God that would be produced from institutes of this sort, would bring me, too, some grace or reward from their merits or prayers. So I have done my task as best I could: you do yours, and all those who read and are thankful, so that when working or praying in the manner contained in these statutes, you might remember me, too. Let it be your duty also to offer a copy to other

<sup>18</sup> Ambr. Ep. 63. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Klaus Zelser, *Basili Regula a Rufino Latine Versa*, CSEL 86 (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1986), x.

<sup>20</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 1.

monasteries, so that following the example of the Cappadocians, all monasteries might live in the same way, and not by diverse institutes and observations.

Satis libenter, carissime frater Ursaci, adventantes de partibus orientis et desiderantes iam fratrum consueta consortia monasterium tuum ingressi sumus... Et inde maxime delectati sumus, quod non, ut aliquibus mos est, vel de locis vel de opibus orientis sollicitè percontatus es, sed quatenus ibi observatio servorum dei haberetur, quae animi virtus, quae instituta servarentur in monasteriis perquisisti. Ad haec ego ne quid tibi minus digne, non dico quam geritur sed quam geri debet, exponerem, sancti Basilii Cappadociae episcopi, viri fide et operibus et omni sanctitate satis clari, instituta monachorum, quae interrogantibus se monachis velut sancti cuiusdam iuris responsa statuit, protuli. Cuius cum definitiones ac sententias mirareris, magnopere poposcisti ut hoc opus verterem in Latinum, pollicens mihi quod per universa occidentalis partis monasteria si haec sancti et spiritualis viri sancta et spiritualia innotescerent instituta, omnis ille servorum dei profectus qui ex huiusmodi institutionibus nasceretur, mihi quoque ex eorum vel meritis vel orationibus aliquid gratiae vel mercedis afferret. Exhibui ergo, ut potui ministerium meum: imple et tu et omnes qui legis et observatis gratiam, ut et agentes et orantes sic quemadmodum statuta haec continent, mei quoque memores sitis. Tui sane sit officii etiam aliis monasteriis exemplaria praebere, ut secundum instar Cappadociae omnia monasteria eisdem et non diversis vel institutis vel observationibus vivant.<sup>21</sup>

Several important parallels between Cassian and Rufinus may be drawn from an examination of this preface. The first is that Rufinus, in translating Basil's rule, demonstrated a clear concern for the state of monasticism in the west. These monasteries, lacking a guideline, were following 'diverse institutes and observations'.<sup>22</sup> The independent and unregulated nature of Gallic monasticism was also Cassian's reason for advancing the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. For both authors, eastern *instituta* were the appropriate remedy for a western situation in disarray.

Cassian and Rufinus both asserted that their versions of eastern monasticism had been solicited by someone in a position of authority who was interested in western reform. In the case of Rufinus, it

<sup>21</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 1, 3–11 [CSEL 86: 3–4].

<sup>22</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 11 [CSEL 86: 4. 19].

was Ursacius.<sup>23</sup> This Ursacius, who had no interest in superficial stories about the east,<sup>24</sup> asked Rufinus to produce an account of the institutes kept in the eastern monasteries, with the evident intention of reforming both his own monastery and the other monasteries in his region. Similarly, Cassian's account had been called forth by Bishop Castor of Apt, who wanted to establish monasteries in his province.<sup>25</sup>

The other similarity between these two writers is their selection of the term *instituta* to describe the ordinances they were transmitting to the west. Rufinus uses the word five times in his short preface, once as a dismissive note about the chaotic state of western monasticism,<sup>26</sup> and four times with a force that went beyond the idea of practice, implying a legal, binding force. Rufinus argued that the *instituta* set out by Basil ought to be normative for all monks. Basil's law was observed or kept (*servo*) by the servants of God in the east. These *instituta* were laid down by St Basil, a renowned holy man and bishop of Caesarea, famous for his virtue, works, and sanctity. Basil had set out (*statuo*) these *instituta* as responses on 'a kind of sacred law'.<sup>27</sup> The legal force of this sentence is unmistakable. Basil, drawing on his authority as both a bishop and a renowned holy man, interpreted divine law to establish a monastic law. Rufinus then reasserts the quality of these *instituta*: they are 'holy and spiritual', the product of a 'saintly and spiritual man',<sup>28</sup> which will give birth to servants of God in the west if the ordinances are made known to them.<sup>29</sup> A further legal reference occurs when Rufinus urges the monks to hold fast to these statutes (*statuta*).<sup>30</sup> And finally, in closing, he advances his hope that the *instituta* he has translated will replace the disorder of western monasticism.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>23</sup> I have referred to Ursacius as the 'abbot' of the Italian monastery. Although my use of the term 'abbot' is decidedly anachronistic, evoking images of later Benedictine monasticism, Rufinus does suggest that Ursacius has a leadership role in the *monasterium*. He refers to the place where Ursacius resides as 'your monastery' and implies that Ursacius has charge over other brothers, 'all those you bring together and watch over'.

<sup>24</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 3 [CSEL 86: 3. 9].

<sup>25</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 6 [CSEL 86: 4. 5–6].

<sup>28</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 10 [CSEL 86: 4. 16].

<sup>31</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 11 [CSEL 86: 4. 17–20].

The idea that the *instituta* were a body of normative guidelines for monastic life is apparent in Rufinus' preface. The *instituta* were established by Basil for his monks, and ought to replace the diverse practices observed in the west. These *instituta*, the interpretation of a saintly and holy man, would, if faithfully observed, produce servants of God, leading those who kept them to a higher life. All of these ideas are present in Cassian's thought.

A final precedent for the idea that there were *instituta* guiding monastic practice may be found in the writings of Sulpicius Severus. Although the main purpose of Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi* was the defence of the reputation of Martin of Tours (as offered in Sulpicius' *Vita Martini*), *Dialogi* can also be read as a response to the eastern writers who were trying to prescribe monastic practices for the west.<sup>32</sup> The two places Sulpicius employs the term *institutum* in his *Dialogi* both evoke a strong echo of Rufinus' preface to the *Regula Basilii*.

In the first instance, he applies the term to the Egyptian monks when he asks Postumianus to 'tell us . . . what peace of the saints is there; what are the institutes of the monks; and by what great signs and virtues Christ is working in his servants'.<sup>33</sup> This formulation bears a strong resemblance to the request Ursacius makes of Rufinus, to tell him 'what observance had been kept there by the servants of God, what virtues of soul, what institutes were kept in the monasteries'.<sup>34</sup>

The second use of the term also evokes Rufinus' work. Postumianus, the advocate for eastern monasticism in *Dialogi* has offered a devastating critique of Gallic practices, to which Gallus, the defender of the Gallic reputation, responds that in a brief time Postumianus had 'comprehended all our institutes'.<sup>35</sup> One wonders if this might not have been aimed again at Rufinus, who had urged the western monks not to live according to their diverse practices and observations.<sup>36</sup>

The issue of whether Sulpicius was alluding to Rufinus in his *Dialogi* is ultimately beyond the scope of this work. More important

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 2 [CSEL 1: 153. 24–154.1]: *quae sit sanctorum quies, quae instituta monachorum, quantisque signis ac uirtutibus in seruis suis Christus operetur.*

<sup>34</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 21 [CSEL 1: 174. 8–9]: *ita breuiter uniuersa nostrorum instituta complexus es.*

<sup>36</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* Pref. 11.



at this point is the observation that by the time Cassian wrote *De institutis* for a Gallic audience, three earlier authors had already laid the groundwork for the idea that an established code guided eastern monastic life. Ambrose had alluded to a set of rules; Rufinus had suggested that this code was the *instituta* created by Basil; Sulpicius referred directly to the institutes observed by the Egyptian monks.

Cassian's *instituta* are built on the foundation laid by his predecessors. He adopted the idea that there were *instituta monachorum* and developed it into an entire system, a unified body of legislation that guided the lives of the Desert Fathers. Moreover, unlike the ascetic guidelines made up by anyone who wished to found a monastery in Gaul, Cassian's *instituta* had guided the true ascetics for centuries. The *instituta Aegyptiorum* were validated by the weight of antiquity; they had long governed the lives of all true ascetics. This legislation, which dated back to the founding of the church, had been carefully passed on from master to worthy disciple, and even in Cassian's day, was the standard that ordered the lives of the Desert Fathers.

## 2 THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE *INSTITUTA*<sup>37</sup>

But how was this bold claim to be substantiated? One of Cassian's most important arguments was the idea that the *instituta Aegyptiorum* were not something new, but rather dated back to the foundation of the church, and in fact, to the pre-Christian prophets. He substantiated this proposition by casting Elijah and Elisha in the role of proto-monks. This sort of appeal to antiquity was a common literary topos; in classical writing it could be used to justify an argument by showing that a custom or practice had been established in the far-distant past. Conversely, an opponent's views could be

<sup>37</sup> An earlier version of the next three sections of this chapter first appeared in Richard J. Goodrich, 'Forging Authority: John Cassian's Use of Inherited Texts in *De institutis* I-IV', in *Inherited Texts in Late Antiquity*, edited by David Scourfield (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, forthcoming).

discredited by suggesting that they were somehow novel or new. This practice is found in both secular and ecclesiastical argumentation.<sup>38</sup>

Cassian employed an appeal to antiquity to defend the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. An example of this may be found in Cassian's discussion of the monastic practice of girding the loins.<sup>39</sup> In developing his argument for girded loins, Cassian closely followed Basil's exposition of the same subject.<sup>40</sup> This emulation included appropriating the same biblical texts to support his argument. Where he deviated from Basil was his interpretation of the significance of his biblical proof texts.

Basil felt that Christians should gird their loins for reasons that were largely practical. The girdle was essential for one who worked. It created a neat appearance, and made it easier to move by drawing the tunic close to the body, which conserved body heat.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Christ had girded his loins when he washed his disciples' feet, and the saints of earlier centuries had shown that the use of belts was necessary.<sup>42</sup> Basil followed these reasons with five examples of saints who had worn the belt (*zona*). These men (Elijah, Job, John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul) had set a pattern for later Christians to follow, a claim that welds biblical precedents to functionality.

Cassian came at the question from an entirely different angle: Elijah and Elisha were not simply precedents for Christian dress; they had 'laid the first foundations of this vocation', and were the architects of Egyptian monasticism.<sup>43</sup> The equation of Elijah and the Egyptian monks was not unprecedented; Elijah's life had been an influential pattern for explaining the lives of various fourth-century

<sup>38</sup> This was the argument of the philosopher Celsus, who derided the newness of Christianity (Or. *Cels.* 1. 26; 2. 4–5; 6. 10). Tertullian (Tert. *Apol.* 37. 4), somewhat perversely, turned the argument on its head, boasting that if Christians wanted to harm the Roman Empire, it would be easily done; Christianity, a religion that was of yesterday (*hesterni sumus*), had already infiltrated all aspects of Roman life. For Tertullian's use of history in his *Apologia* see Mark Burrows, 'Christianity in the Roman Forum: Tertullian and the Apologetic Use of History,' *VC* 42 (1988), 209–35.

<sup>39</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 1. 2–5.

<sup>40</sup> In the following discussion, 'Basil' should be understood as a reference to the Latin translation found in Rufinus' *Regula Basili*.

<sup>41</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* 11. 37–8.

<sup>42</sup> Ruf. *Basil. reg.* 11. 32.

<sup>43</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 1. 2 [SC 109: 36. 8–10]: *Hoc enim habitu etiam illos ambulasse, qui in ueteri testamento professionis huius fundauere primordia.*

monks. Elijah had shunned civilization and devoted his life to haunting the wilderness in a search for God. Eager to validate the deeds of their latter-day heroes, Christian writers cast their subjects in Elijah's mould, demonstrating that God continued to work as directly and immediately in the desert as he once had in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>44</sup>

Cassian took this a step further. Where other writers had stressed the similarity of their subjects to the prophets, Cassian argued that the prophets had originated the monastic movement. Elijah laid the foundation (*fundauere primordia*) of what became the monastic lifestyle. He was the founder of the system that had flowered at the time of the apostles and persisted into the present age. Where Basil had simply offered Elijah as an example of an important figure who girded his loins, Cassian forged an explicit connection between the early prophets and the later monks.<sup>45</sup>

This connection was reinforced in Cassian's discussion of the monastic robe, in which he asserted that nothing should be done that had not been taught by the ancient saints who had laid the foundations of the monastic profession.<sup>46</sup> Another connection to the prophets was made when he noted that the present-day monks wore goatskins, 'in order to imitate those who, in the Old Testament, prefigured the lines of this vocation'.<sup>47</sup> The link with the prophetic office was strengthened by Cassian's citation of Heb. 11:37–8 in the following lines of his chapter on the goatskin. The anonymous writer of Hebrews<sup>48</sup> had penned a description of the prophets that could just as easily have been a description of the monastic movement. Separated from (and superior to) the world, these men haunted lonely places in search of God. The connections to the monastic life were obvious and Cassian was not alone in citing them.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> For instance, Jerome applied the story of God using ravens to feed Elijah (1 Kgs. 17: 4–6) to his hero Paul. When Antony visited Paul in the far desert, the raven which had been supplying Paul with food for sixty years brought a whole loaf instead of the usual half (Hier. *Vit. Paul.* 10).

<sup>45</sup> This forging of links is also found in *Collationes* where Cassian notes that Elijah, Elisha, Antony, and certain others made it their purpose to pursue the secret works of the desert and purity of heart (Cassian, *Coll.* 14. 4. 1).

<sup>46</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 2. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 7 [SC 109: 46. 2–4]: *quae gestant ad imitationem eorum qui professionis huius praefigurauere lineas iam in ueteri testamento.*

<sup>48</sup> Thought to have been Paul during Cassian's time.

<sup>49</sup> Cassian cites Heb. 11: 37–8 twice in *Collationes*. The first time is in a list of exemplars imitated by the Egyptian monks, namely John the Baptist, Elijah, Elisha,

## The Apostolic Church

Another, equally important precedent for the *instituta Aegyptiorum* was the Apostolic Church,<sup>50</sup> a connection that emerges in Cassian's discussion of the two nocturnal offices of prayer observed by the Egyptian monks. Whereas the Gallic monks employed widely divergent practices of prayer,<sup>51</sup> the Egyptian practice was unified,

established in antiquity, enduring inviolate down through the ages until now in all the monasteries of those provinces: because the [Egyptian] elders assert that it was not laid down by human innovation, but it was brought down from heaven to the fathers under the supervision of an angel.

Qui modus antiquitus constitutus, idcirco per tot saecula penes cuncta illarum prouinciarum monasteria intemeratus nunc usque perdurat, quia non humana adinuentione statutus a senioribus adfirmatur, sed caelitus angeli magisterio patribus fuisse delatus.<sup>52</sup>

This statement introduces Cassian's elaborate justification of the *instituta Aegyptiorum*, an argument that spans three chapters of *De institutis* 2.<sup>53</sup> The *instituta* were pre-eminent not only because of their great antiquity, but also because certain aspects of the code had come from heaven, given directly to men by God. Cassian drew on Acts and Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* to support the former claim;<sup>54</sup> the latter was supported by his reworking of an Egyptian story, the Rule of the Angel.

He began with an exploration of the ancient roots of the coenobitic life. According to Cassian, the monastic life was brought to Egypt by the evangelist Mark, who was also the first bishop of

and those of whom the Apostle speaks in the Book of Hebrews (Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 6. 2). These same saints, along with those referred to in Heb. 11. 37–8, also form an honour roll of men who went beyond the requirements of the law laid down by Moses (Cassian, *Coll.* 21. 4. 2).

<sup>50</sup> In the following discussion the term *Apostolic Church* should be understood as a reference to the early Jerusalem community described in the Book of Acts. This first body of believers formed around the apostles after Christ's ascension into heaven (Acts 1: 9–15) and remained in Jerusalem until they were dispersed after the death of Stephen (Acts 8: 1). It is not my intention to engage with any theological or historical issues about this group, and my term *Apostolic Church* is nothing more than a convenient reference for the sake of discussion.

<sup>51</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 4 [SC 109: 64. 5–10].

<sup>53</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 4–6.

<sup>54</sup> Primarily Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 17. 2–24.

Alexandria. This primordial group of monks embraced not only all of the virtues recorded of the earliest believers in the early Jerusalem community,<sup>55</sup> but 'they also added much loftier things than these'.<sup>56</sup> Cassian's link between the Apostolic Church (as described in Acts 4: 32–5) and the monastic movement was not without logic. This passage portrays a community that was severing its ties with the world (most especially by selling property and donating the proceeds to a common pool) and joining together to pursue Christian perfection.<sup>57</sup> The verses describe an early fervour, the feeling that Christ (who had just ascended into heaven) would soon return. Anticipating an imminent *parousia*, the believers were exchanging their earthly possessions for treasures in heaven.<sup>58</sup> Goods and property were sold and donated to a common fund, an action which Cassian would later interpret as a precedent for his belief that monks must renounce their ownership of all worldly goods.<sup>59</sup>

The importance of these verses for the monastic movement is demonstrated by the range of writers who utilized them. The Pachomian abbot Horsiesios (leader of the Pachomian federation in the years 346–50 and 368–87) took them as a proof text that the Pachomian monastic community sprang from God, and was intended to be united in love, just as the hearts and souls of the Apostolic Church had been united.<sup>60</sup> Every action of the monk was to be directed toward the good of the community, to further the coenobitic goal of a single heart and soul.<sup>61</sup> Implicit in this unity was the idea that a monk had no right to withhold worldly goods from his brethren, and must follow the example of the saints who had relinquished their goods, laying them at the feet of the apostles.<sup>62</sup> In the *First Sahidic*

<sup>55</sup> And here Cassian cites Acts 4: 32, 34–5.

<sup>56</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 1 [SC 109: 64. 13–14]: *uerum etiam his multo sublimiora cumulauerant.*

<sup>57</sup> For the idea that the early ascetic and communal quality of the Apostolic Church was derived from the teachings of the Essenes: Brian Capper, 'Community of Goods in the Early Jerusalem Church,' *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 26.2 (1995), 1730–44.

<sup>58</sup> Matt. 19: 21.

<sup>59</sup> See esp. Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Orsies. *Doct.* 50.

<sup>61</sup> Orsies. *Reg.* 51. Theodore, in his discourse on Pachomius' speech to some erring brothers (c.350–68), asserted that it was Pachomius who had made the brethren one spirit and one body (*V.Pach.Bo.* 194).

<sup>62</sup> Orsies. *Doct.* 27. See also Aug. *Ep.* 211. 5, who uses the same precedent (Acts 4: 32) to support his claim that the women living under his sister must contribute all of their private property to a common pool for the good of their sisters.

*Life of Pachomius*, when disciples began to flock to Pachomius (c.324), he established a rule that required each monk to work enough to be self-supporting and to provide a share of the food and goods that were used to offer hospitality to guests. In a passage modelled on Acts, Pachomius' early disciples each brought a share to Pachomius, who administered their contributions. Pachomius' early followers required this oversight, observed the author of the *Life*, because they were not yet ready to enter into the perfect *koinonia*, the state where all the brothers were of one heart and mind.<sup>63</sup>

Basil also used these verses to support his argument for the superiority of corporate living, a lifestyle intended to produce Christian perfection and unity in the brethren. Communal life was a training school that fostered perfection in love through the service of others.<sup>64</sup> He closed his chapter on the advantages of community by stating that those who work communally toward this goal adhere to the pattern set in Acts 4. In a later chapter, Basil stated that the words 'mine' and 'yours' were not permitted among the brothers, as they acted as a barrier to the goal of unity of heart and soul.<sup>65</sup> Unity was made possible by the renunciation of possessions, and Basil forbade the private ownership of goods as contrary to Acts 4:32.<sup>66</sup> Each monk was to receive enough to meet his needs, like those who had been part of the Apostolic Church, an act that would lead the monk into bodily continence.<sup>67</sup> Sober overseers were to be placed over the community to ensure that this goal was met, dispensing goods impartially and without favouritism.<sup>68</sup>

For Cassian, like the Pachomian legislators and Basil, the perfection of the Acts community in Christ was signalled by its single heart

<sup>63</sup> *V.Pach.Sad.* 11.

<sup>64</sup> *Bas. Reg. fus.* 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Bas. Reg. fus.* 32.

<sup>66</sup> *Bas. Reg. br.* 85. For Basil's view that a bishop was the ideal patron for giving and receiving alms: Susan Holman, 'Rich City Burning: Social Welfare and Ecclesial Insecurity in Basil's Mission to Armenia,' *JECS* 12 (2004), 196.

<sup>67</sup> *Bas. Reg. fus.* 19.

<sup>68</sup> *Bas. Reg. fus.* 34. See also *Bas. Reg. br.* 131; *Bas. Reg. br.* 135, discusses the duty of the overseer to know the needs of those for whom he makes provision. In *Bas. Reg. br.* 150, Basil noted that the overseer who failed in his task would receive Christ's condemnation: 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink' (Matt. 24: 41–2 [RSV]).

and soul. Consequently, he imports this imagery to describe his Egyptian monastic forebears. Their unity was displayed by their voluntary shedding of temporal goods for the welfare of the brethren. But this, according to Cassian, was only a starting point for the progenitors of true monastic life. Having received their monastic training from the blessed Mark, the first Egyptian monks went on to deeds that surpassed what had been written in Acts 4.<sup>69</sup>

The original source for Cassian's monastic ancestors was a work of the first-century Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria. Philo's *On the Contemplative Life* documented the practices of a group of Jewish ascetics who had taken up residence south of Alexandria on a hill above Lake Mareotis.<sup>70</sup> According to Philo, this group of men and women were called *θεραπευταί*.<sup>71</sup> His description of their life contains a number of parallels with later Christian asceticism. Before fleeing to the desert, the *θεραπευταί* renounced their worldly goods, handing them on to their lawful heirs, or friends if they had no one else; they lived alone in small houses that had a room consecrated for their worship and study; they prayed twice daily, at dawn and sunset; they fasted throughout the day, taking neither food nor water until after sunset (some of the *θεραπευταί* would fast three or six days at a time); they spent their days studying the Divine Scripture (which Philo defined as the Law, Prophets, and Psalms), reading the writings of wise men, and composing hymns and psalms.<sup>72</sup> Once a week the *θεραπευταί* would meet for a communal assembly, and every year they held a great feast (probably Pentecost).<sup>73</sup>

Eusebius reworked Philo's account in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. He found in Philo's text an excellent description of the early Christian ascetic movement: the men and women Philo had described were not

<sup>69</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Ph. *Con.* 22. Cf. David Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 230.

<sup>71</sup> Ph. *Con.* 22. Philo offered two possible explanations for this name, which he claimed was derived from the verb I heal (*θεραπεύω*): 1) that it signified their ability to heal the ills of both body and soul; 2) that it pointed to their exemplary worship of God.

<sup>72</sup> Renunciation of goods: Ph. *Con.* 13; living arrangements: Ph. *Con.* 20, 24; twice-daily prayer: Ph. *Con.* 27; fasting Ph. *Con.* 34; scripture study: Ph. *Con.* 25, 28.

<sup>73</sup> Communal assembly: Ph. *Con.* 30–3; annual feast: Ph. *Con.* 65.

Jewish, but rather, early Christians of Hebraic origin. This was clear because the *θεραπευταὶ* followed rules of the church that were still honoured in the fourth century. Philo's careful documentation of their practices proved that he had been impressed with the Christian ascetics.<sup>74</sup> If Philo had labelled them *θεραπευταὶ* rather than Christians, it was only because he had either given them a name that best described their healing ministry, or possibly it was what they had called themselves, since the name Christian was not in common use at that time.<sup>75</sup>

Eusebius followed Philo's description of the *θεραπευταὶ* fairly closely, although he did feel obliged to add his own Christianizing touches. Perhaps the most important of his additions was his account of their origin. Rather than being Jews who had emigrated to the region in order to live the perfect life, Eusebius claimed that these men and women were the first converts of Mark, the disciple who had been sent to Alexandria in order to preach the gospel and establish churches.<sup>76</sup> These new Christians renounced all of their wealth and possessions in accordance with the example found in the *Acts of the Apostles*.<sup>77</sup>

A comparison of the two texts reveals other Christian details inserted by Eusebius. Philo (noted Eusebius) had undoubtedly listened to some of the preaching of the *θεραπευταὶ*. The holy works that formed the basis of their study and discourses were the Gospels, writings of the Apostles, and texts cast in the mould of the prophetic works such as the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and the writings of Paul.<sup>78</sup> The female *θεραπευταὶ* were also a clear testimony to the Christian character of the group, as only Christian women voluntarily practised chastity in order to pursue wisdom.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Philo's description of an annual celebration clearly was the Christian celebration of the Passion of the Saviour (Easter), signified by its vigils, abstinence, and

<sup>74</sup> Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 17. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 17. 4.

<sup>76</sup> Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 16. 1–2. Mark, according to church tradition, was the companion of Peter and author of the Gospel account that bears his name.

<sup>77</sup> Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 17. 6. A small lapse occurred when Eusebius failed to reconcile an earlier statement (that the ascetics gave their property to their relatives [Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 17. 5]) with his example of the *θεραπευταὶ* following the precedent of the Apostolic Church and contributing their worldly goods to a common pool.

<sup>78</sup> Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 17. 6.

<sup>79</sup> Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 17. 18–19.



the way in which the clergy were seated in order of precedence.<sup>80</sup> It should be plain to any reader, concluded Eusebius, that Philo recorded some of the earliest traditions of the Christian Church which had been handed down from the Apostles.<sup>81</sup>

It seemed to have been plain to John Cassian, who chose to adopt the *θεραπευταὶ* as monastic forefathers. But just as Eusebius had altered Philo's account to suggest early Christian ascetics, Cassian improved Eusebius' version to offer an ancient antecedent for correct monastic praxis. The first significant difference in Cassian's account of these Egyptian ascetics is the fact that they have lost their name. They are no longer referred to as *θεραπευταὶ*. To the contrary, Cassian labels them monks.<sup>82</sup> Where Eusebius had tried to explain away Philo's name for the group, Cassian simply changed it to suit his purpose. In addition to altering the name of the group, Cassian also eliminated the women. His monks are described as fathers, and all of the pronouns in the passage (2. 5–6) are masculine. For Cassian, asceticism had developed out of an all-male context.

These earliest monks had received an ascetic rule (*normam*) from the evangelist Mark (following Eusebius). Mark was the link between Alexandria and Jerusalem, a conduit for the ascetic practices that had arisen in the first community of believers. Cassian improves on this Eusebian idea by elevating Mark to the bishopric. Although one could infer from Eusebius' account that Mark was the first bishop of Alexandria, he does not explicitly label Mark a cleric.<sup>83</sup> In a time when the major sees were competing for primacy by claiming apostolic foundation,<sup>84</sup> Cassian laid claim to Mark as one of the founders

<sup>80</sup> Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 17. 21–3. Philo writes of the order of seating during the celebration in which the *θεραπευταὶ* are arranged by length of service (Ph. *Con.* 67).

<sup>81</sup> Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 17. 24.

<sup>82</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 1 [SC 109: 64. 2]: *monachorum nomine censerentur*.

<sup>83</sup> The only other reference in Eusebius to Mark's position is Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 24. 1, where Eusebius notes that Annianus was the first man after Mark (the Evangelist) to receive the charge (*λειτουργίαν*) of the city and surrounding region. Interestingly enough, Eusebius does not use the term bishop (*ἐπίσκοπος*) here either, although he employs it regularly throughout the rest of his work.

<sup>84</sup> And an example overlapping with the period in which Cassian wrote *De institutis* was the claim made by Arles that it deserved to be the metropolitan over south-eastern Gaul because the church in the city had been founded by St Trophimus (Zosim. *Ep.* 3).

of Egyptian asceticism. Mark, as bishop and evangelist, lent authority to the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. He also provided a link to the original Apostolic Church in Jerusalem. That Cassian has this in mind can be seen by his immediate citation of Acts 4:32, 34–5, where the early members of the Jerusalem Church sell their property and goods and contribute the proceeds to the common fund. Having forged the link between Jerusalem and Alexandria, Cassian claimed that the Egyptian ascetics had achieved even greater things than what had been accomplished in Jerusalem.<sup>85</sup>

Cassian then realigned his account with what had been offered by Eusebius. The loftier deeds of the monks are located in their departure from Alexandria to pursue spiritual perfection in solitude. Outside the city (Cassian omits a reference to Lake Mareotis), they gave themselves over to the reading of the Holy Scripture, prayer, and manual labour.<sup>86</sup> Manual labour was another of Cassian's additions to the story. He would later insist that all monks needed to work, both in order to support themselves and to foster prayer.<sup>87</sup> Like the *θεραπευταί*, Cassian's monks endure heroic fasts, sometimes only eating every two or three days, and most certainly never before sunset.<sup>88</sup>

Cassian revised Eusebius' story in order to demonstrate the great antiquity of the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. The *θεραπευταί* were supplanted by the monastic fathers and true monasticism was tied to the beginning of Christian history. Readers who did not know this story were directed to the *Ecclesiastical History*, one of the very few citations to be found in Cassian's work,<sup>89</sup> where they could read it for themselves. Unlike those who were simply making up ascetic practices in Gaul, the *instituta Aegyptiorum* could be dated to the time of the Apostles. This legislation had endured because the ever-sapient fathers had taken steps to create a body of legislation that was to be kept by all successive generations.

<sup>85</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 1 [SC 109: 64. 13–14]: *uerum etiam his multo sublimiora cumulauerant.*

<sup>86</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13–14. It is possible that Cassian added manual labour as an explanation for how the *θεραπευταί* might support themselves, a question left unaddressed by both Philo and Eusebius.

<sup>88</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 2.

<sup>89</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 3.

## The Rule of the Angel

Having reworked Eusebius to locate his monks in the distant past, Cassian then moved on to an account of the genesis of the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. The second half of *De institutis* 2. 5 narrates the events that grew out of the founding fathers' perception that the original purity of the coenobitic life was under threat of contamination. Although the founding fathers possessed a great deal of fervour, there was a fear that subsequent generations might lapse into lukewarmness. This worry was addressed by the convocation of a monastic council charged with defining a form for daily worship. This legislation would ensure that subsequent generations of monks would enjoy a legacy of piety and peace rather than noxious schism and division.<sup>90</sup>

Cassian used the idea of a monastic council to lend additional authority to his *instituta Aegyptiorum*. A fifth-century reader would know that the purpose of a council was to delimit orthodox Christianity. Just as the bishops had gathered at Nicaea, Constantinople, and innumerable regional councils to judge what was correct for the church, so, too, did Cassian's monastic patriarchs meet to draft the legislation that would codify orthodox asceticism.

As with most councils, there was a considerable range of opinions present. The question of how many psalms to chant at the twice-daily offices was one question that divided the fathers. Like the Gauls, each father had his own particular practice. Unlike the Gauls, their desire for uniformity and a concern for the formation of future generations drove the fathers to search for a universal standard. The Egyptians were willing to conform to the consensus of the whole, whereas the Gauls persisted in their self-centred, idiosyncratic practices.

The heroic excellence of these fathers emerges in Cassian's account of the number of psalms advocated by each man. Each monk submitted larger numbers of psalms, championing what came easily to him, while simultaneously neglecting the needs of the weaker brothers. Some of these great monks advocated the recitation of fifty or sixty psalms at every office, while others pressed for more. Cassian emphasizes that this was not out of a spirit of pride or

<sup>90</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 3.

braggadocio, but rather a reflection of the individual excellence of these early monks. The debate was neither contentious nor an unsavoury example of monastic one-upmanship. Each was sincere in his advocacy of what he had found to be the best practice for his own temperament. Unfortunately, this wide variation of ideas created an irreconcilable rift, a 'holy disagreement'.<sup>91</sup>

The council had reached an impasse, one that human negotiating skills were unable to resolve. The hour of prayer approached and the monks decided to celebrate the evening office (vespers) together. A monk rose in their midst and chanted twelve psalms. At the conclusion of the twelfth psalm, he vanished from sight, imposing a sudden end to the office as well as to the dispute over the appropriate number of psalms. The holy fathers understood, wrote Cassian, that God, through the agency of an angel, had established a universal rule for the nocturnal offices, one that was to be observed by the congregations of brothers.<sup>92</sup>

Cassian's invocation of an angelic messenger shifts the authority of the *instituta Aegyptiorum* to a higher plane. In the first book of *De institutis* Cassian had justified his recommendations for monastic garb with appeals to the example of the prophets, apostles, and early fathers. Cassian now made God the source of the rule for prayer. In doing so, he reworked a story that was current in Egypt and placed it at the heart of his foundation myth. The best parallel to Cassian's version is the account offered by Palladius in the *Historia Lausiaca*, in which Pachomius received a bronze tablet containing the rules for monastic life from an angel.<sup>93</sup>

In Palladius' version, Pachomius was sitting alone in a cave when an angel appeared. The angel told Pachomius that because he had attained perfection, he was now fit to go forth and lead young men into the monastic life. To aid in this task, the angel gave Pachomius a

<sup>91</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 4 [SC 109: 68. 50–1]: *contentionis sancta diuersitas*.

<sup>92</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 6.

<sup>93</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 32. This story was later repeated in Soz. *Hist. eccl.* 3. 14, where Sozomen adds the interesting detail that the bronze tablet existed in his day. The correspondence with the version offered in the *Historia Lausiaca* suggests that Palladius' work was the source for Sozomen (see Edward Cuthbert Butler, *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, Vol. 2 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904], 206, n. 50).

bronze tablet that contained directives for food and drink, work, dress, and the organization of the monastery. Additionally, the angel ordered the monks to ‘offer twelve prayers throughout the day, twelve at the time of lamp-lighting, twelve at the night vigils, and three at the ninth hour; but when the monks are about to eat, he ordered a psalm to be sung before each prayer’.<sup>94</sup> When Pachomius protested that this number of prayers was too small, the angel answered that the measure had been set with the needs of the weak rather than the strong in mind.<sup>95</sup>

The stylistic variations between this chapter and the rest of Palladius’ work have led some scholars to suggest that Palladius copied this account from a written source.<sup>96</sup> It is likely that the story did not originate with Palladius and had been circulating in oral and written forms for some time. Indeed, one sign that the story predates Palladius may be found in Jerome’s preface to the *Rule of Pachomius* (*Regulae Pachomii*), where Jerome mentions the ‘angel who was sent to them, having been sent on behalf of this rule itself’.<sup>97</sup> Although Jerome does not offer any details of the story, his reference (made in the year 404) suggests that a version of the tale existed prior to its appearance in the *Historia Lausiaca*.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 32 [Butler (1904): 92. 3–7]: ἐτύπωσε δὲ διὰ πάσης τῆς ἡμέρας ποιεῖν αὐτοὺς εὐχὰς δώδεκα, καὶ ἐν τῷ λυχνικῷ δώδεκα, καὶ ἐν ταῖς παννυχίσι δώδεκα, καὶ ἐννάτην ὥραν τρεῖς· ὅτε δὲ μέλλει τὸ πλῆθος ἐσθίειν ἐκάστη εὐχῇ ψαλμὸν προῤῥεσθαι τυπώσας.

<sup>95</sup> This is a theme that Benedict of Nursia would develop as the backbone of his rule: the need to set goals that even the weakest of the monks could attain. See, for instance, his legislation on the proper amount of wine for a monk: a monk is allowed a half bottle per day as a concession to the weak, although the strong brother should aim to take no wine at all (Ben. *Reg.* 40).

<sup>96</sup> The arguments for this view may be found in Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia I: The Life of Saint Pachomius* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 5–6.

<sup>97</sup> Hier. *Reg. Pachom.* Pref. 1 [PL 23: 65B]: *qui ad eos ob hanc ipsam institutionem missus venerit qui ad eos ob hanc ipsam institutionem missus venerit.*

<sup>98</sup> A. van der Mensbrugghe, ‘Prayer-time in Egyptian Monasticism (320–450),’ *SPAT* 2 (1957), 445, dates the genesis of the Rule of the Angel to the period between 346 and 390. He attributes (447) the differences in Cassian’s and Palladius’ versions to the fact that the Rule (and the monastic practice of prayer it purports to legislate) developed between the time when Cassian first heard it (prior to 400), and the time when Palladius heard it (during a trip back to Egypt after Theophilus’ death in 412). I believe that the differences in the story have more to do with the rhetorical aims of each author. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia I*, 6, sees this story as one which predated Palladius, and concludes ‘the famous Rule of the Angel is a document composed in Lower Egypt by someone who had only a very superficial knowledge of the Pachomian Koinonia’.

Although my intent here is not to trace the transmission and development of this story, certain interesting observations may be drawn about the way Cassian reshaped it. Whereas Jerome and Palladius both agree that the Rule of the Angel was associated with Pachomius, Cassian linked it to his ancient Egyptians. As in his reworking of Philo and Eusebius, Cassian hijacked a story and modified it to apply to his own monastic patriarchs.

There is also a sense of monastic one-upmanship in Cassian's account. His angel did not give the fathers a list of regulations for monastic life, but only disappeared in a timely manner to settle an irreconcilable division. The angel in Cassian's story provides guidance that is subtler than Palladius' angel (who offered rules on inscribed tablets). Moreover, although Cassian's fathers had engaged in a vigorous debate over the number of psalms, when the angel vanished all dissent ended. Pachomius, on the other hand, argues with the angel. The fathers demonstrate spiritual discernment by correctly interpreting the significance of the angel's sudden disappearance, and then by obediently shaping their psalmody to conform to a divine standard. While the great founder of Pachomian monasticism sits in a cave arguing with an angel (and indeed needs to have the rules written out for him on a tablet), Cassian's patriarchs immediately discern God's will and get on with the business of establishing the code.<sup>99</sup>

In Cassian's account, divine intervention set the seal of orthodoxy on the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. The disappearance of the angel clearly established God's will for monastic praxis, in contrast to the diverse practices Cassian had observed throughout Gaul. By reworking the Rule of the Angel to meet his purpose, Cassian grounded the *instituta Aegyptiorum* in the ultimate authority.

### 3 THE TRANSMISSION OF THE *INSTITUTA*

The suggestion that the *instituta Aegyptiorum* were of great age and antiquity was one of Cassian's most important arguments. Far from being a collection of novel practices, they were rooted in the early

<sup>99</sup> See the discussion in Chapter 3 for Cassian's views on Pachomian monasticism.

Apostolic Church, the seed from which true monasticism had sprung. Indeed, as Cassian stated, these earliest monks had made it their business to establish normative practices for the ascetics who would come after them.

But what guaranteed that the *instituta* forged by these earliest monks were the same as those used by the Egyptian monks of the early fifth century? Cassian offered a simple solution to this problem: the *instituta Aegyptiorum* had been handed on from master to disciple in an unbroken line that linked the Apostolic Church to the present-day Egyptian fathers. In positing this chain of transmission, Cassian invoked the same argument that ecclesiastical writers had used since the first century, the idea that orthodox doctrine was guaranteed by Apostolic succession.<sup>100</sup>

A precedent for this idea was to be found in Clement of Rome's work, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (c.96). In this letter, he suggested the continuity of orthodox doctrine by stating that Jesus had taught the apostles, who had then instructed and ordained the bishops and deacons who were responsible for training those who would follow.<sup>101</sup> This uniformity of doctrine and practice was still to be found among the apostolically-founded churches, according to Hegesippus, who had made a tour of these churches (c.154–66).<sup>102</sup>

This line of argumentation received further development in Irenaeus' polemic against gnosticism.<sup>103</sup> In *Adversus haereses*, Irenaeus claimed that the doctrines taught by the *true* church were those that

<sup>100</sup> The use of apostolic succession as an argument for the authentication of orthodox practice may have derived from the example provided by the Hellenistic philosophers. See Allen Brent, 'Diogenes Laertius and the Apostolic Succession,' *JEH* 44 (1993), 367–89, who postulates a clear connection between the creation of lists demonstrating apostolic succession by writers like Irenaeus, and the succession lists created by philosophers like Diogenes. As Robert A. Markus, 'Church History and Early Church Historians,' *Studies in Church History* 11 (1975), 6, suggests, it was also one of the major tests for Eusebius for differentiating between orthodoxy (which was characterized by lineal succession and continuity of teaching) and heresy (discontinuity).

<sup>101</sup> *I Clem.* 42.

<sup>102</sup> *Eus. Hist. Eccl.* 4. 22. Hegesippus' five-volume polemic against the gnostics (from which Eusebius quoted) is lost.

<sup>103</sup> Jean Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Authority: A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1973), 144–51. For Irenaeus' use of tradition: Denis Minns, *Irenaeus* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 134.

had been taught by the apostles.<sup>104</sup> This body of tradition had been so zealously guarded and handed down, maintained Irenaeus, that if the apostles had left no writings behind, the church would still be succoured by properly transmitted tradition.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, this was happening among those barbarian churches that did not have access to the written copies of the Bible.<sup>106</sup>

Cassian employed the same argument. The *instituta Aegyptiorum* had been established by the earliest monks for the benefit of those ascetics who would follow them.<sup>107</sup> Having agreed on a mode of daily practice, (and in the case of the number of psalms, having received divine instruction on the question), the fathers passed on the *instituta* to their followers. Consequently, like the orthodox doctrine that was guaranteed by a chain of bishops reaching back to the Apostles, the *instituta Aegyptiorum* could similarly be traced back to the first monks.

Cassian makes this point in his discussion of the monastic robe. Opposing those who have chosen to wear sackcloth coverings, he writes:

And for that reason, it will be appropriate that we, too, curtail as superfluous and unprofitable these examples which we see were not handed down from the holy men of old, nor by the fathers of our own times, who now constantly guard their institutes through succession.

Et idcirco haec quae nec a ueteribus sanctis, qui huius professionis fundamenta iecerunt, neque a patribus nostri temporis, qui eorum per successiones instituta nunc usque custodiunt, tradita uidemus exempla, ut superflua et inutilia nos quoque resecare conueniet.<sup>108</sup>

Cassian restates this point more emphatically at the end of the same chapter:

For we ought to bestow sure faith and unquestioned obedience in all respects to these institutes and rules, not those that the will of a few introduced, but rather those whose antiquity is of such great age, and the

<sup>104</sup> In Iren. *Haer.* 3. 3, Irenaeus traced the chain of the bishops of Rome from Linus (Peter's successor) to Eleutherius (the bishop who presided when he wrote).

<sup>105</sup> Iren. *Haer.* 3. 4.

<sup>106</sup> Iren. *Haer.* 3. 4. A similar view on apostolic succession is expressed by Origen in his preface to *De Principiis* (Or. *Princ.* Pref. 2).

<sup>107</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 5. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 2. 2 [SC 109: 40. 19–23].



countless numbers of the holy fathers have passed on, by unanimous agreement, to later times.

Illis enim debemus institutis ac regulis indubitata[m] fidem et indiscussam oboedientiam per omnia commodare, non quas paucorum uoluntas intulit, sed quas uetustas tantorum temporum et innumerositas sanctorum patrum concord[i] definitione in posterum propagauit.<sup>109</sup>

The proposition that the *instituta Aegyptiorum* were laid down by the founders of the monastic life, and subsequently transmitted without dilution or modification to the present-day Egyptian monks, was Cassian's most powerful argument against the novelty of the home-grown Gallic practices.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, as Cassian stated in his preface, these *instituta* had been passed on to him, a claim he made when he told Castor that he would offer an account of the institutes of the monasteries, a body of legislation that had been 'handed on to us by the fathers in that place'.<sup>111</sup>

Cassian stood in a line of men who had been trained in (and were now poised to pass on) the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. This claim points to his *experientia*, as well as highlighting the unbroken chain of praxis that reached back to the ancient founders of monasticism.<sup>112</sup> Cassian does not offer novel practices, but rather asserts that he can deliver what is kept (*custodiri*) by the present-day monks in Egypt. Their zealous custodianship ensured the purity of what had been handed on (*tradita sunt*). Like the 'orthodox doctrine' passed from the Apostles to bishops, and whose roots in antiquity were a defence against heretical innovation, the *instituta Aegyptiorum* had been handed along a chain that stretched, unbroken, back to the Apostolic Church. Cassian had been trained in the *instituta* of the east, and had received this teaching from those who guaranteed the purity of these doctrines, the successors of an Apostolically-instituted and divinely-sanctioned monasticism.

<sup>109</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 2. 4 [SC 109: 42. 39–43].

<sup>110</sup> A theme explored above in Chapter 2.

<sup>111</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 3 [SC 109: 24. 39–40]: *ita ut ibi nobis a patribus tradita sunt*.

<sup>112</sup> In Cassian, *Coll.* 10. 10. 2, Cassian hints that the duty of transmitting this knowledge was given only to the best disciples. Abba Isaac, offering the formula for unceasing prayer, states that it had been passed to him by a few of the oldest fathers, and he passed it on only to the most exceptional disciples who desired it.

#### 4 ANTIQUITAS AGAINST DIVERSITAS

One of the principal arguments Cassian employed in *De institutis* 1. 2 (his discussion of the monk's robe) was the idea that the practices of the few (even the notable few) must not take precedence over established monastic practices (the *instituta Aegyptiorum*). The opinions of a minority, no matter how saintly, should not be preferred or favoured over the universal constitution of all which has its roots in antiquity. With this sentiment, Cassian foreshadowed the test Vincent of Lerins offered to distinguish orthodoxy, ('what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all')<sup>113</sup> from heresy.

Cassian's strategy of creating a history for his *instituta* and then contrasting this ancient background with the novelty of Gallic practices had a long tradition in Christian polemic against heretics.<sup>114</sup> Cassian's creation of a monastic tradition, founded by the Prophets and Apostles, and handed down from master to disciple, evoked the arguments Hippolytus and Irenaeus used against the teachings of the Montanists. The Montanists had claimed that their possession of the prophetic voice meant that their beliefs were inspired and valid. That the voice of prophecy no longer spoke in the hardening 'Catholic' Church proved that the Spirit had departed from that institution.<sup>115</sup>

Hippolytus' solution to the challenge offered by the Montanists was to maintain that Christ's return was not imminent, and that true prophecy had ceased with John's Apocalypse.<sup>116</sup> The normative guidelines for church doctrine were ensured by the Holy Spirit, who had inspired the texts of the Bible, not in the present innovation and interpretations offered by the Montanists. Likewise, Irenaeus stipulated that the Holy Spirit no longer worked through the prophetic voice, but through a threefold norm: Scripture, the Apostolic Creed, and Apostolic succession.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Vinc.-Lir. *Comm.* 2. 5 [CCSL 64: 149. 25–6]: *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est.*

<sup>114</sup> In the following discussion, the term 'heretic' is used to denote a person or party which held a view different to that of the author of a polemic against that view. The use of the term might seem anachronistic, applied to those views which did not ultimately prevail, but in fact, it was a favourite pejorative used by polemical writers.

<sup>115</sup> See Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of Catholic Doctrine (100–600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 97–123, for an excellent discussion of the evolution of the church's defence against charismatic challenge.

<sup>116</sup> Hipp. *Antichr.* 31; 47–8.

<sup>117</sup> Iren. *Haer.* 3. 5.

Cassian offered a parallel to Irenaeus' threefold guarantee of orthodoxy. His founders of the monastic life (the Prophets, Apostles, and the Acts 4 Church) were the equivalent of those who wrote Scripture. The *instituta Aegyptiorum* are the equivalent of ecclesiastical tradition and the Apostolic Creed, and the faithful fathers who have passed them generation to generation suggests the doctrine of Apostolic succession.<sup>118</sup>

These guarantors of orthodoxy and correct praxis were contrasted with the few who make up rules for monks that do not follow the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. These men were the spiritual equivalent of Montanists, presuming that they have the right to legislate because of their virtues (*uirtutes*).<sup>119</sup> By caricaturing the conflict in this manner, Cassian evokes the spectre of heresy, the danger of those who set their *charismata* against the ancient practices of the church.

But even more dangerous than heresy was the knowledge that the deceiver (Satan) was behind these false rules. Cassian made this connection in *Collationes*, where he asserted that just as the Devil attempted to twist Scripture in order to trick Jesus, so, too, did he incite men to formulate rules that were not in keeping with the *instituta Aegyptiorum* in order to lead ascetics astray. Although these rules resembled the *instituta Aegyptiorum*, they were in fact, counterfeits. Cassian employed a numismatic analogy to illustrate his point: rather than being the true coin of the elders, the false rules were stamped with the image of the usurper. Satan tried to lead the monks astray by encouraging them to follow rules that appeared to cultivate spiritual perfection, but in fact, lead to destruction. The unwary were trapped and drawn off the proper path. The rules (coins) had not been minted by the trusted and experienced Catholic fathers, but rather, were forgeries intended to deceive the inexperienced.<sup>120</sup>

The true monk ordered his life by the authentic deposit of the monastic tradition, the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. This tradition was founded in antiquity by prophets, apostles, and the holy fathers; it was passed master to disciple over the centuries; moreover, it enjoyed

<sup>118</sup> Henry Chadwick, 'Bishops and Monks,' *SPAT* 29 (1993), 45.

<sup>119</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 2. 3.

<sup>120</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 1. 20.

the unanimous agreement of all.<sup>121</sup> Consequently, the laws that had guided untold legions of ascetics demand unquestioning faith and obedience, a compliance that brooked no discussion. This was the true coin of the monk.

## 5 DEVIATIONS FROM THE *INSTITUTA AEGYPTIORUM*

The preceding sections have demonstrated how Cassian created and supported an independent source of authority for his monastic teaching. Cassian told his readers that what he intended to offer, the *instituta Aegyptiorum*, had been forged in antiquity when the church was pure, and had been handed down (unaltered) through successive generations of like-minded followers. The *instituta Aegyptiorum* were not a novel formulation on Cassian's part, but ancient teachings, and consequently should command the allegiance of all who walked the ascetic way.

There is, however, a problem in all of this. Cassian had raised the *instituta Aegyptiorum* to an exalted position, the pinnacle of all monastic praxis; he had rigorously justified the authority of this body of legislation. Yet all of this work seems to be undermined by his claim that he was going to alter them for his Gallic audience:

I will take it on myself in this work to moderate to a certain extent with the institutes of the monasteries in Palestine and Mesopotamia, those practices following the Egyptian rule that I agree to be impossible in these regions, or hard or arduous, whether through the severity of the climate or on account of the difficulty and difference of custom. Let me temper them to a certain degree, because, if a reasonable measure of what is possible is kept, there is the same perfection of observance, although the opportunity may be inferior.

Illam sane moderationem opusculo huic interserere praesumam, ut ea, quae secundum Aegyptiorum regulam seu pro asperitate aerum seu pro difficultate ac diversitate morum impossibilia in his regionibus uel dura uel ardua

<sup>121</sup> Harries, *Law and Empire*, 65–9, for the role of *consensus universorum* in imperial legislation, and Charlotte Roueché, 'Acclamation in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias,' *JRS* 74 (1984), 87–188, for the idea that in Late Antiquity the *consensus universorum* certified divine will.

conprobauero, institutis monasteriorum, quae per Palaestinam uel Mesopotamiam habentur, aliquatenus temperem, quia, si rationabilis possibilitum mensura seruetur, eadem obseruantiae perfectio est etiam in inpari facultate.<sup>122</sup>

If the *instituta Aegyptiorum* enjoyed the status of a quasi-divine law, who was Cassian to change them? And perhaps more importantly, does not his claim to be offering a diluted version of the *instituta Aegyptiorum* threaten the basis of authority he had so rigorously developed? By altering what had been instituted in the age of the Apostolic Church and passed down unmodified to the present generation, Cassian would seem to lay himself open to being as much a source of novel innovations as those who were creating monastic works out of their own *ingenium*.

In this passage, Cassian makes four significant points. The first is to place the *instituta Aegyptiorum* at the pinnacle of monastic *instituta*. Secondly, he locates his Gallic audience (who are engaged in making up their own monastic practices) in the monastic hierarchy (near the bottom, unable even to come close to matching the Egyptians). The third point (by implication) is that Cassian was such an expert that he could engineer a diluted version of the *instituta Aegyptiorum* for his ascetic beginners. And finally, Cassian broadly suggests that even though the Gauls will fall well short of the Egyptians, even a little progress in the right direction is a good thing.

Cassian claims that the *instituta Aegyptiorum* stand at the peak of monastic *instituta*. This is a view that he will consistently maintain throughout *De institutis* and *Collationes*. The *instituta Aegyptiorum* are closely followed by the ordinances of the Pachomian monks.<sup>123</sup> Although the Pachomians practice a commendable rigour, they lack the spiritual discernment found among those who have been trained under the *instituta Aegyptiorum*.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, the Pachomian system is placed on the second tier of Cassian's monastic hierarchy, a position that is inferior only to the *instituta Aegyptiorum*.

Much further down the ladder one finds the institutes of the Palestinians, Syrians, Mesopotamians, and Cappadocians. The practices of the monasteries in these regions are useful for diluting the *instituta Aegyptiorum* for the Gauls. This point, implied in *De*

<sup>122</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 9 [SC 109: 30. 121–32. 128].

<sup>123</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 1–2.

<sup>124</sup> See the earlier discussion in Chapter 3.

*institutis*, is stated explicitly in *Collationes*. Germanus and Cassian had promised the elders of their monastery in Bethlehem that they would return to the monastery after a short Egyptian sojourn. Unfortunately, the excellence of the Egyptian monks had convinced both men that they ought to stay in the desert, reneging on their promise. While discussing whether to honour their promise to return, Germanus was asked whether what he had learned in Egypt was superior to what he learned in Bethlehem. He replied, 'We are not able to draw a comparison between these [the Egyptian institutes] and those institutes we learned there.'<sup>125</sup>

This denigration of the Palestinian *instituta*, is developed further in the next book of *Collationes*. Here, a certain Abba Piamun claimed that Cassian's earlier training in a Bethlehem monastery was a hindrance in the quest for spiritual perfection; what he had learned in Palestine would have to be forgotten before he could begin to make progress in the perfect life.<sup>126</sup> There was no possibility of moving forward until he had unlearned his old *instituta*.

Likewise, the poor quality of the monks formed under the Cappadocian system is suggested by Cassian's claim that a rule of silence had to be instituted among them to still the bickering over the dinner table.<sup>127</sup> Whereas the leaders of those monasteries had to deprive their monks of the right to speak in order to keep arguments from erupting, the Egyptians sat in perfect, contented silence.

As inadequate as the *instituta* of the Cappadocians, Mesopotamians, and Palestinians may have been, they were still better than the diverse rules of the Gauls, which are located at the bottom of Cassian's ascetic hierarchy. In fact, it should be noted that Cassian never uses the term *instituta* as a reference to the practices of the

<sup>125</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 17. 7 [SC 54: 253. 5–7]: *nullam ducimus comparationem inter haec atque illa quae illic percepimus instituta*. Cassian's denigration of the *instituta* of his previous monastery may also be found in Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 36. 1 [SC 109: 246. 2], where he stated that he had come to Egypt from the monasteries of Palestine, 'completely untrained' (*rudes admodum*).

<sup>126</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 3. 1. The same negative view is expressed in Cassian, *Coll.* 19. 1. 3 where Cassian noted that he had never seen such a great expression of the virtue of patience in his Syrian monastery. And again in Cassian, *Coll.* 19. 2. 2 where he wrote that the virtue of humility was completely lacking in our own institutes (presumably Syrian again).

<sup>127</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 17.

Gallic monks. The strongest terms Cassian grants the Gauls are *typus* and *regula*. The Gauls 'have arranged for themselves, concerning these matters, various plans and rules'.<sup>128</sup> Whatever practices the Gauls follow, they are certainly not *instituta*.

Cassian repeatedly reminded his Gallic readers that they are not capable of the rigorous excellence of those formed under the *instituta Aegyptiorum*.<sup>129</sup> In order that they might still get something out of their ascetic practice, Cassian stated that he would dilute these practices. In doing so, however, he is careful to note that he will not be introducing his own ideas, but rather adopting the baser monastic practices of the Pachomians, Cappadocians, Palestinians, and Mesopotamians. One example of this is the addition of the three daily offices of prayer to the monastic *cursus*. According to Cassian, the Egyptians only have two communal offices of prayer each day, Vespers and Nocturns.<sup>130</sup> The rest of the time the Egyptians pray without ceasing. For the Gauls, who are unable to match this excellence in prayer, Cassian claims that he will interpolate three daily offices (Terce, Sext, and None), a *cursus* which had been drawn from the monasteries of Palestine and Mesopotamia.<sup>131</sup>

Another example of a change to the *instituta Aegyptiorum* may be found in the legislation concerning the reception of novices. Cassian stated that these rules were drawn from the rules of Pachomians and the *instituta Aegyptiorum*.<sup>132</sup> Cassian makes this change because the Gauls simply are unable to match the perfection and rigour of the Egyptians.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2. 1 [SC 109: 58. 3–11]: *super hac re diversos typos ac regulas sibimet constituisse... typos ac regulas uidimus usurpatas*. A similar sentiment may be found in Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 5 [SC 109: 62. 38].

<sup>129</sup> In addition to making this point in the preface, he reasserts it in Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 2, when he states that the Gauls needed to pray at fixed times because they were incapable of the unceasing prayer of the Egyptians. The argument is repeated in Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 2, where he states that no one from our (presumably Gallic) monasteries would be able to maintain Egyptian (in this case Pachomian) rigour for even as long as a year.

<sup>130</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 2. The monks do gather communally at the third hour of Saturday and Sunday when they share communion.

<sup>131</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 1.

<sup>132</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 1.

<sup>133</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 1: *perfectionem Aegyptiorum et inimitabilem disciplinae rigorem horum*.

The Gallic monks will never compare with the spiritual giants who have been formed under the *instituta Aegyptiorum*, but short of going to Egypt and seeking training, a Gallic monk has few options.<sup>134</sup> Unable to endure the hardships of the undiluted Egyptian system, the Gaul might make a little progress by adopting Cassian's version of the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. Ultimately, the Gallic monk's skill will be inferior to the Egyptian, but even this smaller gain will outdistance those who are making up their own practices in Gaul.<sup>135</sup>

\* \* \*

This chapter has advanced the premise that the *instituta Aegyptiorum* were a construct Cassian employed to create an authoritative basis for his ascetic ideas. Cassian does this by making an essentially simple proposal: the ascetic life is not something new to Christianity, but rather, was forged in the same fires that gave birth to the church. In fact, Cassian asserted, the charisms and fervour of the original Apostolic Church are preserved only in the Egyptian ascetic strand.

Nevertheless, since fervour only lasts a season (or a generation in this case), the monastic forebears who had emerged from the decaying Apostolic Church met together to craft an enduring body of legislation that would guide all true ascetics. The authority conveyed by their individual charisms was codified, preserved for those who sought the highest way of life. This ascetic code, according to Cassian, was the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. Organized by the most excellent of the ascetics and an angel, based on the examples of prophets and apostles, this code was intended to be normative for all who followed. Moreover, it served its purpose, and to Cassian's day, had served as

<sup>134</sup> It is intriguing that Cassian never proposes this as a viable course of action. The one time he mentions the possibility is in reference to Eucherius of Lyons (Cassian, *Coll.* Pref. 2. 1). Here he noted that Eucherius had wanted to go to Egypt to learn the greatest system, leaving behind a Gaul that was sluggish with the numbness of frost. Consequently, Cassian felt obliged to offer a second series of Conferences in order to make unnecessary such a dangerous voyage (Cassian, *Coll.* Pref. 2. 2). Stewart, *Cassian*, 28, labels this a 'suspiciously ingenuous motivation'. Had Eucherius travelled to Egypt he might have found the situation somewhat different from what was described by Cassian.

<sup>135</sup> Cassian's premise, that faithful observance of even a little is better than negligence in much is restated by Abba Paul in *Collationes*, who, commenting on his reasons for leaving his hermitage and joining a coenobium, suggests that it is better to be found faithful in keeping little promises than careless in keeping great ones (Cassian, *Coll.* 19. 3. 2).



the code for the Egyptian monks, to whom it had passed through an unbroken line of succession. Since this was the case, those who practised asceticism were obliged to turn from their own novel formulations and adhere to this normative code, which had been tempered to accommodate the weaker Gallic monks.

Unfortunately, the other contemporaneous sources for Egyptian monasticism do not bear out Cassian's claim of a unified practice. Egyptian practices varied from monk to monk and place to place. In fact, the *instituta Aegyptiorum* are a means of substantiating anything Cassian wishes to prescribe for his Gallic audience. They have an authority that transcends his own, one which he had consciously created with this purpose in mind.

Cassian employed two major strategies to win a hearing for his ascetic ideas in Gaul. Firstly, he emphasized the experience that underpinned his work, experience that was missing in both the native Gallic ascetic experiments, as well as in the work of competing ascetic writers. Secondly, he shifted the basis for authority from himself to an ancient body of monastic legislation. Cassian, unlike those who made up their ascetic regulations, was nothing more than an experienced monk passing on an ancient system.

## *Renuntiatio* and the 'Rhetoric of Renunciation'

Earlier chapters of this study focused on the strategies Cassian employed to win a hearing for his coenobitic legislation. As we have seen, Cassian went to considerable length to promote himself as an experienced ascetic, someone with a great deal to offer his Gallic readership. But why did Cassian need to take such pains to justify his work? How did his ascetic legislation differ from the works of his predecessors?

In Chapter 1, I suggested that early fifth-century Gallic ascetic literature had made the case for fusing the ascetic and aristocratic lifestyle. As we shall see in this chapter, Cassian took exception to this idea and advanced an asceticism that began with a true, self-immolating renunciation, rather than the rhetoric of renunciation offered to an elite readership by other promoters of the ascetic life.<sup>1</sup> This rhetoric had been shaped to appeal to a well-born class, portraying asceticism as a lifestyle that further ennobled the practitioner: he or she became part of a divine aristocracy.<sup>2</sup> These versions of the ascetic life, celebrated in much of the literature of the late fourth to early

<sup>1</sup> See Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London: Viking, 1986), 301, for the nature of extant Christian writings from this period as the product of an elite class offered to an elite audience.

<sup>2</sup> Michèle Renee Salzman, 'Competing Claims to *Nobilitas* in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries,' *J ECS* 9 (2001), 362; Susanna Elm, 'Orthodoxy as the True Philosophical Life: Julian and Gregory of Nazianzus,' *SPAT* 37 (2001), 70–1, notes that the adoption of Christianity by the elite class was facilitated by accommodating their traditional values and maintaining their status in the new Christian community.

fifth century, bore a closer resemblance to the traditional Roman practice of *otium*<sup>3</sup> than the rigorous, self-abnegating discipline of the Desert Fathers. While we should not make the mistake of assuming that the extant literature captures the entire spectrum of western ascetic practice, these works were written to serve as models for aristocrats contemplating the ascetic life.<sup>4</sup> The sources propose a tamed asceticism, a Christian philosophical life made palatable for an elite class. By conflating *otium* and Christianity, they provided a wide gate through which the aristocrat could pass with most of his or her traditional perquisites intact. The models proffered emphasize an ascetic life tailored to fit the values and *mores* of well-born aristocrats.<sup>5</sup>

Western ascetic writers took captive the classical ideal of *otium* and reconsecrated it as a suitable vehicle for Christian asceticism. The idea that one might withdraw from the city and the business (*negotium*) found there, to the country in order to cultivate virtue and think philosophically had roots that reached back to Cicero.<sup>6</sup> For Christian elites, a reworking of this long-standing ideal moved the

<sup>3</sup> A full analysis of the word *otium* from its first use in classical literature down to the time of Cassian may be found in Jean LeClercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le vocabulaire de la contemplation au moyen âge* (Rome: Herder, 1963), 25–41. This discussion is complemented by Dennis Trout, 'Otium,' in *Augustine Through the Ages*, edited by Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), 618–19. See also, Jacques Fontaine, 'Valeurs Antiques et Valeurs Chrétiennes dans la Spiritualité des Grands Propriétaires Terriens à la Fin du IV<sup>e</sup> Siècle Occidental,' in *Epektasis: Mélanges Patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, edited by Jacques Fontaine and Charles Kannengiesser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 571–95 and John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court: A.D. 364–425* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 1–31.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine offers one example of the recruiting value of these works in his story of the emperor's agents who are drawn into the ascetic life after reading the *Vita Antonii* (Aug. *Conf.* 8. 6). Cf. Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Antique Christianity,' in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon, 1986), 176.

<sup>5</sup> For the aristocratic view that a Christianity of personal renunciation was for the elites only: J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 5; see also, Salzman, *Competing Claims*, 359–85.

<sup>6</sup> The leisure of *otium* was deemed essential for the cultivation of virtue (LeClercq, *Otia Monastica*, 25). This leisure and seclusion from the world was also essential for the literary task. One example of this may be found in Vincent of Lérins, who claimed that his retreat from the bustle and crowds of the cities to a remote monastery situated on a small country estate (*uillula*) made the composition of his work possible (Vinc.-Lir. *Comm.* 1. 2).

study of Christian theology rather than philosophy to the centre of the withdrawal from the business of the world.<sup>7</sup> When the Roman elite, inspired by tales from the eastern deserts, looked for a model for their own withdrawal, they quite naturally turned to *otium*.

As Christianity infiltrated the higher echelons of Roman society, examples multiplied of aristocrats who blended *otium* with the study of Christian *philosophia*. Ausonius of Bordeaux was an early, prominent, Gallic example of this synthesis. Although certainly not an ascetic, the case of Ausonius suggests how *otium* and Christianity could be fused. This conflation is illustrated by the scene Ausonius constructs in his poem, *Ephemeris*. The extant sections of this poem paint a charming picture of villa-oriented Christian life. The poet rises in the morning and offers a prayer (in hexameters) to God in his private chapel. At the conclusion of the prayer, Ausonius notes that his duty had been fulfilled: 'Now I have prayed enough to God.'<sup>8</sup> Ausonius' brief spate of Christian devotion was one of the many obligations the poet would attend to during his day, set in its proper place alongside other tasks such as writing lunch invitations, directing the cook, and dictating literary works to his secretary. Ausonius' exercise of faith may have been an important part of his routine, but it certainly was not the focus of the poet's daily round.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> And indeed this distinction is an anachronism. The division between theology and philosophy was a later development. Consequently, Christian withdrawal from the world was often labelled a retreat for the purpose of studying 'philosophy'. Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, claimed that Macrina induced both Basil and her mother to take up the study of philosophy (i.e. Christian theology) (Gr. Nyss. *V. Macr.* 6). Christian asceticism was interpreted in terms of the ideals of the philosopher by many early Christian writers. Eusebius, when writing about Origen noted that he had lived the philosophic life for many years, which Eusebius defined as following certain ascetic practices (limiting sleep, fasting, going barefoot, taking no wine) and the intense study of the Scriptures (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 6. 3. 9–12). This sustained demonstration of the philosophic life (φιλοσόφου βίου) attracted many students, including some who had been unbelieving gentiles (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 6. 3. 13). Likewise, the Cappadocian Fathers also equated Christian asceticism with the life of philosophy, although this link is more common in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzen than in Basil (cf. Rosemary Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1969], 15 n. 2).

<sup>8</sup> Aus. *Ephem.* 4. 1 [Green (1991): 10. 1]: *satis precum dato deo*.

<sup>9</sup> On Ausonius in general, see Nora Chadwick, *Poetry and Letters in Early Christian Gaul* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1955), 47–62; Hagith Sivan, *Ausonius of Bordeaux: Genesis of a Gallic Aristocracy* (London: Routledge, 1993); Keith Hopkins, 'Social

A more deliberate attempt to merge Christian asceticism with *otium* seems to have motivated Augustine's early retreat with his friends to the estate of Verecundus at Cassiciacum for the purpose of studying Christian *philosophia*. Augustine repeatedly characterized this retreat as a life of *otium*.<sup>10</sup> Although this rural interlude was ostensibly devoted to Christian study, Augustine also alluded to more traditional Roman activities: the men spent a good deal of time engaged in literary pursuits, writing letters (or as in Augustine's case, four dialogues),<sup>11</sup> as well as reading Virgil (half a book before the evening meal).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Augustine's dialogues were consciously set in the framework of the *otium ruris*—they took place while strolling in the meadows or sitting together in the baths.<sup>13</sup> This was a far cry from the radical renunciation of the world associated with the Desert Fathers. Augustine and his companions, as Trout notes, 'assumed that the proper and complete practice of Christianity required a degree of learning and leisure probably available to few outside the elite'.<sup>14</sup> The Roman ideal of *otium ruris* was maintained; the study of Christianity was substituted for the study of *philosophia*; the complex web of social ties and values that linked the elite to the late antique aristocratic world was left in place in a way that would have not been possible in a retreat to the Egyptian desert.<sup>15</sup>

Mobility in the Later Roman Empire: The Evidence of Ausonius,' *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 11 (1961), 239–49; Roger Green, *The Works of Ausonius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Aug. *Ord.* 1. 7. 20; Dennis E. Trout, 'Augustine at Cassiciacum: *Otium Honestum* and the Social Dimensions of Conversion,' *VC* 42 (1988), 136.

<sup>11</sup> Augustine's works, *Contra Academicos*, *De beata vita*, *De Ordine*, *Soliloquia* all date from this period.

<sup>12</sup> Aug. *Ord.* 1. 8. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Aug. *Beat.* 4. 23; Aug. *Acad.* 3. 1. 1. Cf. Trout, *Augustine*, 137. A comparable set of emphases surrounded the literary activities of Paulinus. In addition to composition of his letters and *Natalicia*, Paulinus also apparently offered literary readings of poetry and, on at least two occasions, served up Sulpicius Severus' *Vita Martini* to his guests (P.-Nol. *Ep.* 29. 14). Sigrid Mratschek, 'Multis enim notissima est sanctitas loci: Paulinus and the Gradual Rise of Nola as a Center of Christian Hospitality,' *J ECS* 9 (2001), 541, suggests that poetry readings were held in an open-air forum when the weather permitted.

<sup>14</sup> Trout, *Augustine*, 140.

<sup>15</sup> See Salzman, *Competing Claims*, 375, for the essential conservatism of the rhetoric of most Christian leaders from this period and their reluctance to challenge the traditional class consciousness of their elite audience. As Karen Torjeson, 'In Praise of Noble Women: Gender and Honor in Ascetic Texts,' *Semeia* 57 (1992), 49,

Cassian opposed this accommodation. For him, asceticism was the narrow road, a life that required the renunciation of all ties to the world, rather than a self-congratulatory rhetoric of renunciation that did not serve to transform those who embraced it. Cassian's debate was not with those who doubted the value or place of asceticism within the late Antique Church<sup>16</sup> — the place of asceticism in the church was presuppositional.<sup>17</sup> Rather, it was the denaturation of asceticism by a western elite that was opposed most vigorously in *De institutis*.

Like Jerome and the other writers of his time, Cassian hoped to facilitate the growth and spread of the ascetic movement in the west. Unlike them, however, Cassian did not see asceticism as something that could simply be worked into the existing lifestyle of an elite class. Where he parted company from his contemporaries was in his belief that the ascetic life was transformational and centred on the idea of renunciation (*renuntiatio*). The renunciation of the world and everything that chained a monk to that world was the absolute first step, the *sine qua non* of the ascetic life. As Christ had commanded, the monk sold everything he had, gave it to the poor, then took up his cross and followed the master.<sup>18</sup> Half measures — the retention of property, a continuing involvement in the outside world — were not options in Cassian's thought. A person had either made their *renuntiatio*

noted, Christian writers emphasized traditional standards of status when praising those members of the elite classes who had embraced the ascetic life: Paula, for instance, was 'noble in family', a descendant of the Scipios and Gracchi clans, whose origins could be traced back to Agamemnon; her husband's family tree included the *gens Iulii* and was linked to Aeneas (Hier. *Ep.* 108. 3–4).

<sup>16</sup> Writers such as Jovinian (see David G. Hunter, 'Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late Fourth-Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian,' *Theological Studies* 48 (1987), 45–64), Vigilantius, and Ambrosiaster. For the anonymous Ambrosiaster as a Roman cleric and opponent of Jerome's views on virginity, see David G. Hunter, 'On the Sin of Adam and Eve: A Little-Known Defense of Marriage and Childbearing by Ambrosiaster,' *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989), 283–99. Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 11–16, has argued that Augustine also resisted the formation of a spiritual elite, and this point has also been suggested in my earlier discussion of Basil (see Chapter 3).

<sup>17</sup> Moreover, this was the presupposition of his audience — Castor had commissioned him to produce *De institutis*, and the further pattern of dedications show him reaching out to Lérins, where a group of well-born men and women were engaging in some form of ascetic endeavour.

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 19: 21.

or they had not. The former was the true monk; the latter was simply playing at the ascetic life, or worse, masquerading as a monk in an attempt to win the unmerited praise of others.

Cassian required a monk to renounce wealth, property, possessions, and the comforts that accompanied secular life. He was to renounce his claim to social status and break off connections with family members, friends, and acquaintances. The formerly free man would don the chains of slavery, offering instant and unquestioning obedience to his superiors, renouncing self-will, the privacy of his own thoughts, and control over his own destiny. The monk became a servant of Christ as well as a servant *for* Christ, imitating the master who had renounced all things in order to serve mankind.

Only a proper *renuntiatio* set one's feet on the path that led to the heights of perfection.<sup>19</sup> Without this immolation of self, there was no possibility of ascending into the rarefied air breathed by the true Christian ascetic. The monk who wanted to enter the ascetic life, wrote Cassian, should not follow his own prescriptions, but rather should seek out the discipline and institutes of the monastery where he could renounce the world.<sup>20</sup> The lifestyle practised by the Gauls was asceticism in name only. True monks began their lives with renunciation.

*Renuntiatio* was a death to the world and its claims,<sup>21</sup> designed to close the avenue that led back to the former life. Once the monk had made his renunciation there was to be no looking back, a precept that was in accordance with the Lord's statement that those who put their hand to the plough and then looked back were unfit for the kingdom of heaven.<sup>22</sup> It was much better to have never made the *renuntiatio*, persisting in lukewarmness, than to have made a renunciation and subsequently return to what had been forsaken. The torment of the ultimate penalty (hell) awaited those who had pledged themselves to the gospel life, only to later renege on their sacred vows.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 2. Cf. Cassian, *Coll.* 14. 9. 2 for the injunction to separate from all worldly cares as a prerequisite for the spiritual life. It was impossible for the person still caught up in the world to acquire knowledge.

<sup>20</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 2; Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 34–5.

<sup>22</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 36. 1, citing Luke 9: 62.

<sup>23</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 33.

Entry into the ascetic life was a grave step. It was not to be adopted without forethought and a careful reckoning of the price that would be exacted. It was a costly endeavour, but ultimately one that would cultivate a character that emulated the greater example of Christ. As shall be demonstrated in the following sections, Cassian's version of the ascetic life began with the renunciation of all things that made a monk an individual.

## 1 WEALTH AND PROPERTY

Renunciation, in Cassian's thought, involved a number of items and attitudes that will be considered in the following sections. Leading the list was the absolute and complete renunciation of wealth and property.<sup>24</sup> No one, according to Cassian, was allowed to enter an Egyptian monastery until he had renounced all material possessions. Having waited the requisite ten days before the gates of the monastery (in order to test perseverance), the postulant was subjected to a detailed audit of his finances. This inquest ensured that not so much as a single coin from the postulant's former possessions remained to corrupt him.<sup>25</sup> A complete dispersal of wealth and property was required before the postulant would even be considered for admission into the monastery. *Renuntiatio* was not only turning away from a past life, but laying a torch to the bridges that would offer a retreat. Cassian was determined to remove fall-back positions that could tempt a monk to fly back to a former life.

This renunciation of wealth signalled that the monk had abandoned all faith in the ability of material possessions to save him. There was, after all, no guarantee that he would gain admission into the monastery. A more pragmatic legislator might have allowed a monk to enter and then to dispose of his worldly goods after a trial period. This was not, however, Cassian's course of action. The monk who sought entry into the monastery must first place himself

<sup>24</sup> See Jeremy Driscoll, 'Love of Money in Evagrius Ponticus,' *Studia Monastica* 43 (2001), 21–30, for Cassian's teacher, Evagrius Ponticus, on the same subject.

<sup>25</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 3. 1–2.



confidently into God's hands. Having renounced whatever security wealth could provide, the monk trusted that God would take care of him.

Renunciation of wealth was a great leap of faith. It was buttressed by several biblical texts, in which Jesus seemed to urge the step as a prerequisite for Christian discipleship.<sup>26</sup> The rich young man (Matt. 19:22) who wished to follow Christ was told to renounce his wealth if he desired to be perfect. This was not a counsel that the young man could obey, and he left, saddened. The attachment of the rich to their possessions made their entry into the kingdom of God more difficult than the passage of a camel through the eye of a needle.<sup>27</sup>

The hard pecuniary sayings of Jesus posed a problem for the early church: could the rich be saved? Were his teachings to be understood literally? Was it impossible for a person to be both wealthy and a Christian? One of the earliest answers to this question is found in the second-century work, *The Shepherd of Hermas*.<sup>28</sup> Here, the rich and poor were cast in mutually supportive roles, both taking shelter under the wings of the church. According to the Shepherd, the rich were an elm tree that grew tall but bore no fruit. The poor were vines that only produced fruit when they were lifted from the earth. The role of the rich was to support the poor through their giving; the duty of the poor was to offer the fruit of their poverty (intercessory prayer) on behalf of the rich.<sup>29</sup> The affluent and the destitute enjoyed a symbiotic relationship — each necessary for the other's salvation.

Another well-known answer to this question was offered by Clement of Alexandria, who considered the problem of the wealthy believer in his work *Which Rich Man Will Be Saved?* (*Quis dives salvetur*).

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, Matt. 19: 16–30; Mark 10: 17–31; Luke 18: 18–30. The priority of the poor over the wealthy is also suggested in the Magnificat (Luke 1: 53–5) and the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6: 20–5).

<sup>27</sup> Matt. 19: 24.

<sup>28</sup> Herm. *Sim.* 2. Cf. John McGuckin, 'The Vine and the Elm Tree: The Patristic Interpretation of Jesus' Teachings on Wealth,' *Studies in Church History* 24 (1987), 6; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 302.

<sup>29</sup> The claim that there was an interdependence between rich and poor was also common among the Greek fathers: Barry Gordon, *The Economic Problem in Biblical and Patristic Thought* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 106–7; for John Chrysostom: Blake Leyerle, 'John Chrysostom on Almsgiving and the Use of Money,' *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), 41–2.

According to Clement, Jesus' words to the rich young man were to be understood on a spiritual, rather than a literal, level.<sup>30</sup> The young man was not to sell his possessions, but rather, to banish improper thoughts about them.<sup>31</sup> The renunciation advocated by Jesus was actually a stripping of the passions from the soul; the rich young man was to cultivate dispassion toward his wealth. After all, if he gave his things away, what would he have to offer as charity to the poor?<sup>32</sup> The possession of material wealth was a neutral act; what mattered was the character of one's thoughts about that wealth.<sup>33</sup>

The shifting of renunciation of wealth from a literal to a spiritual plane eased the way into the church for wealthy converts. Despite ongoing calls for a literal interpretation of Christ's words by certain fringe groups,<sup>34</sup> the mainstream church did not make renunciation of wealth a prerequisite for Christianity. Indeed, to a large extent, the early church relied on the largesse of the elite families for the construction of buildings and the financing of other charitable ventures.<sup>35</sup> As a client of the aristocrats, the church benefited greatly by the concentration of wealth among an elite who were inclined to support the ongoing mission of the church. Clement's spiritualizing of Christ's commands ensured that this comfortable relationship was not disturbed.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Clem. Q.D.S. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Clem. Q.D.S. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Clem. Q.D.S. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Clem. Q.D.S. 14.

<sup>34</sup> One such group was censured by the Synod of Gangra (345), in part for their requirement of total renunciation of wealth. Similarly, Pelagius (or one of his followers) had claimed that if the elite were to surrender their wealth, then all Christians would become equal and all would enjoy the same standard of living (Pelag.-Haer. *Diu.* 12. 1).

<sup>35</sup> See Charles Bobertz, 'The Role of Patron in the *Cena Dominica* of Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition*, *JTS* n.s. 44 (1993), 170–84, for a discussion of the role of the wealthy patron in the early church; A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1964), 900–1, for the construction of *paroeciae* or *dioeceses*—churches built by someone other than a bishop, usually with an endowment of land to fund its ongoing operation. See also Ivor J. Davidson, 'Captation in the Fourth-Century West,' *SPAT* 34 (2001), 38. On the advantages of cultivating the wealthy over the poor, see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 291. For the problems posed by wealthy church patrons in the thought of John Chrysostom, see Leyerle, *John Chrysostom*, 44–6.

<sup>36</sup> McGuckin, *Vine and Elm*, 12–13, argues that while the fathers frequently castigated the misuse of wealth, they invariably avoided condemning the possession of wealth.

Cassian displayed no interest in the question of the wealthy secular Christian. For the ascetic, however, Christ's words in Matt. 19 were to be understood as an ironclad injunction. There could be no ascetic life without the complete renunciation of all wealth and possessions. Although this sounds simple in theory, practical difficulties and family resistance could complicate the renunciation of worldly assets.<sup>37</sup>

An example of family disapproval may be found in the case of Sulpicius Severus, who encountered stiff resistance from his father when he proposed adopting the ascetic life. According to Paulinus, Sulpicius' mother-in-law had endorsed Sulpicius' decision to become an ascetic after the death of her daughter (Sulpicius' wife). With the loss of his son and heir, Sulpicius' father, was left enmeshed in the nets of his possessions.<sup>38</sup> While Paulinus was quick to interpret this action in terms of a scriptural parallel (James and John leaving their father with his nets in order to follow Christ), one wonders where the line between renunciation and escape should be drawn. If Paulinus can be trusted and Sulpicius disobeyed his father's commands in order to become an ascetic, then he might have put his inheritance at risk.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> The disposition of inherited wealth could be complicated by factors such as a poor market for property, tax liability, and the problem of what became of the men and women who worked the land after a sale. For the question of Christian aristocrats, their various strategies for dealing with hereditary wealth, and the observation that disposing of one's assets might not have been as easy as expected, see Jill D. Harries, 'Treasure in Heaven: Property and Inheritance Among Senators of Late Rome,' in *Marriage and Property*, edited by Elizabeth Craik (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984), 54–70. For evidence that slaves might resist a sale to new owners when an aristocrat began to alienate estates, see Geron. *Vit. Mel.* 11, and the discussion in Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Life of Melania the Younger* (Lewiston, Lampeter, Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 101.

<sup>38</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 5. 6. Just as a *paterfamilias* could allow or deny a child's marriage (see Eva Marie Lassen, 'The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor,' in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, edited by Halvor Moxnes [London and New York: Routledge, 1997], 105), he could presumably also forbid ascetic renunciation. But see Antti Arjava, 'Paternal Power in Late Antiquity,' *JRS* 88 (1998), 153, for the view that this power was largely symbolic, and Jane Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen* (London: Routledge, 1993), 53, for the argument that while they may have been infrequently exercised, the rights of the *paterfamilias* remained a potent threat. Some evidence for this latter view may be drawn from the observation that Pinianus and Melania were not allowed to enter the ascetic life until her father was dying (Geron. *Vit. Mel.* 6–7).

<sup>39</sup> See Arjava, *Paternal Power*, 154, for the argument that the threat of disinheritance remained the most effective control strategy for a *paterfamilias*; Brent Shaw, 'The Family in Late Antiquity,' *Past and Present* 115 (1987), 21–5, for tensions along

On the other hand, he seems to have had a retreat available in the estate of his mother-in-law, Bassula, so it was not as if he was going to be thrust out in the world with nothing by disobeying his father. Consequently, one wonders whether Sulpicius' 'renunciation' was a separation from the world or a tactic to escape the control of a domineering *paterfamilias*?<sup>40</sup> In any event, his rejection of his father's wealth was made palatable by the consolatory estate of his mother-in-law.

The objections of family members grew out of the idea among the elite class that the aristocratic families must be continued at all costs.<sup>41</sup> Greatness and nobility were traits that flowed in one's blood; they could only continue if transmitted to offspring.<sup>42</sup> The same applied to the wealth that had been zealously husbanded and accumulated over generations.<sup>43</sup> To allow a noble family to come to an end, while simultaneously dispersing the fruit of generations, was a grave cultural sin.<sup>44</sup> The pressure to preserve bloodline and inheritance is evident in the example of the younger Melania and her husband, Pinianus. Melania had allegedly been forced into marriage by her father, Publicola.<sup>45</sup> Although she pleaded with her husband to allow her to remain a virgin within the marriage, Pinianus decreed that she must first produce an heir who would serve to continue the family name and inherit their property.<sup>46</sup>

Nor were the western fathers eager to see great families destroyed. Despite the panegyrics celebrating the renunciations of wealth made

the father/son axis and the limited options available to a son in Roman culture; for leaving behind one's biological father to follow the true father: M. A. Wes, 'Crisis and Conversion in Fifth-Century Gaul,' in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* edited by John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 255.

<sup>40</sup> Arjava, *Paternal Power*, 148–9, for a son's absolute dependence on his father and inherited wealth in the absence of wage-paying alternatives.

<sup>41</sup> Clark, *Melania*, 83.

<sup>42</sup> See Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 523–4, for the importance of heredity as a sign that a senatorial candidate was worthy of that honour.

<sup>43</sup> Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 554–7.

<sup>44</sup> And even in the case of less noble citizens, the loss of a family farm because there was no son to continue running it was considered disastrous. Cf. Shaw, *Family*, 19–20.

<sup>45</sup> Geron. *Vit. Mel.* 1.

<sup>46</sup> Geron. *Vit. Mel.* 1; 3. Cf. Harries, *Treasure in Heaven*, 65–6.

by members of the Roman elite, Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome were united in stipulating that when giving alms, a person's first obligation was to family.<sup>47</sup> Thoughtless generosity was inappropriate, as Augustine made clear in his letter to Ecdicia, a noblewoman who had earned her husband's wrath by giving away a portion of her wealth to a band of disreputable monks.<sup>48</sup> Augustine and Jerome affirmed the importance of passing one's wealth onto one's heirs, thereby ensuring the continuation of the family line. For those who wondered how giving to the poor fit into this equation, both writers offered the solution of counting the poor as one member of the family and dividing the estate equally among the children, making the poor a co-inheritor with the legitimate children.<sup>49</sup>

Encouraged by the moderate voices of the western fathers, two strategies for the management of wealth emerged among those drawn to the ascetic life. The first course was for the Roman aristocrat simply to pass the bulk of his or her estate to those who stood next in the hereditary line. In most cases this premature transfer of wealth did not preclude the retention of some property for the ongoing maintenance of the aristocrat who had died to the world.<sup>50</sup>

This pattern may be observed in a number of cases. Jerome, for instance, noted that his patron (Paula) gave her money to deserving people, but she accomplished this through the careful management of her resources.<sup>51</sup> Her goal was to exhaust both life and material wealth at the same moment, leaving not a penny for her daughter and presuming on the charity of others to purchase her burial cloth.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, somewhat callously, Jerome exults at the fact that when Paula

<sup>47</sup> Boniface Ramsey, 'Almsgiving in the Latin Church: The Late Fourth and Early Fifth Centuries,' *Theological Studies* 43 (1982), 233.

<sup>48</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 262. See Kate Cooper, 'Womanly Influence: Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy,' *JRS* 82 (1992), 158–9, for a discussion of this epistle.

<sup>49</sup> Aug. *Disc.* 8. 8; Hier. *Ep.* 120. 1. Cf. Ramsey, *Almsgiving*, 229–30.

<sup>50</sup> Although Gregory of Nyssa's biography of his sister, Macrina, suggests a slow progression from affluence to poverty, Francine Cardman, 'Whose Life Is It? The *Vita Macrina* of Gregory of Nyssa,' *SPAT* 37 (2001), 48, is quite right to note that even at her personal nadir she was still living on her family estates. According to Gregory, she and her mother gave away *most* of their money to the younger members of the family (Gr. Nyss. *V. Macr.* 10. 3–4). Their subsequent lifestyle, while undoubtedly a reduction in comfort, certainly could not be equated to the urban poor (Cardman, *Life*, 48).

<sup>51</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 108. 16.

<sup>52</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 108. 15.

died she left her daughter Eustochium a mountain of debt, a financial burden that she could not hope to pay off through her own exertions.<sup>53</sup> All of this must be sifted carefully: while it might seem that Paula had deprived her heirs of her property, at another point in this letter Jerome does admit that she had previously passed on much of her wealth to her other children.<sup>54</sup> Eustochium seems to have been the only heir who received nothing (save the monastic foundation in Bethlehem) from her mother.

Nor could it be said that Paula spent all of her money on the poor. When she and Jerome arrived in Bethlehem, she embarked on an ambitious building programme, and was forced to live in a 'miserable hostel' until the buildings she required (cells, monastic buildings, and a guest house) were constructed.<sup>55</sup> Despite Jerome's claim that this was all for the greater glory of God and would serve to make certain that if Joseph and Mary ever again visited Bethlehem they would have a place to stay,<sup>56</sup> one is struck by the fact that the monastic life could not have been practised in a miserable hostel.<sup>57</sup>

It is also intriguing that Jerome, despite his repeated directives to others concerning the renunciation of wealth, does not appear to have followed his own advice.<sup>58</sup> In a letter to Pammachius he revealed that he had despatched his brother, Paulinian, to the family estates in Stridon. There the younger man was to liquidate the family holdings and bring the money to Jerome in Bethlehem. Obviously, this was less renunciation than redeployment of assets. Jerome did not intend to renounce this wealth (possibly offering it to the poor or to the church in his home province), but rather intended to extract what

<sup>53</sup> Hier. Ep. 108. 15.

<sup>54</sup> Hier. Ep. 108. 5.

<sup>55</sup> Hier. Ep. 108. 14.

<sup>56</sup> Hier. Ep. 66. 14. Cf. Steven Driver, 'The Development of Jerome's Views on the Ascetic Life,' *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 62 (1995), 58.

<sup>57</sup> Despite the younger Melania's spectacular renunciations, she still retained enough money to build twenty-four churches and monasteries on Mount Olivet (where she and Pinianus withdrew to live their mortified life). See Clark, *Melania*, 116–19, for a description of these buildings. The construction of lavish buildings was a traditional way of demonstrating one's elite status in the classical world (Leyerle, *John Chrysostom*, 31; Evelyn Patalagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4e-7e siècles* [Paris: Mouton, 1977], 181–3).

<sup>58</sup> For the view that Jerome's comments about the sacrifices made by the women he extolled were a rhetorical set piece: Harries, *Treasure in Heaven*, 55–6.

capital he could from the family holdings so that the money could be used to support the Bethlehem building projects.<sup>59</sup>

A similar course of planned giving underlies the story of Melania the Elder, who supported churches and monasteries for thirty-seven years, selling off her property as she needed the money.<sup>60</sup> According to Palladius, she died just as her funds were exhausted.<sup>61</sup> Her granddaughter, Melania the Younger, was said to have sold all of her estates in Spain, Aquitania, Tarragonia, and Gaul, but had retained those in Sicily, Campania, and Africa. These latter properties provided funding to support her monasteries.<sup>62</sup>

The same financial strategy could be found in the west. This is brought out in a letter (written by Jerome) theoretically aimed at consoling the Roman Senator Pammachius over the loss of his wife. Following her death, Pammachius had renounced the world and entered the ascetic life.<sup>63</sup> Like Paula and Melania, Pammachius embarked on a programme of controlled giving.<sup>64</sup> Whereas the aristocrats of Rome sponsored games and shows for the plebs, Pammachius gave games for the poor and shows to the indigent.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 66. 14. See Torjeson, *Praise*, 44, 50, for building as a way of winning public acknowledgement of virtue.

<sup>60</sup> Harries, *Treasure in Heaven*, 59, suggests that the majority of her wealth went to her son and legal heir, Publicola. Cf. Francis Murphy, 'Melania the Elder: A Biographical Note,' *Traditio* 5 (1947), 65–6.

<sup>61</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 64. 2. See also the story of Olympias, the widow of Nebridius, the former prefect (ἐπαρχή) of Constantinople, who was said to have given all of her goods to the poor (Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 66. 2).

<sup>62</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 61. 5; Geron. *Vit. Mel.* 20–2. A similar tale is offered about Verus (Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 66).

<sup>63</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 66. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Jerome is inconsistent on this assertion, at one point saying that Pammachius had given everything away, while at another implying a slow dispersal of wealth. That the latter probably represents what Jerome had in mind is suggested by Hier. *Ep.* 66. 8, where he employed the standard biblical admonitions to sell everything and follow Christ, but then qualifies this by advocating discernment in giving—that is, giving only to those who are truly in need. This is reinforced, when discussing Pammachius' new guest house, by offering the example of Abraham as a model, a man who was wealthy but still personally offered hospitality to all who came to his door (Hier. *Ep.* 66. 11). Jerome's inconsistency is further illustrated in a letter to Paulinus of Nola (Hier. *Ep.* 53. 11, which advocated a complete and immediate divestiture of wealth). For Paulinus and Jerome's correspondence: Pierre Courcelle, 'Paulin de Nole et Saint Jérôme,' *Revue des Études Latines* 25 (1947), 250–80.

<sup>65</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 66. 6.

Moreover, he had begun to build a hospice at Portus which was larger than Jerome and Paula's foundation at Bethlehem.<sup>66</sup> The claim that Pammachius may have slowly dispersed his wealth over time is also suggested by the testimony of Palladius, who noted that Pammachius gave away some of his property, and left the rest to the poor upon his death.<sup>67</sup> Possession of wealth was justified by giving it away incrementally.<sup>68</sup>

A second variation for the disposition of wealth and property was to renounce riches on a spiritual plane, while simultaneously retaining control of them in the material world. The aristocrat became a custodian of the wealth, a regent for God. All things belonged to God; the aristocrat simply administered them on his behalf. This was the paradigm for reconciling wealth and ascetic Christianity adopted by Sulpicius Severus and Paulinus of Nola. According to Paulinus, Sulpicius had actually signed his mother-in-law's estate at Primuliacum over to the church, but then continued to live there as the host of the house.<sup>69</sup> Paulinus drew a fine distinction, for he noted that Sulpicius' 'forfeiture' of his estate was the spiritual equivalent of selling it.<sup>70</sup> This renunciation offered Sulpicius the advantage of ownership without the burden of mental enslavement to his estate. Sulpicius controlled and administered his estate on behalf of either the church (as Paulinus implied) or God. An interesting variation on this line of argument emerges in Paulinus' letters to Aper and his wife, Amanda. Paulinus stated that Aper had renounced all claim to wealth and property by placing the administration of those things into Amanda's hands. Therefore he was no longer bound by ties to material wealth and Amanda was doing a holy work by shielding Aper from the material concerns of the world.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 66. 11.

<sup>67</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 61. 1. Cf. Harries, *Treasure in Heaven*, 62, who notes that while living Pammachius did not reduce his holdings below the senatorial census.

<sup>68</sup> Ramsey, *Almsgiving*, 239.

<sup>69</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 24. 1-3.

<sup>70</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 24. 1. Peter Walsh, *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola, Vol. II* (New York: Newman Press, 1967), 312 n. 6, states that there is little doubt that Sulpicius had transferred his property to the church. Against this view is Paulinus' claim (P.-Nol. *Ep.* 24. 3) that Sulpicius remained the 'apparent owner' of the estate, even though he had mentally detached himself from the claim to ownership.

<sup>71</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 44. 4.



The spiritual renunciation of wealth was an important aspect of Paulinus' thought.<sup>72</sup> The proper role of the ascetic aristocrat was to cultivate dispassion toward wealth, and to earn favour with God by giving charitably to the poor. Although a number of ascetic writers used Christ's injunction to the rich young man as the basis for their views on renunciation, Paulinus derived his theology from the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31).<sup>73</sup> In this story, the rich man had scorned the beggar Lazarus, who had spent the latter part of his life sitting outside his gates; he failed to offer the beggar food or alms. When the pair died, Lazarus ended up in heaven while the rich man was consigned to hell. The rich man then begged Abraham (who served the same role that St Peter would serve in later Christian popular thought: the gatekeeper in heaven) to send an emissary to his equally wealthy brothers in order that they might be warned to behave charitably toward the poor and be admitted into heaven. This request was rejected by Abraham on the grounds that even a figure bringing a warning from the afterlife would not shake his hard-hearted brothers.

Although this parable does not seem to hold out much hope to the affluent, Paulinus was able to extract theological justification for his lifestyle from it. The point of the story was not that the rich could not be saved, but rather that this particular rich man had been condemned because he had failed to fulfil his proper role in the divine economy—as a patron who employed his money to care for the poor.<sup>74</sup> In fact, according to Paulinus, the social divisions of rich and poor were created by God in order to furnish an opportunity for the well-off to be charitable.<sup>75</sup> The two classes were intended to live in a symbiotic relationship, the rich supporting the poor and the poor nourishing the rich through their grateful prayers.<sup>76</sup> The possession of material wealth was not the ultimate criterion; the person's attitude toward that wealth was the crux of the issue. Consequently, one needed to cultivate detachment toward one's possessions. They were,

<sup>72</sup> See Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 133–59, for a complete discussion of Paulinus' reconciliation of wealth and renunciation.

<sup>73</sup> Trout, *Paulinus*, 134–8.

<sup>74</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 13; P.-Nol. *Ep.* 25.

<sup>75</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 33. 21.

<sup>76</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 34. 6–8. This idea, as noted above, was borrowed from Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas.

after all, the property of God. The role of the wealthy man or woman was to administer God's goods in his absence. This sentiment was echoed by Augustine, who noted that wealth, gold, silver, possessions, and servants were all good, if they were used to do good.<sup>77</sup>

These examples suggest strategies employed by western ascetics to reconcile their ascetic interests with the possession of wealth. While these men and women took seriously the injunction to give up their riches, most interpreted the command in a less rigorous fashion than Cassian.<sup>78</sup> Although Cassian would differ from the Briton in other ways, on the issue of the renunciation of wealth, he demonstrated a great deal of sympathy for the position taken by Pelagius (or one of his close followers) in *Concerning Wealth* (*De diuitiis*). Both men argued for the fundamental incompatibility of Christianity and wealth.<sup>79</sup>

Apparently aware that many western ascetics were involved in a theoretical renunciation of wealth, Cassian placed the need for a total renunciation at the heart of his critique of the Gallic monks. The Gauls, he noted, had not made a renunciation, but to the contrary, were retaining their possessions.<sup>80</sup> In addition to the direct condemnation of this practice offered by Cassian in Books 4 and 7 of *De institutis*, it is also significant that he attributed the decline of the Apostolic Church to economic impropriety.<sup>81</sup> According to Cassian, the members of that first church, observing the relaxed concessions offered to the Gentiles, decided that they could be Christians without renouncing their wealth and property (against the examples of the earliest members who sold all they had and laid the proceeds at the

<sup>77</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 48. 8. This was not the belief of Augustine's arch-enemy, Pelagius, who excoriated these attitudes as nothing more than rationalizations employed to support the status quo. Cf. Ramsey, *Almsgiving*, 255; G. J. M. Pearce, 'Augustine's Theory of Property,' *SPAT* 6 (1962), 498.

<sup>78</sup> Harries, *Treasure in Heaven*, 58.

<sup>79</sup> It should be noted, however, that Cassian's position on non-ascetic Christians is not as clearly stated; monks are his principal concern. The unknown writer of *De diuitiis*, to the contrary, advocated a renunciation of wealth by all Christians. Cassian also shared the Pelagian view that wealth was the product of the rich having cheated the poor out of their money (Cassian, *Coll.* 1. 10. 4). On Pelagius in general: B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988).

<sup>80</sup> Implied in Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 1–2; cf. Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 15. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 5. 3.

feet of the apostles). They believed that they could follow Christ in faith, without literally fulfilling the command to sell everything and give it to the poor. This failure to obey Christ's command led to the laxity and ultimate failure of the first church.

Cassian would have nothing to do with the concessions made to wealth by his contemporaries. One walked either by trusting in the things of the world or by trusting in God. Economic laxity had destroyed the Apostolic Church and it was one of the flaws undermining Gallic asceticism. As Cassian noted, one of the great shortfalls of the Gallic abbot (aside from the lack of experience discussed earlier) was the fact that he had not renounced his wealth and possessions. In Egypt, no one was allowed to preside over a monastery until he had made this renunciation.<sup>82</sup> In fact, as noted above, in Egypt no one was even allowed to join a monastery until this fundamental step had taken place.

Retained wealth, especially money stashed in a secret place, was like a bridge that led back to the former life. When things became difficult in the monastery (as Cassian assured his readers they would), the new monk would begin to recall that he had another option: he could abandon the ascetic life and return to his former existence. He could flee the battle and seek safety in the rear. As soon as any disturbance or difficulty arose, the knowledge that he had a fall-back position would send him flying from the monastery like 'a rock sent whirling from a sling'.<sup>83</sup> Cassian intended to eliminate this line of retreat. The monk with nothing held in reserve would be more likely to remain in the battle line. Moreover, by voluntarily stripping himself of all wealth and possessions, he had taken the first steps toward the emulation of Christ, who himself had nothing to call his own.

The first injunction of the monastic life was to count the cost. If the renunciation of the security offered by wealth and possessions was too much to exchange for the possibility of spiritual perfection, then Cassian advised the seeker to stay away from the front. Quoting

<sup>82</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 3. 2 [SC 109: 126. 21]: *uelut funda rotante fugiturum*. This theme is also developed in Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 7. 2, where a growing concern about where the money would come from should a monk need to flee a monastery was offered as one of the signs of a resurgent avarice.

Deut. 20:8, he noted that the man who was afraid of the fight was better off staying at home. At least that way his fear would not poison his fellow soldiers.<sup>84</sup> A double-minded man, one who had one foot in the world and one foot in the ascetic life, could not prosper.

This position was summed up in a quote Cassian attributed to St Basil.<sup>85</sup> Cassian told the story of how a rich senator gave away most of his wealth and property, but held enough back to support himself in the ascetic life. Basil, according to Cassian, confronted this senator with the words 'You have spoiled Syncletius, the senator, and not made a monk.'<sup>86</sup>

The practice of making a partial renunciation (the course followed by Pammachius, Paula, Melania, and others) was also addressed in *De institutis* 7. 16, where Cassian discussed the folly of those who bent Scripture to accommodate their own lust for money because of their inability to make a proper renunciation. They took Christ's words, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,'<sup>87</sup> as a proof text for their view that they should retain their wealth in order to support themselves and to have something extra to give to those in need.<sup>88</sup> This was a corruption of the words of the Lord, a twisting of Scripture to justify their own lifestyles. These people, concluded Cassian, were deceiving themselves. Ascetic life and retained wealth were incompatible. You either entered the ascetic life by completely renouncing everything, or you stepped down the broad way that led to destruction.

The classic example of the destructiveness of a partial renunciation could be drawn (once again) from the stories of the Apostolic Church. Cassian found here an excellent illustration of how God dealt with those who tried to keep a foot in both worlds. In the Book of Acts, the first believers sold their property and donated the

<sup>84</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 15. 1.

<sup>85</sup> This quote is not found in any of Basil's extant works, although this pericope was taken into the *Apophthegmata patrum* under Cassian's name (*Apophth. Patr.* Cassian 7).

<sup>86</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 19 [SC 109: 320. 7–8]: *Et senatorem, inquit, Syncletium perdidisti et monachum non fecisti*. There is some doubt about the reading here, as Gazet took Syncletium to be a transliteration of the Greek word *συγκλητικός* (senator) and omitted it from his text, while Petschenig rendered it as a proper name. This textual crux need not detain us, and I have translated it based on the text found in Guy.

<sup>87</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 16 [SC 109: 314. 8–9] (citing Acts 20:35): *Beatius est magis dare quam accipere*. This is Paul's paraphrase of Matt. 10: 8.

<sup>88</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 16.

proceeds to the Apostolic Church. Ananias and Sapphira also decided to sell a piece of property, but rather than giving all of the money to the church, they retained a portion of the proceeds for their own use.<sup>89</sup> Caught in their deceit when they presented part of the money to the Apostle Peter, they fell dead at the Apostle's feet.

This desire either to retain or to acquire wealth is subsumed under the heading of covetousness by Cassian. Those who made either a partial renunciation, or, once having entered the monastic life, began hoarding money, were guilty of the same sin that led to the death of Ananias and Sapphira; they partook of the treachery that drove Judas Iscariot to his doom and eternal condemnation.<sup>90</sup> Cassian provided a descriptive analysis of the progress of covetousness once it had gripped a monk's heart in *De institutis* 7.7–11. The disease began with the desire to have just a small amount of money to call one's own, progressed through the hoarding of wealth, and finally led the monk to flee from his monastery once he had amassed enough money. He would then take a woman into his domicile in order to keep his purse (an action that led to other vices).<sup>91</sup> Ultimately this monk is cast into hell.

This line of thinking is also reflected in Cassian's division of monks into four classes.<sup>92</sup> His first two classes, the coenobites and anchorites, preserved the unblemished charisms and rigour of the Apostolic Church. The third class, the Sarabaites, traced their lineage back to Ananias and Sapphira.<sup>93</sup> Although Cassian's description of these monks largely echoes Jerome's description of the Remnuoth,<sup>94</sup> he diverged from this earlier text by locating the root of their contemptible lives in their failure to renounce their wealth. These men wanted to imitate, rather than enter into, the life of perfection. Counterfeits rather than true coin of the kingdom, they wanted to be known as

<sup>89</sup> Acts 5: 11.

<sup>90</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 25. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 7–11.

<sup>92</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 1–10.

<sup>93</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 7. 1–2.

<sup>94</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 22. 34. Cassian does follow Jerome, however, in converting the names earlier writers (such as Pachomius and Athanasius) had employed to differentiate between ascetic models, into terms which separated monks based on theological distinctions. That is, the difference between the Remnuoth and the coenobites was not so much the organization of their monastery as the fact that Jerome characterized the former groups as being heretical (James Goehring, 'Through a Glass Darkly: Diverse Images of the *Apotakikoi(ai)* of Early Egyptian Monasticism,' *Semeia* 58 [1992], 36).

monks, but did not wish to embrace the discipline of monastic life, be subject to elders, or cultivate humility. They made a public profession of the ascetic life but continued to live in their own homes doing whatever pleased them.<sup>95</sup> Abba Pinufius (to whom Cassian attributed this conference) sealed this identification by noting that in other provinces (those outside Egypt) the Sarabaites were almost the only kind of monk to be found.<sup>96</sup>

Cassian's view of the monastic world can be divided along the fault line of renunciation of wealth. Those monks who had renounced their wealth and property were on the road to becoming true monks; the rest who either retained or sought to acquire wealth, were the spiritual offspring of Ananias and Sapphira and could ultimately be expected to meet a similar doom. There is no flexibility to be discovered in Cassian's works. One either renounced all of one's wealth or one had not yet made a start in the ascetic life.

## 2 DISPOSAL OF WEALTH

Before concluding this section, a brief consideration needs to be made of another of Cassian's variations from contemporary thinking, namely the disposal of wealth. As noted above, Cassian was extremely clear on the need to renounce all wealth before entering a monastery. Not so much as a single coin was allowed to stick to the postulant.<sup>97</sup> But if wealth was forbidden the new monk, what was to become of his worldly lucre?

Augustine's *Regula* provided one common answer to this problem. Once again the model of the Apostolic Church provided a guideline for monastic life, as Augustine suggested that postulants would sign over their wealth and property to the monastery. This is implied in his injunction that those who had possessions in the world should freely agree to contribute them to the common pool.<sup>98</sup> Those monks

<sup>95</sup> The fourth class of monks were those who longed to flee the discipline and subjugation of the coenobium in order to become anchorites (Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 8. 1–2).

<sup>96</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 7. 8.

<sup>97</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 3. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Aug. *Reg.* 1. 4; Aug. *Mon.* 33.

who had much to give were warned not to become vain for having offered a great deal to the monastery.<sup>99</sup> Nor was this gift to be a one-time event; Augustine decreed that if a monk received gifts from his relatives these should also be donated to the common pool.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, Hilary records that the treasury at Lérins was replenished by new recruits coming to the island.<sup>101</sup>

The sharing of a common pool of goods was also in effect in Martin's monastery, although it is not clear whether the monks donated their wealth to the monastery on seeking entrance. In his first description of Martin's monks, Sulpicius asserted that the monks called nothing their own, but rather held everything in common.<sup>102</sup> They were not allowed to buy or sell as (Sulpicius noted) other monks did. Those who had once lived as noblemen were now enjoying simple lives of poverty. The question of the disposition of wealth is never directly addressed. Nevertheless, it is quite probable, as Stancliffe asserts, that new monks contributed their possessions to the monastery. This income stream was supplemented by a subsidy from the church.<sup>103</sup>

Martin's alleged praise of the former nobleman Paulinus should not be accepted as a paradigm for the monks of Marmoutier. According to Martin, Paulinus sold everything he had and gave it to the poor before becoming an ascetic.<sup>104</sup> This passage must be interpreted with some caution as it does fuse a clear panegyric intent (praise for Paulinus) with Christ's model. Sulpicius deliberately seems to press Paulinus' *renuntiatio* into a biblical framework in order to propose an ideal for noble readers to emulate. In fact, neither Paulinus nor Sulpicius sold everything they had in order to literally fulfil Christ's command; Sulpicius retreated to a family estate, while Paulinus

<sup>99</sup> Aug. *Reg.* 1. 7.      <sup>100</sup> Aug. *Reg.* 5. 3.

<sup>101</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 21.      <sup>102</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 10.

<sup>103</sup> Clare Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 26. The same thing is suggested by Augustine in his *On the Work of Monks* (*De opere monachorum*), when he states that monks should do some manual labour to support the monastery, but then the remainder of their needs could be supplemented by alms (Aug. *Mon.* 19). The external funding of monasteries is also implied in Hier. *Vigil.* 13, where Jerome chastises Vigilantius for not wanting to send money to Jerusalem to support the saints who had given up everything to do the work of the Lord.

<sup>104</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 25.

developed a pilgrimage centre in Nola. Both retained control of these properties.<sup>105</sup>

It may be that Martin did require his monks to give away all of their possessions before joining his monastery. This interpretation is suggested by his actions when Lycontius offered a hundred pounds of silver to the monastery out of gratitude for Martin praying for the healing of his household. According to Sulpicius, Martin's monks implored their leader to use some of this money to provide for their needs (food and clothing). Martin refused and gave all of the silver to the poor. The church, according to Martin, was responsible for ensuring that the monks were fed and clothed.<sup>106</sup> If this statement can be taken as an accurate reflection of Martin's policy, then perhaps postulants came to the monastery having already made their renunciation and thereafter they relied on alms provided by the church.

Augustine's rule assumed that his monks would contribute their former wealth to a common pool; the policy at Martin's monastery was less clear. Cassian, on the other hand, was extremely explicit on the question of disposition of wealth: the monk must give away all of his wealth before he approached the monastery. He was, under no circumstances, allowed to offer his money as a gift to the monastery.<sup>107</sup>

Cassian advanced two reasons for this directive: first, the new monk would have an exaggerated sense of his place in the monastery (viewing himself as a patron rather than a postulant); and second, should the monk wish to leave the monastery at a later time, he might demand the return of the money pledged to the foundation.<sup>108</sup> If the postulant has divested himself of all of his wealth before seeking the monastery, neither of these alternatives would pose a problem.

With these stipulations, Cassian revealed a deeper level of experience than that displayed in the monastic regulations of Augustine.

<sup>105</sup> Also suggested by Hier. *Ep.* 53. 11, who advised Paulinus to get rid of everything at once rather than doling his money out slowly.

<sup>106</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 14.

<sup>107</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 4.

<sup>108</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 4. Cf. Sean Kinsella, 'Covetousness and Renunciation in Book VII of the Institutes of John Cassian,' *Studia Monastica* 40 (1998), 205–6.



While Augustine was clearly bent on recreating the community of goods found in the Apostolic Church,<sup>109</sup> his implementation of this ideal led to problems. These hidden tensions emerge in his protracted discussion of how those who have donated substantial wealth to the monastery were to consider themselves no better than those who had entered the monastery from less-privileged backgrounds.<sup>110</sup> A problem was created when the awareness of external social divisions was imported into the community. The great temptation of the once-wealthy monk was to consider himself more important than the brother who had brought nothing to the monastery.

Cassian circumvented this problem by placing all of the brothers on an equal footing before they were even considered for admission into the monastery. Every monk was required to make a *renuntiatio*; no one was allowed to pass the gatekeeper while still retaining wealth or property. Nor would a monk be offered the opportunity to cultivate a sense of self-importance by believing that his contribution to the monastery sustained it in some manner.

The second problem that Cassian intended to defuse was the possibility that a monk might grow weary of the monastic life and seek to reclaim wealth he had donated to the monastic coffers. Again, as long as there was a place of retreat, the monk had to wrestle with the temptation to return to an easier existence rather than enduring the difficult course that led to spiritual perfection. By refusing to allow the monk to contribute wealth to a monastery, Cassian closed this avenue of escape. The monk would not believe that the monastery was holding his wealth in trust (as it did his secular clothing) against the eventuality that he might one day return to the world.

This policy also protected the monastery. Cassian noted that the Egyptian monasteries had learned through experience that the acceptance of wealth from a postulant was a bad idea.<sup>111</sup> Many of them had been placed in the unenviable position of having to deal with a lapsed monk who wanted his money back. By denying the initial gift, Cassian ensured that it would never have to be repaid.

<sup>109</sup> Acts 4: 32–7.

<sup>110</sup> Aug. *Reg.* 1. 7.

<sup>111</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 4.

## 3 POSSESSIONS

Closely linked to the renunciation of wealth and property was Cassian's injunction that a monk must also renounce all possessions. The only items a monk was permitted to own were his clothes (provided by the monastery) and a mat.<sup>112</sup> The postulant was expected to enter the monastery with nothing but the clothes he wore. When the elders were satisfied that the postulant had renounced wealth and property, he was brought before the assembled brothers and stripped of his secular garb.<sup>113</sup> The abbot then clothed the postulant in the habit of the monastery, admitting him as a novice. Through the loss of his clothing, the postulant was literally stripped of the last of his possessions. The habit he wore was borrowed and would have to be returned if he chose to leave.<sup>114</sup> Like Christ, the novice no longer had anything that he could count his own.<sup>115</sup> He was reduced to a fundamental equality with the other brothers in the *coenobium*. While the secular world might gauge social standing by wealth or birthright, within the monastery these indicators had been effaced. All of the brothers, from the most experienced man to the freshest novice, were sheltered and fed out of the possessions of the monastery. In economic terms, all were equal, all depended on the largesse of the community.

Nor would any of these brothers dare to regard anything as their own once they had joined the monastery. This virtue, Cassian stated, was one that he wished extended to the Gallic monasteries.<sup>116</sup> That it did not was suggested by Cassian's condemnation of those monks who had locking baskets to protect their possessions, an act that stood in opposition to the exemplary practices found in Egypt, where even the use of the adjective 'my' was a grave sin that earned a monk punishment.<sup>117</sup> No Egyptian monk would think to label something 'his'. Nor would he own a box or basket, or anything that could be

<sup>112</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 13.

<sup>113</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 5. These clothes were stored for safekeeping. Eventually, if the monk persevered in the monastery, a time would come when the clothes would be given to the poor (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 6).

<sup>114</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 6.

<sup>115</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 15. 2.

<sup>117</sup> Baskets: Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 15. 1; Egyptians: Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 13. See also Bas. *Reg. fus.* 33. Cf. M. J. Wilks, 'Private Ownership in Patristic Thought,' *SPAT* 6 (1962), 534.

secured with a seal.<sup>118</sup> Again Cassian drew a contrast between the monks of Egypt, who had their priorities in the right place, and the monks of Gaul. For obvious reasons, possession of property was not something that western writers would brag about; nevertheless, the story of Brictio, as related by Sulpicius, offers indirect confirmation of Cassian's charge. Although Brictio was said to have joined Martin's monastery with nothing, Sulpicius noted that he had become the owner of horses and slaves (including attractive girls).<sup>119</sup> The ownership of horses is significant; the high cost of the animals (20–25 *solidi* according to some legal documents)<sup>120</sup> placed them well outside the reach of all but the wealthy.<sup>121</sup> That Brictio owned horses implies a marked rise in social standing and wealth.

Sulpicius also excoriated upwardly mobile clerics in *Dialogi*, where Postumianus offered a diatribe on the unseemly conduct of the Gauls.<sup>122</sup> The archetypical ascetic, having received a little praise, let it go to his head; said to be a holy man, he began to believe it; if gifts were sent to him, he thought that God was arranging to bestow wealth on him; if he attained power, he would consider himself an angel; if made a cleric, he obtained new, costly robes, a horse, and entered the social round. The connection of this condemnation to Brictio is not certain, but in view of Sulpicius' antipathy toward Brictio, it does not seem entirely far-fetched.<sup>123</sup>

Sulpicius' condemnation was aimed at upwardly mobile Gallic ascetics. His charge suggests the presence of some who not only failed to renounce their possessions, but were adding to them. If, as has been suggested, these men were retaining their ancestral properties to serve as monasteries, then there is no reason to suspect that they would have felt any need to strip themselves of their possessions.

<sup>118</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 13.

<sup>119</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 15.

<sup>120</sup> Javier Arce, 'Otium et negotium: The Great Estates, 4th–7th Century,' in *The Transformation of the Roman World: AD 400–900*, edited by Leslie Webster and Michelle Brown (London: British Museum Press, 1997), 26.

<sup>121</sup> Arce, *Otium*, 26, suggests that 'owning horses was equivalent to what Symmachus defined as "[leading] a consular life"'.  
<sup>122</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 21.

<sup>123</sup> See also Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 15 [CSEL 1: 214. 20–1], where Sulpicius reports Martin's words on Brictio: 'if Christ put up with Judas, why should I not endure Brictio' (*si Christus Judam passum est, cur ego non patiar Brictionem*)?

Cassian's charges, especially his note about the locking boxes that could be sealed, bear the authenticity of eyewitness observation.

Possessions are intimately bound to property and wealth in Cassian's thought. A proper *renuntiatio* required a literal and permanent separation from all material things, and indeed the cultivation of contempt for those treasures of earth.<sup>124</sup> Possessions were an anchor, an undesirable weight that could not be carried up the path that ascends to spiritual perfection. The monk who could not sever the chain was doomed to remain forever earthbound.

#### 4 FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The dissolution of all ties to the external world was absolutely integral to Cassian's thought, as the preceding sections concerning wealth and possessions have demonstrated. But Cassian did not limit a monk's *renuntiatio* to material ties. The monk was also required to sunder the ties of duty and obligation that bound him to his nuclear family.<sup>125</sup> As long as a link to the outside world remained, the monk was in danger of being lured from the monastery. The bond arising from the accident of birth must be broken and replaced by a web of social connections circumscribed by the walls of the monastery. Unlike many other ascetic writers, Cassian took literally hard texts such as Luke 14:26 (which stated that a Christian must be prepared to hate his family in order to follow Christ). Other patristic authors found ways to defuse this anti-familial text,<sup>126</sup> but Cassian used it to justify his claim that family obligations must be renounced.<sup>127</sup>

Nowhere is this renunciation more graphically illustrated than in Cassian's story of the father and his young son who joined an Egyptian monastery. Normally, asserted Cassian, this arrangement

<sup>124</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 39. 1.

<sup>125</sup> On the place of the family in late antique society, see Shaw, *Family*, 3–51.

<sup>126</sup> See Andrew Jacobs, 'Let Him Guard Pietas: Early Christian Exegesis and the Ascetic Family,' *J ECS* 11 (2003), 265–81.

<sup>127</sup> This can be seen in Cassian, *Coll.* 3. 4. 2, where Cassian recounts the call of Antony, replacing the more familiar Matt. 19: 21 of Athanasius' text with Luke 14: 26. See discussion in Jacobs, *Pietas*, 277.

would not be allowed, but the father (Patermutius) waited before the gates so persistently with his eight-year-old boy that the monks finally relented and admitted the pair.<sup>128</sup> Patermutius and his son were immediately separated so that the father would not be inclined to think that he had retained at least one possession (his son) from the secular world. The abbot then decided to test Patermutius in order to see if any paternal feeling for the boy remained in him. He had the boy dressed in rags and ordered the other monks to slap and abuse the boy whenever his father was present. The boy's dirty cheeks, noted Cassian, were frequently washed with tears. When this harsh treatment failed to disturb the father's equanimity, the abbot decided to take the test a step further. One day, when he came upon the boy crying, he ordered Patermutius to seize his son and cast him in the river. Without hesitation, Patermutius grabbed his son, marched to the river, and threw him into the water. Fortunately, through the foresight of the abbot, brothers had been stationed on the riverbanks to rescue the boy should Patermutius demonstrate the faith of an Abraham.<sup>129</sup>

While the didactic emphasis of this story centred on the virtue of obedience, Cassian also demonstrates how firmly the ties to the secular world must be rejected. Patermutius was unmoved by the plight of his son because he no longer acknowledged a familial connection to the boy. He regarded his son with the indifference he would accord any other brother. When the abbot ordered that the boy be subjected to blows in front of his father, Patermutius concluded that this discipline was for the boy's own good, and took no more interest in the action than he would take in the case of any other novice subjected to punishment. Patermutius had successfully severed his former bonds.<sup>130</sup>

As long as a familial link was intact, there was a danger that the monk might be drawn back into an involvement with the secular world. The demands and needs of a family might encourage the

<sup>128</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 27. 1–4. Cassian also mentions a boy and father in Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 7.

<sup>129</sup> A contrast Cassian cannot resist (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 28).

<sup>130</sup> A variation on this theme may be found in Paulinus' description of how Melania had entrusted her son to guardians and eschewed contact with him so that she might love her son by neglecting him (P.-Nol. *Ep.* 29. 9).

monk, who had begun to plough his field, to look back in longing.<sup>131</sup> The only sure and certain course was to renounce all involvement with those who had surrounded the monk in his former life. The negative renunciation of family connections is intended to allow the positive integration into a new community to yield fruit.<sup>132</sup> The monk is aided in this by the regulations of the *instituta Aegyptiorum*. Communication with the outside world was firmly discouraged. Necessary communication was strictly monitored. The monk was not permitted to speak to a family member unless an elder was present. Nor was the monk permitted to receive (or respond to) letters from the outside world. The transgression of these rules earned a swift punishment.<sup>133</sup>

Again, Cassian's attempt to wall off the world separated him from other western ascetic writers.<sup>134</sup> Augustine's *Regula*, for instance, does not explicitly state that the monk will be denied contact with family members. To the contrary, the rule which enjoins that gifts received from relatives must be shared with the entire monastery suggests that Augustine's monks were not required to break off contact.<sup>135</sup> Jerome also deemed it permissible for the young Gallic monk Rusticus to continue to see his mother as often as he wished after he became an ascetic, just as long as she did not visit him accompanied by other women.<sup>136</sup> Sulpicius Severus continued to communicate with his mother-in-law Bassula,<sup>137</sup> and Paulinus received his cousin Melania and her entourage in Nola.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 36. 1 (citing Luke 9: 62). See also Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 39. 1, where the renunciation of one's familial relationships is the beginning of the conversion to spiritual perfection and Cassian, *Coll.* Pref. 1. 6, where he links the renunciation of family and interest in secular affairs to spiritual perfection. This theme is also advanced in Cassian, *Coll.* 1. 2. 3 and 1. 5. 3. See also Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 6, for the view that the Devil was responsible for afflicting a monk with family cares.

<sup>132</sup> See Philip Rousseau, 'The Formation of Early Ascetic Communities: Some Further Reflections,' *JTS* 25 (1974), 113–17, for a discussion of this with respect to Pachomius.

<sup>133</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 16. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Although it was more common in the east. Pachomius' *Regula*, which served as the model for much of the practices outlined in Cassian, *Inst.* 4, also contained the precept that a monk must be prepared to sever family connections (Hier. *Reg. Pachom.* 49).

<sup>135</sup> Aug. *Reg.* 5. 3.

<sup>136</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 125. 7.

<sup>137</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Ep.* 3.

<sup>138</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 29.

For Cassian, the ideal monk remained within the cloister, walled off from the seductive concerns of the world that he had renounced.<sup>139</sup> This point was illustrated by his account of Abba Archebius. Cassian offered Archebius as a paradigm for the aristocrats he was trying to instruct, explicitly stating that the story would benefit the monks of Gaul and teach them to maintain both a rigorous continence and the most unspoiled form of love.<sup>140</sup> Archebius was the son of a prosperous family.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, scorning both wealth and world, the young Archebius had fled to a monastery. He spent the rest of his life in seclusion, never returning to his own village (which was four miles away) nor looking on the face of a woman. However, when his father died, Archebius learned that his mother had been left with a debt of 100 *solidi*.<sup>142</sup> Although Archebius had renounced all claims to his father's wealth, when he heard that creditors were harassing his mother, he resolved to pay the debt for her. He subsequently took on three times his normal amount of work. Labouring night and day, he managed to earn enough money to pay her debt in a year.

This story seems to offer an inconsistency in Cassian's thought: if Archebius had renounced his family ties, how did he know that his mother was besieged by creditors, and moreover, why would he care? On closer examination, however, the premise Cassian advanced in *De institutis* 4 seems to hold: Archebius never saw another woman (including his mother) after entering his monastery. Since the monastery was quite close to his former village (four miles), news of his father's death and his mother's plight could easily have reached him without any direct (or indirect) contact with his mother.<sup>143</sup>

Charity provides the overarching context for this story. In the preceding chapter, Cassian had related how Archebius had given his cell to Germanus and Cassian when they had entered the desert.<sup>144</sup> The story of how he had relieved his mother's debt was offered

<sup>139</sup> Seductive also in that Cassian makes withdrawal from the world and its conversation a prerequisite to the battle for chastity (Cassian, *Coll.* 12. 15. 2).

<sup>140</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 38. 1 [SC 109: 250. 4]: *sincerissimum retinere dilectionis affectum*.

<sup>141</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 38. 1.

<sup>142</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 38. 1.

<sup>143</sup> Although Cassian does not say precisely how Archebius learned of his mother's dilemma.

<sup>144</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 37.

as a further illustration of Archebius' great charity. Cassian explicitly stated that it was the desire to practice charity that led Archebius to relax the evangelical prohibition on interacting with a family member. He took his mother's debt upon himself because the Christian obligation to practice charity took precedence over the injunction to have no interest or involvement in the affairs of his family. Indeed, as Cassian noted, when his father was alive and the family was prosperous, Archebius took no notice of them. It was only upon learning that his mother had fallen into great need that he sought to relieve her burden. Moreover, he was able to accomplish this relief without diminishing his monastic *cursus*—he was not drawn back into commerce with the world or with his family.

## 5 EXTERNAL CONTACTS

The monk's horizons were to be reduced to the walls of the monastery. As Abba Pinufius stated in the oration that closes Book Four of *De institutis*, progress in the monastic life was linked to the shunning of the world.<sup>145</sup> The affairs and concerns of the secular world must cease to interest the monk. In fact, the monk was exhorted to consider himself dead to this world. Cassian employed this theme of a living death when he explained the significance of the linen tunic the monks wore, the *colobium*.<sup>146</sup> Since linen was used as a burial garment,<sup>147</sup> its use as an undergarment constantly reminded the monk that he was metaphorically dead to the world and had been buried with Christ. Cassian reinforced this idea of a separation from the world by quoting Paul: 'For you are dead, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God.'<sup>148</sup> Whereas the monastic girdle and robe were external signs of separation, symbols of renunciation aimed

<sup>145</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 39. 1.

<sup>146</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 4.

<sup>147</sup> Christ's body was wrapped in a linen cloth (*ὀθόνιον*) before it was interred (John 19: 40; 20: 5). Cassian made the connection between the linen colobium that monks wore and death to the world in Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 4; see also Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 5. That some ascetics followed this practice is illustrated by the story of Melania, who wraps the monk Pambo in linen cloth and buries him following his death (Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 10. 5).

<sup>148</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 1. 4 [SC 109: 44. 8–9]: *Mortui enim estis, et uita uestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo* (citing Col. 3: 3).



toward the external observer, the undergarment, the closest layer to the monk's flesh, was intended to remind him of the choice he had made: death to the world, life in God.

This living death extended to the renunciation of both family connections (as discussed above) and the relationships with former acquaintances who were still marooned in the world. The monk had entered a new society, one which stood apart from the world. All attention must be turned inward, focused on the quest for spiritual perfection. Insulation from the concerns of the world was provided by the walls of the monastery.<sup>149</sup> The monk no longer saw his former acquaintances — all contact with the outside world was screened by the abbot. Nor was the monk allowed to send or receive letters apart from the permission of the abbot. The monk was to enter a living death, and the first thing to die was his interest in events and people beyond the cloister.<sup>150</sup>

As most of the evidence for early western asceticism is contained in letters and literary works, it is easy to believe that a renunciation of contact with the world was not one of the defining characteristics of the western ascetic.<sup>151</sup> Chief among those who practised asceticism while retaining a lively interest in the world was the presbyter Jerome.<sup>152</sup> This interest is well documented in the early letters he wrote from his 'cell' in Syria, where he passionately claimed that he had cut himself off from the affairs of the world, while simultaneously chastising his correspondents for the infrequency of their letters.<sup>153</sup> For Jerome, the letter was compensation for the physical absence of friends. Indeed, the maintenance of relationships — an act

<sup>149</sup> And this separation was suggested by the walls Pachomius erected around his monasteries, designed not to keep the monks in, but rather, to keep the world out (*V. Pach. bo.* 19).

<sup>150</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 16. 2.

<sup>151</sup> Although this statement needs to be carefully qualified by noting that if there was a group practising a renunciation of the world, we would know little about them. We know about Jerome, Paulinus, Sulpicius et al. precisely because they were so actively involved with the world. Once again, therefore, we are a victim of our sources. Cassian seems to be criticizing an outward-looking, worldly western asceticism, but we should not assume that this was the only kind of operation in Gaul at this time.

<sup>152</sup> For Jerome as a correspondent: Philip Rousseau, 'Jerome's Search for Self-Identity,' in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, edited by Pauline Allen, Raymond Canning, and Lawrence Cross (Queensland: Center for Early Christian Studies, 1998), 125–42.

<sup>153</sup> See, for instance, Hier. *Ep.* 6; Hier. *Ep.* 7. 2; Hier. *Ep.* 8. Cf. Driver, *Development*, 49.

practised by even the most barbaric of people — was a duty for those living in a more civilized age.<sup>154</sup>

Paulinus also spent a great amount of time establishing and maintaining contact with the world while ostensibly withdrawn from secular affairs at Nola. His letters reveal an intention to claim for his foundation, built around the martyr Felix's tomb, the status of one of the pre-eminent holy sites in the world.<sup>155</sup> Moreover, Paulinus often speaks of his couriers, men like Postumianus, Vigilantius, and Victor, who spent their time carrying his missives around the rim of the Mediterranean. This effort seems to have paid off as Nola did become one of the great stops on the pilgrim route. Nevertheless, Paulinus had, as Mratschek notes, 'absolutely no intention of isolating his monastery from the outside world'.<sup>156</sup>

This cultivation of the world and literary self-promotion was not Cassian's view of the proper goal for a monk. It has already been noted that a monk under the *instituta Aegyptiorum* was to be punished for receiving or writing letters without the abbot's permission.<sup>157</sup> Cassian's ideal monk had renounced all interest in anything happening beyond the walls of the monastery. This point is well illustrated by a story in *De institutis* 5. 32, in which a monk received a large packet of letters from his home province of Pontus after spending fifteen years in the desert.<sup>158</sup> The monk contemplated the

<sup>154</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 8. The same might be said for Hilary of Arles, as Eucherius reports that Hilary begged to receive letters from Eucherius (Eucher. *Laud. her.* 3). The letter was the agent that supported the ties of *amicitia*, the idea of shared friendship that has been described as one of the most important bonds of the aristocracy (Ralph Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993], 13). Similar themes emerge in Ausonius' chastisement of Paulinus for not answering three letters that had been sent to him (Aus. *Ep.* 21). See also Catherine Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 151.

<sup>155</sup> So Mratschek, *Multis*, who has documented Paulinus' wide-ranging network of contacts and the attempt to create a major ascetic centre at Nola. See also Robin Lane Fox, 'Literacy and Power in Early Christianity,' in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, edited by Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 136–9, for a discussion of public Christian letters.

<sup>156</sup> Mratschek, *Multis*, 514. But see Conybeare, *Paulinus*, 54–5, who sees the composition of Christian letters as a sacramental activity, an 'outward and visible sign of the invisible connection in Christ between those who write and those who receive and read them' (55).

<sup>157</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 16. 2.

<sup>158</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 32. 1.

packet of letters for a short time, asking himself what passions and recollections of the past would be awoken if he opened and read these letters. He also wondered how long, once the thoughts of his past had been stirred back into life, it would take before they relapsed into silence and his long-cultivated peace of mind returned to him. Ultimately the monk judged that the claims of his past belonged to the past, and he burned the letters without even opening the packet to see who had written to him. As the flames consumed the letters, he was said to have cried 'Do not tempt me to return to the things of the world from which I have fled'.<sup>159</sup>

It is difficult to read this story without wondering if Cassian had Jerome or Paulinus in mind when he wrote it. But even if no allusion was intended, the story's point is extremely clear: the monk was to avoid involvement with the world, deeming it a distraction that would disrupt the spiritual quest. The monk had died to the world and no longer should take any interest in what happened outside his enclosed society. Likewise, the monk would also sever the ties of *amicitia* that bound him in a web of secular relationships. Friendships could only occur between like-minded individuals; in the case of the monk, those who were pursuing spiritual goals with equal fervour.<sup>160</sup> This friendship presupposed renunciation of the world and this restriction of scope implied that it could only be enjoyed by brothers in the same monastery. The social horizon for the monk was to be reduced to the monastery, to those brothers who also strove for spiritual perfection.

## 6 SOCIAL STANDING

If the monk has died to the world and entered a new society, then it makes sense that the conventions the world employed to order individuals in a social hierarchy might also be destroyed. Indeed,

<sup>159</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 32. 3 [SC 109: 242. 26–8]: *ite, inquiens, cogitationes patriae, pariter concremimini nec me ulterius ad illa quae fugi reuocare temptetis*. Of course this was quite a counter-cultural activity—see Conybeare, *Paulinus*, 24, for a discussion of the requirement to respond to letters as a duty (*officium*) of elite life.

<sup>160</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 16. 5. Cf. Chrys. *Sac.* 1. 3.

Cassian advocated a new standard for judging pre-eminence in his enclosed order: standing based on the monk's emulation of Christ. The traditional gauges of rank—wealth and heredity—that stratified the secular world did not apply in Cassian's monastery. Here background counted for nothing; a monk who entered one of the Egyptian monasteries was a novice, no different from any other novice. Claims to power and pre-eminence were left at the front gate; sons of the great landowners, scions of senatorial families, were treated no differently than sons of beggars.

This does not appear to have been the practice of most ascetic foundations reported in western sources, where social rank translated directly into ascetic standing. One interesting example of this trend may be drawn from Jerome's abundant praise of the Roman senator Pammachius. This prominent senator had renounced the secular world after his wife (Paulina) had died. Jerome wrote a belated letter of condolence to Pammachius two years after her death. Although this letter was supposed to be consolatory, its main agenda seems to have been to restore a strained relationship with the Roman aristocrat. It is a rather obsequious sample of Jerome's art, aimed more at ingratiation than comfort. Especially prominent in Jerome's panegyric was the idea that Pammachius had now become the leader of the ascetics who lived in Rome, the 'commander in chief of all monks'.<sup>161</sup> Although we must be careful not to read too much into Jerome's effusive, ingratiating prose, his letter does advance the idea that social standing could be translated into monastic pre-eminence. It was completely proper for a man who had been numbered among the secular elite to assume a leadership role when he entered the ascetic life. Pammachius did not start his life as a junior novice, but rather, he was styled the leader of the Roman monks. Even though this was an Hieronymian obsequy and may offer no accurate information about Pammachius' true status in the Roman ascetic community, Jerome's letter suggests that he had no reservations about elites retaining their status in their adopted ascetic lives. And indeed, as Jerome's letters make clear, Pammachius did continue to

<sup>161</sup> Hier. Ep. 66. 4 [CSEL 54: 65. 18–19]: *magnus in magnis, primus in primis monachorum ἀρχιστρατηγὸς monachorum*. Jerome restated this sentiment in a later passage (Hier. Ep. 66. 11).

exercise a great deal of personal influence and authority on the course of ecclesiastical developments in Rome.<sup>162</sup>

Further evidence is offered by the examples of Paulinus, Sulpicius Severus, Paula, and the two Melanias. In each of these cases, the patron of the monastery moved effortlessly into a leadership role, despite the fact that none of these people had received training under experienced ascetics. These men and women essentially purchased their monasteries: they would have bought the land, paid for the construction of buildings, and equipped and supported those people who joined their foundations. They are examples of what Weber termed 'traditional authority' as opposed to the charismatic authority that enabled the poor Egyptian Abbas to draw followers to themselves.<sup>163</sup> The followers of Paula and the Melanias were drawn from among their relatives, friends, and slaves.<sup>164</sup> Moreover, in the case of at least one monastery, the transfer of leadership was based on heredity (Eustochium inherited the leadership of the Bethlehem monastery after her mother died) rather than merit or suitability for the position.<sup>165</sup> The working assumption of these leaders seems to have been that a former pre-eminence in the world made them uniquely qualified to lead other ascetics. Social standing was preserved in their adopted ascetic life.<sup>166</sup> But this, as has been demonstrated, was

<sup>162</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 27–8.

<sup>163</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society: Vol. I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 215, defines three pure types of authority: the rational, which is based on a shared belief in law and those appointed to enforce it; the traditional, resting on forms that have been observed over long periods of time and centred on personal loyalty; and the charismatic, which is based on devotion to an exemplary or heroic person. Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Authority and Humility: A Conflict of Values in Fourth-Century Female Monasticism,' in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith* (Lewiston, Lampeter, Queenston: Edwin Mellon, 1986), 215, applies Weber's analysis to female ascetics and notes that the foundations of women like Paula and Melania were based on traditional authority.

<sup>164</sup> Clark, *Authority and Humility*, 215.

<sup>165</sup> Clark, *Authority and Humility*, 216–17.

<sup>166</sup> Gillian Clark, 'Women and Asceticism in Late Antiquity: The Refusal of Status and Gender,' in *Asceticism*, edited by Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 36–7, has suggested that ascetic renunciation, in the case of women, also meant a loss of social status. While this may have been true for a large number of women, there were spectacular exceptions. Teresa Shaw, 'Practical, Theoretical, and Cultural Tracings in Late Ancient Asceticism,' in *Asceticism*, edited by Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford

anathema to Cassian.<sup>167</sup> The idea that an untrained ascetic could lead and guide other monks lay at the root of the Gallic problem.

There was only one measure of standing in Cassian's rule for ascetic life: Christ-likeness. All of the standards the world used to classify people were left at the front gate. One would not find the same social divisions that Jerome attributed to Paula's Bethlehem monastery,<sup>168</sup> or those divisions which may be deduced from the descriptions offered by Sulpicius Severus and Paulinus.<sup>169</sup>

Indeed, claimed Cassian, in Egypt they did not allow just anyone (and the implication here is anyone of rank) to found a monastery; the postulant must present himself to a monastery and begin at the bottom of the ascetic hierarchy. The aristocrat entered at the same point as the brother drawn from an impoverished background.<sup>170</sup> The renunciation of his wealth had stripped him of his social position — he now shared the poverty of Christ along with all of his new brothers.<sup>171</sup> No one had anything to call his own, no wealth to distinguish him from his fellows.

Nor did divisions based on age apply. The secular world might give precedence and deference to older members of the society, but for Cassian, the only value of age was as a source of humility: the older

University Press, 1995), 79, notes, in the case of the two Melanias, that women did not retreat into obscurity with their profession, but indeed may have become even more prominent. Cf. Jerome's assertion that Paula (who had been unknown while living as an aristocrat in Rome) was now, while living in obscurity in Bethlehem, known throughout the empire and in the barbarian countries as well (Hier. *Ep.* 108. 3). See also Paulinus' description of Melania the Elder's triumphal return to Italy in a procession that evokes the image of an imperial *aduentus* (P.-Nol. *Ep.* 29. 12). For Basil: Susan Holman, 'Rich City Burning: Social Welfare and Ecclesial Insecurity in Basil's Mission to Armenia,' *J ECS* 12 (2004), 196.

<sup>167</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>168</sup> In Jerome's tribute to Paula, he claimed that the women in her monastery were divided into three groups based on the rank they held in the outside world (Hier. *Ep.* 108. 20). Although these women did not work or live together, in the spirit of egalitarianism, they did all meet together for the offices of prayer. Against this was the eastern example of Macrina, who (according to Gregory of Nyssa) manumitted her household slaves and treated them as equals, as well as admitted sisters from the lowest classes of society into her ascetic household (Gr. Nyss. *V. Macr.* 11; Gr. Nyss. *V. Macr.* 12) — see the discussion in Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 92–3; Clark, *Authority and Humility*, 213.

<sup>169</sup> See discussion below.

<sup>170</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 1.

<sup>171</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 5.

postulants were to mourn the years they had wasted in the outside world.<sup>172</sup> In fact, in Cassian's new social order, it was quite likely that an older novice might find himself under the authority of someone much younger than himself.<sup>173</sup> In this case the older man was to submit to the younger, offering him the obedience appropriate to someone in a higher position. A sense of how awful this might be in secular terms is implicit in Sidonius Apollinarius' letter to Eutropius where he raised the haunting possibility that if Eutropius did not pursue higher offices, he might find himself passed over on the career ladder, standing while his juniors sat arguing at the council table.<sup>174</sup>

## 7 LUXURIOUS LIVING

Renunciation of the past also meant that the monk would separate himself from the small comforts offered by life. The context for Cassian's monasticism was not a Christianized form of *otium*, but rather an existence that sustained, rather than indulged the desires of the body. One of the first challenges of the novice was to forget the delights of his past life.<sup>175</sup> The monastic *cursus* was not intended to foster 'repose, a carefree life, or delights',<sup>176</sup> but rather was the most difficult and demanding of paths.

Whereas in their past lives monks may have enjoyed the pleasures of the table, now they were reduced to rough fare. Cassian did not prescribe a set menu as he felt that one standard could not meet the nutritional needs of all monks. Physiological needs differed; what was possible for some was out of the reach of others. Older monks or the sick would not be able to survive on moistened beans, fresh vegetables, or dry bread.<sup>177</sup> Consequently he did not offer a set menu for

<sup>172</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 2.

<sup>173</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 2.

<sup>174</sup> Sid. *Ep.* 1. 6. 4.

<sup>175</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 3.

<sup>176</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 38 [SC 109: 178. 3–4]: *non ad requiem, non ad securitatem, non ad delicias.*

<sup>177</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 5. 2. Pachomius and his brother John were said to subsist on two loaves of bread and a bit of salt each day (*V. Pach. bo.* 19). Cf. Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 19 for Moses' recommendation.

all, but rather placed the burden on the monk to distinguish between need and gluttony in his choice and quantity of food.<sup>178</sup>

Cassian does state that the Egyptian monks mainly consumed dried and uncooked food: the leaves from leeks, salt, olives, and small, salted fish.<sup>179</sup> Their greatest luxury, wrote Cassian, was to eat chervil (an herb from the mustard family) that had been salted and soaked in water.<sup>180</sup> Adoption of this sparse diet was not to be expected of the Gauls, however, as the harsher climate made these nutritional guidelines impractical.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, able-bodied Gallic monks were not to indulge in the luxury of wine and meat, as this was a sign of gluttony.<sup>182</sup> The proper course was to eat (in strictest moderation and never to repletion) food that could be obtained easily and cheaply.<sup>183</sup>

That this course would not have appealed to a western ascetic is suggested by one of Paulinus' letters to Sulpicius Severus. *Epistle 23* offers an account of how the rustic Victor (one of Sulpicius' letter carriers) attempted to win the aristocrat over to a rougher fare. Victor taught Paulinus how to make a simple gruel of meal and water.<sup>184</sup> But in case the reader believes that Paulinus had discovered the joys of food preparation, later in the letter he noted that it was actually another servant, an old *rusticanus* that Paulinus had imported from the country, who helped Victor with the cooking.<sup>185</sup> This old man, long accustomed to such coarse dishes, was said to be growing fat on Victor's hodgepodge. Paulinus, a slave to the refined tastes of a senator,<sup>186</sup> directed more appreciation toward the effort than the result.<sup>187</sup>

The cultured tastes of ex-aristocrats were also the subject of the concessions Augustine made in his rule. His monks were warned not

<sup>178</sup> A subject that is treated at length in *De institutis* 5 (see the discussion of these texts in Chapter 2. Cf. Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 22. 1.

<sup>179</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 22. Again, there is the equation of the monk with the poor and disenfranchised who might not have the means to cook food; cf. Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 95–6. J. L. North, 'Abstinence from "Dainty Food,"' *SPAT* 29 (1997), 505, offers one instance of the Desert Fathers enjoying sweetmeats.

<sup>180</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 11.

<sup>181</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 11.

<sup>182</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 6.

<sup>183</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 23. 1.

<sup>184</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 6.

<sup>185</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 9.

<sup>186</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 6.

<sup>187</sup> Victor's creation was said to have emitted a strong, stinking vapour that filled Paulinus' room (P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 7).



to envy those who received more food, or better clothing, mattresses, and blankets. The monks, who had been drawn from more affluent backgrounds, were given these extra luxuries (stated Augustine) because their bodies would not tolerate the harsher regime imposed on the brothers who came from less noble antecedents.<sup>188</sup> The right of the wealthy to enjoy a higher standard of living than the poor also emerges in Augustine's *Sermon* 61. Here he notes that the rich should eat their luxurious food because having grown accustomed to it, they would become sick if they ate rougher fare. The rich were to consume luxuries, while the poor were to be given necessities.<sup>189</sup>

In the case of Paulinus, there is the sense that the noble ascetic has possibly reduced his luxurious standard of living, but he was unable to stomach the rough food of a Victor. Undoubtedly he would have gravitated toward the moderate view expressed in Augustine's *Regula*. The Bishop of Hippo was quite realistic in his recognition of the difficulties faced by those accustomed to a luxurious existence. Nevertheless, his allowance for different standards of living in the monastery (based on one's antecedents) does seem to have been a source of tension among the brothers.<sup>190</sup> While Augustine's recommendations are eminently pragmatic, they would import social divisions into his monastery.

Cassian was the great equalizer. There was to be no hierarchy in the monastery based on a monk's previous life. Nor was there to be different food for different classes of monks. All brothers would eat the food that was common to the monastery. The only possible variation was quantity and selection. And these variations were made as concessions to sustain life, not to palliate cultured tastes.

## 8 SERVUS DEI

John Cassian offered a programme of renunciation that was very radical in the context of the late Roman world. The unqualified

<sup>188</sup> Aug. *Reg.* 3. 3–4.

<sup>189</sup> Aug. *Serm.* 61. 11–12. Cf. Ramsey, *Almsgiving*, 234–5.

<sup>190</sup> As is implied by the directives to the poorer brothers not to begrudge the concessions made to the formerly wealthy brothers (Aug. *Reg.* 3. 3–4; 5. 1).

renunciation of wealth and property, the severing of ties with family and friends, and the reduction of the living standard to a subsistence level must have been hard for someone drawn from an elite background to accept. Cassian was not finished; his restructuring of the Roman social order involved one last great reversal: the free man would take on the role of a slave. How difficult would it have been for an elite Roman reader to contemplate the renunciation of his freedom? How hard would it have been for someone who had always been served to don the chains of a servant?<sup>191</sup>

The slave's role in antiquity was to carry out tasks set by a master. These tasks ranged from serving as physicians to working in the fields.<sup>192</sup> The slave had no claim to rights as an individual — under Roman law, he or she was nothing more than a master's property. Although the slave could hold property or possessions as a *peculium*, ultimately these things were also the property of the master.<sup>193</sup> Nor did slaves enjoy extensive protection under Roman law: the Theodosian Code stated that a master would not be held accountable if a punished slave died.<sup>194</sup> Slaves were property, no different than a villa, a horse, or a book. There was a wide gulf between an aristocrat, who had perhaps the greatest amount of personal freedom in Roman society, and the man or woman owned by another. Consequently, the idea that an aristocrat would willingly take up the yoke of servitude in a monastery was indeed a revolutionary concept.<sup>195</sup>

<sup>191</sup> William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 88–93; Keith Bradley, 'Animalizing the Slave: The Truth of Fiction,' *JRS* 90 (2000), 110–1, for the parity between slaves and domestic animals in classical thought.

<sup>192</sup> R. Samson, 'Slavery, the Roman Legacy?' in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* edited by John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 220.

<sup>193</sup> Samson, *Slavery*, 221; Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 34. A similar situation existed for sons and daughters who were still under the authority of a *paterfamilias*.

<sup>194</sup> Thds. Imp. *Cod.* 9. 12. 1.

<sup>195</sup> Wes, *Crisis*, 257: 'To exchange *libertas* for *servitus* is the most radical and, in the view of a Roman aristocrat, the most absurd step one can take.' This may not have applied, however, to those from the poorer end of the social spectrum. As Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 5, has suggested, many slaves were much better off than the great majority of the free poor (cf. Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974], 92). For a person drawn from this background, Cassian's monastery might have represented a substantial improvement.

Cassian shows no sympathy for those who would face this reduction in status. All monks in the coenobium worked; all monks served; and all monks offered absolute, unquestioning obedience to those set over them.<sup>196</sup> In short, all monks were slaves, adopting the same quality of humble service that had characterized Christ. The fundamental division of individuals in the classical world,<sup>197</sup> the distinction between free and slave, was destroyed; the servant, the served, and the free poor were conflated into a single class: *serui Dei*. Those who had once ruled and been served now learned humility by working with their hands and serving others.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, this diminution of personal freedom does not seem to have characterized early western monasticism.<sup>198</sup> Nor were the divisions of social order rapidly breached. When describing the lives of the monks at Marmoutier, for instance, Sulpicius Severus was quite explicit in stating that Martin's monks practised no trades, nor were they allowed to buy or sell.<sup>199</sup> Martin had forbidden the monks to engage in self-supporting crafts. 'Let the Church feed and clothe us, so long as we do not seem to have earned anything for our own use.'<sup>200</sup> The church's role in providing for the monks was also implied by the fact that a deacon (Cato) was responsible for the management of the monastery's affairs, including the provision of food for the monks.<sup>201</sup> This duty, undertaken on behalf of the monks, suggests that the details of providing daily bread were not suitable concerns for a monk. This would be handled by those who served the monastery. The monk's duty was to pray—let the

<sup>196</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 1, identifies three basic components in slavery: the slave is property; the owner's rights over the slave were complete; the slave was kinless, having been stripped of his or her former social identity. The need to separate a monk from his former social context has already been discussed above and this section will pursue the similarities between Garnsey's first two components and Cassian's monks. For the characterization of Macrina as a servant, see Elm, *Virgins of God*, 99.

<sup>197</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 185.

<sup>198</sup> Clark, *Ascetic Renunciation*, 181.

<sup>199</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 10.

<sup>200</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 14 [CSEL 1: 212. 23–4]: *nos, inquit, ecclesia et pascat et uesiat, dum nihil nostris usibus quaesisse uideamur.*

<sup>201</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 10.

church look after the secular affairs of providing food and clothing for the monks.<sup>202</sup>

The story of an old man who was hired to gather wood for the monks also suggests that manual labour was not practised by the monks of Marmoutier.<sup>203</sup> This information may be supplemented by the story related above concerning Brictio, who, although brought up in Martin's monastery owned horses and slaves. Although Sulpicius' account is ambiguous about Brictio's status (is he a former monk who is now a cleric, or a monk-cleric who is still part of Martin's monastery), the story does suggest what is implied elsewhere, the presence of servants or slaves at Marmoutier. The only apparent exception to Martin's prohibition of work was that the younger monks were allowed to copy texts while the older monks prayed.<sup>204</sup>

The divisions embedded in Gallic asceticism become even more pronounced when attention is turned to the evidence for a social hierarchy at Sulpicius' foundation at Primuliacum. Paulinus of Nola's *Epistle* 24 stated that Sulpicius Severus was nothing more than one of many servants at Primuliacum, living as a fellow servant with the household slaves (*confamulus uernularum*).<sup>205</sup> Does this mean that Sulpicius had freed his slaves? If so, it is curious that Paulinus still refers to them as slaves. Would it not be more accurate to refer to the manumitted slaves (if indeed that is what they were) as brothers or monks?<sup>206</sup>

<sup>202</sup> Jerome advanced a similar argument in his attack on Vigilantius (who had opposed sending money from Gaul to support the monasteries in the Holy Land). Jerome claimed that since these men and women had renounced all, they were now owed a living by the church (Hier. *Vigil.* 13). This view was opposed by Augustine in his *De opere monachorum*, written to monks of Carthage who had ceased working in order to pray all the time. Despite Augustine's injunction that monks should do some work, it should be noted that he mitigates this for those drawn from an elite class who would not be accustomed to manual labour, and should therefore be given an administrative function in the monastery (Aug. *Mon.* 33).

<sup>203</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 21.

<sup>204</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Mart.* 10.

<sup>205</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 24. 3.

<sup>206</sup> One possible explanation is that of the *paramone*, a Roman contract that manumitted the slave, but required the newly-freed person to continue in the role of a household servant (cf. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 34). See also Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 141–52, who argued that the majority of manumitted slaves in antiquity were required to continue to serve their master until death ended the relationship.

Indeed, a close reading of the evidence suggests that Primuliacum tended toward a more traditional, Roman model of estate management. While Sulpicius and Paulinus profess equality among the brothers, it is intriguing to note that the servants among the *serui Dei* were responsible for the work, while the elite *serui Dei* engaged in activities which bore a strong resemblance to the more traditional activities of an aristocrat who has withdrawn from the world (embracing a life of *otium*). One example may be extracted from Sulpicius' *Dialogi*. Here it is reported that while Gallus, Postumianus, and Sulpicius Severus were spinning tales about Martin (a quasi-literary activity), a family servant (*puer familiaris*) entered to report the arrival of the priest Refrigerius.<sup>207</sup> Evidently the servants were not part of these ascetic discussions. A similar phrase occurs in one of Sulpicius' *Epistles*. While deep in a dream/vision concerning Martin, a *puer familiaris* entered Sulpicius' 'cell' to tell him that men had arrived with the sad news of Martin's death.<sup>208</sup> It is difficult to avoid the impression that while the aristocrats were engaged in ascetic practices (talking, having visions) the *pueri* were busy with the same tasks that would have occupied their attention in a traditional Roman villa.

Quite possibly there were several layers of social stratification at Primuliacum. There was one division between the master of the estate, Sulpicius, and the *pueri familiaris*. Standing apart from these two clearly defined groups was a third class of brothers, the messenger corps that carried letters between Primuliacum and Nola.<sup>209</sup> One of the most highly praised of these couriers was a monk named Victor.<sup>210</sup> The subject of a lengthy panegyric by Paulinus,<sup>211</sup> Victor was a former soldier<sup>212</sup> who joined first Martin and Clarus,<sup>213</sup> and then Sulpicius.

<sup>207</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 2. 14. Sulpicius' use of the term *puer familiaris* to signify a servant or slave is suggested by a story in *Dialogi* 3. Here, a *puer* from Avitianus' household brought a glass jar to be filled with oil blessed by Martin. Sometime later, a *puer familiaris* in the household upset the jar and it fell to the marble floor but did not break (Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 3. 3).

<sup>208</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Ep.* 2.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. P.-Nol. *Ep.* 11. 4.

<sup>210</sup> See Conybeare, *Paulinus*, 31–40, on the role of these carriers in general and Victor in particular.

<sup>211</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 3–10.

<sup>212</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 25. 1. Cf. Peter Walsh, *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola, Vol. I* (New York: Newman Press, 1966), 302 n. 2.

<sup>213</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 3.

That Victor was not the equal of Sulpicius is implied by Paulinus' assertion that Sulpicius would want to hear how Victor had served Paulinus, 'because your good portion is the good work of your servant'.<sup>214</sup>

Upon reaching Nola for the first time in the year 400, Victor immediately took on the burden of serving Paulinus. Paulinus termed this service a 'voluntary kindness' (*hoc uoluntarium eius bonum*), and claimed to have accepted it hoping to gain merit for allowing himself to be served and in order to avoid hurting Victor's feelings.<sup>215</sup> Paulinus, it should be noted, frequently cultivated merit in this way. The aristocratic ascetic appears to have been well served during his years at Nola.<sup>216</sup> His letter to Sulpicius describes Victor's ministrations at length: Victor is 'allowed' to wash Paulinus' body and feet, to anoint his limbs, and to clean his sandals.<sup>217</sup> At Paulinus' request (undoubtedly cultivating additional merit), Victor massaged the aristocrat's body with oil.<sup>218</sup> Victor also took charge of Paulinus' kitchen. As discussed above, he prepared a traditional monastic meal for Paulinus which did not sit well in the cultured aristocrat's belly, but was quite well received by the coarser servant, the *rusticanus* who helped with the cooking at Nola.<sup>219</sup> Victor also busied himself by procuring and grinding a large supply of meal for the monks of Nola.<sup>220</sup> Victor's final act was the cutting of Paulinus' hair, a duty that Sulpicius had commanded.<sup>221</sup>

Paulinus' presentation of Victor's service at Nola obscures Victor's status. Clearly he was not a former aristocrat; his practical knowledge — of cooking, milling, cleaning, and his ability to care for Paulinus' body — places him outside that stratum. His actions presuppose a non-aristocratic background, and although Paulinus connects each of Victor's actions with the pattern set by the greater servant (Christ), one wonders how voluntary Victor's service might have been. Would

<sup>214</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 3 [CSEL 29: 160. 27]: *quoniam portio tua est bonum familiaris tui*. Mratschek, *Multis*, 522, suggests that Victor had originally been one of Clarus' companions, who after that priest's death, had attached himself to Sulpicius.

<sup>215</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 4.

<sup>216</sup> See Trout, *Paulinus*, 146–8, for examples of Paulinus' *pueri* being sent on missions for Paulinus to his other estates, as well as for Paulinus' arrangements for the ongoing support of manumitted slaves.

<sup>217</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 4–5.

<sup>218</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 5.

<sup>219</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 9.

<sup>220</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 8.

<sup>221</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 10.

a servant arriving with letters for an aristocrat be allowed to take his ease while awaiting a return message, or would he have been expected to attach himself temporarily to the recipient of the messages, busying himself for the duration of his stay?<sup>222</sup>

On the other hand, there are some clues that Victor was something more than a common servant or slave; he is said to be a former soldier who had attached himself to Martin and Clarus. While he could have joined them in the capacity of a servant, Paulinus hinted at Victor's monastic status through an allusion to his sheepskin garment.<sup>223</sup> It may very well be that Victor occupied a middle zone between aristocrat and servant. Perhaps he was a *rusticanus* who had been taken into the community at Primuliacum, but was under obedience to his 'abbot' (Sulpicius Severus).

As has been demonstrated, social stratification existed among the *serui Dei* at both Nola and Primuliacum. It is unlikely, despite the great degree of admiration that he professed for Victor, that an aristocrat like Paulinus would ever have stooped to accepting orders from the courier. Paulinus and Sulpicius may have intellectually acquiesced to the fundamental equality of all brothers in Christ, but on a practical level it is clear that the old social order persisted.

Nor was this unusual among the elite who had withdrawn from the world. Palladius hints at the same stratification in Melania the Younger's monastery when he noted that part of Melania's asceticism was to perform a portion of her female slaves' work. Although Melania had made these women fellow ascetics (*συνασκητρίας*) it is significant that their roles have not been significantly altered by their manumission.<sup>224</sup> Jerome (as noted above) stated that Paula's ascetic foundation had been arranged in three divisions based on class; each class

<sup>222</sup> Mratschek, *Multis*, 522, suggests that when a monk arrived at a monastery he would integrate himself into the community, taking on a share of the daily labours and duties. Again, one is led to wonder if those visitors of a higher rank would have been expected to participate in the jobs that were normally assigned to the *pueri*? Cf. Conybeare, *Paulinus*, 36–7.

<sup>223</sup> P.-Nol. *Ep.* 23. 3.

<sup>224</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 61. 6. Likewise, Gregory of Nyssa noted that Macrina compelled her mother to live at the same level as her maids, but he does not say that the maids were set free from their tasks (Gr. Nyss. *V. Macr.* 11). Macrina does seem to have been serious in her desire to share the lot of her slaves — Elm, *Virgins of God*, 46, argues that by baking bread for her mother, Macrina took on a task that was reserved for slaves, a serious violation of existing social convention.

was responsible for its own allotted tasks.<sup>225</sup> Moreover, Jerome also wrote that if a woman from a noble background joined the monastery, she was not allowed to keep any attendant who had served her in her former household.<sup>226</sup> This attendant, whose mind could be fixed on the delights of a life forsaken, might reawaken suppressed desires in the noble girl through her conversation. While this salutary prohibition does circumvent one possibility, the rule implies that a servant who had not been with the girl in the world would have been allowed.<sup>227</sup> The rule does not forbid attendants, per se, but rather attendants who had enjoyed a secular relationship with the noble girl.<sup>228</sup>

The references to servants in the sources for western asceticism tend to support the idea that traditional roles of served and servant were maintained within these foundations. The paucity of these references should be attributed to the fact that slaves and attendants were part of the cultural landscape—unremarkable and barely worth mentioning—rather than the belief that these foundations lacked a toiling class. The references surveyed above suggest that the social stratification that marked the secular world persisted in the monastery. In fact, it would have been remarkable had this not been the case: slavery was such a deeply ingrained cultural feature that even among Christians there was no serious challenge offered to the institution until the seventeenth century.<sup>229</sup> If one enjoyed the fruits

<sup>225</sup> Hier. Ep. 108. 20.

<sup>226</sup> Hier. Ep. 108. 20.

<sup>227</sup> As is not uncommon with Jerome, his recommendations vary with his audience. When he writes to the former senator, Pammachius, for example, he attempts to goad the new ascetic on by alluding to the example of Paula and Eustochium who do all manner of domestic duties: lighting lamps, sweeping floors, cleaning vegetables. Jerome then asked a rhetorical question: 'Do they do this because there are no servants for these duties? Goodness no! They do it to demonstrate that they can also outperform those in physical toil that they exceed in stature of mind' (Hier. Ep. 66. 13). One is left with the sense that the bulk of the domestic work in Paula's monasteries fell into the hands of the less noble women, although the upper crust occasionally did some work in order to prove their superiority.

<sup>228</sup> See Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 102, and Elm, *Virgins of God*, 38, for the conversion of entire households to asceticism, including the slaves.

<sup>229</sup> Which is not to say that some Christian writers did not oppose the institution of slavery during the patristic period. Gregory of Nyssa (Gr. Nyss. *Hom. 1–8 in Eccl. 4*) argued that slavery was wrong. John Chrysostom (Chrys. *Hom. in I Cor. 40. 6*) stated that Christians should educate their slaves in a trade and then emancipate them. Cf. Gordon, *Economic Problem*, 108.



of slave labour in the secular world, it is only natural to expect that this would continue in the ascetic life.

The radical nature of Cassian's admonition to service emerges when set against the preceding examples. Not only were the elite to give up their own servants, but they were actually supposed to become servants for others. They were to humble themselves in emulation of Christ, who likewise had lowered himself to serve all mankind.<sup>230</sup> In Cassian's view the monk's emulation involved four characteristics: manual labour, serving others, offering absolute obedience to one's elders, and relinquishing control over his life and destiny. In short, the man or woman who entered the monastery was to become a slave, no longer free to do as he or she chose.

## 9 MANUAL LABOUR

Those who sought perfection through the vehicle of the *instituta Aegyptiorum* were required to embrace the discipline of manual labour.<sup>231</sup> Cassian's injunction, that all monks must work with their hands, is entirely within the Egyptian stream of thought. The *Apophthegmata patrum*, *Historia monachorum*, and *Historia Lausiaca* all present monks working in order to support themselves.<sup>232</sup> A monk worked for both practical and spiritual reasons.

The most obvious practical reason was economic: the monk who had renounced all of his worldly possessions required some form of support. Presuppositional for Cassian, as discussed above, was that the monk arrived at the gates of the monastery with nothing but the clothes he wore. In order to sustain life, it was necessary to engage in

<sup>230</sup> It is possible that Hilary of Arles was adapting Cassian when he described how Honoratus had become a slave to all for the sake of Christ (Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 18. 2). This connection should not be pressed too vigorously, however, as it certainly goes back to Paul, who also identified himself as a servant of Christ (Rom. 1: 1).

<sup>231</sup> For the positive evaluation of manual labour by the early church see Martin Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church: Aspects of a Social History of Early Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 60–4.

<sup>232</sup> A great number of references could be adduced here. Representative examples include: *Apophth. Patr.* Achilles 5; *Apophth. Patr.* Isaiah 5; *Hist. mon.* 18. 1; Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 7. 5.

some form of work. Whereas Gallic monasteries were foundering because the monks refused to work,<sup>233</sup> Cassian's monastery was a self-supporting institution. Those who lived in one of Cassian's coenobia were expected to support the monastery through their work.<sup>234</sup>

Work was an unending round. If the monk was awake, and neither eating nor praying in the synaxes, he was expected to be working. The Egyptian monks worked so much that they were allowed to sit during the nocturnal psalmody in deference to their fatigue.<sup>235</sup> They sought out work that could be done throughout the day, and even during the hours of darkness when they kept their vigils.<sup>236</sup>

Through this grinding regime of toil the monk learned humility. Soft hands and weak bodies that had never known the rigours of a servant's work were to be habituated to ceaseless effort, so that the monk 'will be able to forget both the arrogance and the delights of his past life and acquire humility of heart through the contrition [produced by] hard work'.<sup>237</sup> The value of manual labour as a means of cultivating humility would have resided in its novelty for many of Cassian's readers. It is hard to imagine that an audience drawn from the lower classes would have been dismayed or shocked by the proposition that they had to embrace manual labour. As a discipline for teaching humility,<sup>238</sup> manual labour would only seem salutatory for those who had never been required to exert themselves before becoming monks.

Work also served as an aid to prayer. Cassian presented manual labour as a means of anchoring a restless mind. The monk who sat idle in his cell was liable either to fall asleep or have his thoughts slip away from prayer and become unproductive. Work kept the monk awake and helped him carry out the injunction to pray without ceasing.<sup>239</sup> So intertwined were manual labour and prayer, claimed Cassian, that it was difficult, in the case of the Egyptians, to decide if their spiritual perfection drove them to work so hard, or whether

<sup>233</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 10. 23.

<sup>234</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 14.

<sup>235</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 12. 1.

<sup>236</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 12. 2.

<sup>237</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 3 [SC 109: 62. 24–6]: *et fastus uitae praeteritae possit et delicias obliuisci, et humilitatem cordis contritione laboris adquirere.*

<sup>238</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 10.

<sup>239</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 14; 3. 2.

because they spent so much time working, they had achieved spiritual perfection.<sup>240</sup>

Another spiritual benefit of work was its role in palliating one of the great vices of the monastic life, *acedia*. This vice, often referred to as 'the midday demon'<sup>241</sup> was the subject of *De institutis* 10. *Accedia* was the spirit of dejection and restlessness that made a monk want to do anything but concentrate on the task at hand. Time slows down and the monk finds himself going out of his cell to check the position of the sun. He contemplates setting off to visit the other brothers, or wonders why he receives no visitors.<sup>242</sup> The monk who succumbs to *acedia* ceases to make spiritual progress and slips into idleness or a dejected torpor.<sup>243</sup> Eventually he is driven by restlessness to seek the companionship of others. Snared by the midday demon, he is unable to return to the path of spiritual perfection and will soon leave the monastery.<sup>244</sup>

Work was Cassian's remedy for *acedia*. The monk must remain in his cell and battle the vice through the discipline of ceaseless labour. Rather than going out of the cell to engage in gossip and idleness with those who had already lost the battle, the monk of the narrow way followed Paul's admonition to the Thessalonians: he minded his own business and worked with his hands to provide for his needs.<sup>245</sup> To relax from the ongoing discipline of work was to relax from the spiritual quest; progress came through perseverance.<sup>246</sup>

## 10 SERVING OTHERS

The monk did not just work on his own behalf, however. Part of his charter was to grow in humility by offering service to others. Service was a fundamental method for conquering pride, one of the more important steps on the road to spiritual perfection. Cassian shared

<sup>240</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 14.

<sup>241</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 10. 1 [SC 109: 384. 9]: *meridianum daemonem*.

<sup>242</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 10. 2. 3–4.

<sup>243</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 10. 6.

<sup>244</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 10. 6.

<sup>245</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 10. 7. 3–4, developing the ideas Paul suggested in 1 Thess. 4: 11.

<sup>246</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 14.

this conviction with Basil, who noted that without brothers, whose feet would a monk wash in order to imitate Christ's humble servanthood?<sup>247</sup> As has already been noted, in the western ascetic foundations (especially at Nola for which the best evidence may be examined) while all were said to be servants of God, some of the ascetics seemed to have embraced that state of servanthood more literally than others.<sup>248</sup>

Cassian disbanded the old social hierarchy: all monks were intended to serve. The central place of service in the monastic life was taught from the beginning of the monk's training. Cassian's novice was made to spend a year living under an elder who was responsible for the care of guests.<sup>249</sup> During this year the senior monk directed the novices and taught them the first principles of the monastic life. One of their duties was to serve the guests. Acting as servants, Cassian noted, the novices were initiated into the rudiments of humility.

Opportunities to act as a servant did not cease once the novice was admitted into the general community. In addition to the work that supported the monastery, the brothers took turns preparing meals for the other monks.<sup>250</sup> This duty was rotated among the monks on a weekly basis so that all of the brothers would have a turn.<sup>251</sup> Once again Cassian used service as a training ground for spiritual development. The monks who had the duty of preparing food for their brothers performed their service with a zeal and humility that greatly exceeded what was offered by a slave even to the harshest master.<sup>252</sup> Indeed, the eastern monks were so eager to serve one another, that some of them rose in the night to perform these duties, even though

<sup>247</sup> Bas. *Reg. fus.* 7.

<sup>248</sup> Again, one may think of the interaction between Victor and Paulinus.

<sup>249</sup> Cassian identifies these guests as pilgrims and brethren from other monasteries in Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 7 and 10. 22. See the similar structure in *V. Pach. bo.* 33.

<sup>250</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 19. 1–3. Cassian thought this discipline was important enough to make a point of suggesting that it be adopted in Gaul (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 22).

<sup>251</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 19. 1. Cassian noted that the weekly rotation was used in Mesopotamia, Palestine, Cappadocia, and throughout the east. The weekly rota was not used in Egypt, however, as the Egyptians typically ate only uncooked food and therefore no great labour was required to prepare the meals. Consequently, a single brother was charged with the duty of arranging for the simple dietary needs of the brethren (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 22).

<sup>252</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 19. 1.

it was not their turn, in order to relieve those who were on the rota for the week.<sup>253</sup>

This example of the eastern monks' zealous service was supplemented by a further instance of their devotion: according to Cassian, one week the monks in a certain monastery had run out of the firewood necessary to cook the communal meals. The abbot declared that until more firewood could be obtained, the monks of the community would have to subsist on dried and uncooked food. The monks who had the duty that week were dismayed because the shortage of wood interfered with their opportunity to serve. In response, they embarked on an even greater labour and spent their days roaming the desert (where wood was extremely scarce) collecting wind-driven stubble and brambles and bearing these odd bits back to the monastery so that they would have fuel for the cooking fires.<sup>254</sup> Even though the abbot's command had offered them an excuse to desist from service, these monks were unwilling to be deprived of the opportunity to cultivate humility through their service to others.<sup>255</sup>

## 11 OBEDIENCE

There was more to servanthood than simply working and serving others. The cultivation of the virtue of obedience lay at the heart of Cassian's injunction that a monk must become a servant. The monk must, without question or hesitation, do whatever was enjoined by his superiors. As Augustine noted, obedience was the matrix of virtues and the universal virtue.<sup>256</sup> While the idea of obedience was familiar to the slaves and servants of the Roman world,<sup>257</sup> one

<sup>253</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 19. 1.

<sup>254</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 21.

<sup>255</sup> I have already discussed another of Cassian's examples of the cultivation of humility through service, Abba Pinufius (see Chapter 2). Abba Pinufius abandoned his position of leadership in a large Egyptian monastery, so that he might cultivate humility by entering a Pachomian monastery as the lowest of novices. In this example, the service of others, especially when coupled to the self-abnegation suggested by Pinufius' reduction of station, furthered the Abba's growth in humility (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 30. 2).

<sup>256</sup> Aug. *Psal.* 75. 12.

<sup>257</sup> See Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 9, for the idea that owners strove for absolute obedience from their slaves.

wonders how comfortable a concept this would have been for one of the ruling elites drawn to the ascetic vocation.<sup>258</sup>

For Cassian, however, the ascetic life was a surrender of self-will and self-centredness, and this abnegation was facilitated by training in the positive virtue of obedience. This complete obedience and submission of will is one of the central themes of *De institutis* 4. Cassian argued that obedience was the primary virtue, and nothing was to be placed before it.<sup>259</sup> It made coenobitic life possible, and it was an absolute prerequisite for a leadership position.<sup>260</sup> The novice learned obedience from his earliest days in the monastery.

The novice's education in obedience began at the hands of the elder assigned to care for visitors to the monastery. Once this probationary period was completed, the novice was transferred into the care of an overseer who took charge of the monk's education. The duty of this overseer, an elder who was gifted with special discernment for this training, was to teach the junior monk how to conquer self-will through the cultivation of obedience.

One method of teaching obedience was the selection of distasteful tasks for the novice.<sup>261</sup> In the case of a certain aristocrat who had joined an Egyptian monastery, this meant carrying ten baskets into a nearby village and selling them in the market. His superior made the further proviso that the ex-aristocrat was not to sell more than one basket to any single buyer, thereby lengthening the amount of time he would have to stand in the market hawking his wares.<sup>262</sup> Although having to flog goods in a market alongside merchants must have been particularly mortifying for someone from a noble family,<sup>263</sup> this monk rose to the challenge and performed his task admirably. He demonstrated that he had exchanged consciousness of his former station with a desire to obtain the true nobility attained through obedience and the emulation of Christ.<sup>264</sup>

Not only must the new monk learn to obey his superiors, but he must also offer instant obedience without grumbling or questioning.

<sup>258</sup> See Henry Chadwick, 'The Ascetic Ideal in the History of the Church,' in *Monks, Hermits, and the Ascetic Tradition*, edited by W. J. Sheils (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 14, for discussion of the idea that *oboedientia* is a word from Christian, rather than secular classical literature.

<sup>259</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 12.

<sup>260</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 28.

<sup>261</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 8.

<sup>262</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 29.

<sup>263</sup> MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 100.

<sup>264</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 29.

Cassian illustrated the ideal of instant obedience with his example of literary interruptions. The Egyptian monks had cultivated obedience to such a high degree, that if a monk was summoned while writing, he would abandon his work without hesitation, lifting his stylus in the middle of a character stroke.<sup>265</sup>

Obedience was to become so deeply rooted in a monk that it would not be the result of a conscious decision. Cassian's ideal monk did not receive a command and then consider whether to obey; Cassian's monks obeyed instantly without questioning the commands they were given. Mental debate about commands would suggest that the monks were not completely obedient, but instead were placing faith in their own discernment rather than subordinating their will to the commands of their superiors. The monk was taught to obey without hesitation, trusting that his elders knew what they were doing in issuing an order.<sup>266</sup> The monk was to treat each command as if it had been ordered by God, and to strive to fulfil it to the limit of his strength.<sup>267</sup>

As was noted in Chapter 3, Cassian employed the same story about John of Lycopolis watering a dead stick as Sulpicius Severus had used in his *Dialogi*.<sup>268</sup> The difference between the stories was that Sulpicius had chosen to highlight the miraculous aspect (the stick had taken root and turned into a tree) while Cassian brought out the monk's unquestioning obedience. John obeyed his elder without questioning the point of doing something absolutely ridiculous.

Cassian used another story about John to demonstrate the priority of obedience over possessions. One day some other Egyptian brothers, having heard about John, came to see his remarkable obedience for themselves. Asked to provide a test for the young monk, his abba ordered John to throw a precious vase of oil out of the window. This vase was very expensive and irreplaceable, supplying oil for the brothers and their visitors.<sup>269</sup> Yet, without hesitation, John snatched

<sup>265</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 12. A similar story is told about Abba Athre who was summoned while cleaning a fish and left his work in the middle of a knife stroke (*Apophth. Patr.* Pistus 1).

<sup>266</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 41. 3.

<sup>267</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 10.

<sup>268</sup> Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.* 1. 19.

<sup>269</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 25 [SC 109: 158. 15–17]: *etiam si pecunia subpeditaret, nihilominus perditā species inueniri repararique non posset.*

up the vase, flew up the stairs, and hurled it out of an open window, where it smashed on the rocks below. Again, this absolute faith in his elder's command, not stopping to weigh costs or consequences, was offered as a salutatory model for Gallic monks. Instant, unquestioning obedience to orders, no matter how irrational they might appear, was the cornerstone of Cassian's system.<sup>270</sup>

## 12 THE RENUNCIATION OF CONTROL

Obedience taught the monk that he no longer had any control over his own life and destiny. The monk was not his own maker, and consequently, rather than being a free agent, he had no basis for independent action.<sup>271</sup> Whereas he once moved with a degree of freedom through late antique society, charting his own course, he was now a slave to the monastery, empowered to make no decisions for himself. By joining the ascetic society, the monk was no longer an independent entity, but rather was someone consecrated to Christ.<sup>272</sup> He was no longer a free man; he had chosen the yoke of the slave. His physical needs were controlled by others: he was told when to eat, when to sleep, indeed he was not even allowed to come out of his cell without the explicit permission of his superior.<sup>273</sup> He relied on the monastery for food and clothing.<sup>274</sup> He was bound to do the will of his superior, instantly and without question, no matter how odd or distasteful the task set before him.<sup>275</sup>

Nor was the monastic slave allowed the refuge of mental independence. One of Cassian's important precepts is the command that junior monks are required to reveal their thoughts to an elder. This is

<sup>270</sup> This quality, which was to be preferred to possessions, also took priority over family members, as has already been noted in the story of the Abba Paternutius, who entered an Egyptian monastery with his son. When his abba ordered him to cast his son into the river, without thought or hesitation, he grabbed his son and threw him in (Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 27. 4). Through this act of obedience, it was revealed that Paternutius had shown the great faith and obedience of an Abraham.

<sup>271</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 2.

<sup>272</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 20.

<sup>273</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 10.

<sup>274</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 5.

<sup>275</sup> Cassian has nothing to say about who controls the superior, or indeed at what point one ceases to have to be a virtual slave to an elder.



intended to be therapeutic; the snares set by Satan are more easily avoided when the less experienced monk reveals his inner state of mind to a discerning elder.<sup>276</sup> The practice is designed as a protective measure for the novice.

A novice's mind was vulnerable as long as he retained private thoughts. The only sure defence was to completely open one's mind to an elder. All parts of the mind, all thoughts, no matter how disgusting or debased, must be submitted for inspection. Indeed, one of the most certain signs that a disciple had been seduced off the royal road was an unwillingness to confess what was in his mind.<sup>277</sup> Satan could not work in the broad light of day, exposed to the discernment of spiritually advanced elders; he required secrecy and the inner pride of self-sufficiency to lead a monk astray.

The process of confessing one's inner thoughts, coupled with an unquestioning obedience to whatever the elder might command regarding those thoughts, led to the acquisition of the greatest of the monastic virtues, humility.<sup>278</sup> The act required vulnerability, a willingness to bare one's soul before another and risk that person's negative judgement. Acquiescence to this heightened vulnerability was the monk's conscious admission of an inability to order his own life. Revelation and obedience signify the subordination of one's will to another. Properly done, this subordination nourished humility, the realization that one did not stand at the centre of affairs, but must defer in all things to those who were wiser and more spiritually advanced. Despite the salutary benefits of this self-disclosure, it should be noted that the practice also opens the doors to the last sanctuary of privacy left to the novice. Not even his thoughts are allowed to remain his own.<sup>279</sup>

Cassian's emphasis on obedience within the monastic community stands in diametric opposition to the self-directed monk. Keeping his

<sup>276</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 9; Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 39. 2.

<sup>277</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 2. 11. 7.

<sup>278</sup> See Michael Casey, 'The Journey from Fear to Love: John Cassian's Road Map,' in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, edited by Pauline Allen, Raymond Canning, and Lawrence Cross (Queensland: Center for Early Christian Studies, 1998), 194, for the view that in Cassian, humility was the effect, rather than the cause of spiritual progress.

<sup>279</sup> In contrast, Seneca (*Sen. Ben.* 3. 20) claimed that the disgrace of slavery might be ameliorated to a certain extent by the knowledge that the mind remained free.

own counsel and submitting only to his own leadership, this monk had already succumbed to the ascetic's most deadly foe: pride. Self-exaltation replaced self-abnegation. Presuming no one to be wiser or fitter than he to order his life, the self-directed ascetic strayed off toward destruction.

The didactic aim of the *instituta Aegyptiorum* was to reject one's desires and self-deluded thoughts, and replace these with a system that fostered identification with the great exemplar, Christ. Just as Christ had renounced the glory of heaven in order to make himself the servant of all mankind, doing not his own will but the will of the Father who sent him, so, too, was the monk to renounce his own self-centredness and enter into willing service of those around him. In this way the monk became a servant of the great servant, taking up Christ's cross and following him.<sup>280</sup>

<sup>280</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 34.

## Conclusion

You have summoned me, an unworthy man and the poorest in every respect, to a share of so great a work.

(Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 2)

So wrote John Cassian in the opening lines of *De institutis*. Nevertheless, as we have seen, this sentiment was not to be understood literally; self-deprecation was a common topos in ancient writing, and as I have argued throughout this book, we should not regard Cassian's *insinuatio* as an accurate assessment by Cassian of his own place in the developing ascetic scene of south-eastern Gaul. Above all other things, *De institutis* was written by a man who harboured no doubt about his fitness to put a mark on the burgeoning western ascetic movement.

The final chapter of this book provides the answer to the question of why Cassian put such an effort into his strategies to win a hearing for his works. What Cassian wrote would prove far too difficult for much of his target audience. His programme of renunciation aimed to strip the monk of self-centred attachments and identities, to destroy all conceptions of secular rank and hierarchies. Anything that could be pointed to with pride, anything that divided, was to be torn away. The monk under Cassian's programme was not allowed to cling to remnants of his former life, neither wealth, social position, nor even the freedom to make decisions for himself.

Cassian aimed his work at an audience drawn from the elite stratum of Gallic society. These were men of rank and prestige, the best men of a vanishing Roman order. Where other writers had offered models that attempted to integrate the old order with a new ascetic lifestyle, Cassian challenged societal norms that had existed for

centuries. Not only must the monk divest himself of property and possessions, but he must also accept the fact that he no longer wields power over others, nor in fact, even over himself. Whereas the aristocratic monk began his ascetic life as an abbot, eager to require the observance of his own inventions, the true monk relinquished all power over others and entered a monastery as the most junior of novices. By offering obedience to all, the aristocrat was schooled in humility. It is this quality that is the proper basis for monastic leadership, an acquired trait rather than a birthright.<sup>1</sup>

The true monk is trained to do the work that would normally have been reserved for servants in the Roman world. The man who may never have done an hour's worth of manual labour was compelled to work with his hands. He became an initiate in the unfamiliar mysteries of toil and sweat. He prepared food for himself and for others. Having dismissed his servants with his property and wealth, the former aristocrat adopted the role of the slave. Through this reversal of station, the first truly became last, the aristocrat learned humility.

The programme offered in *De institutis* was designed to repudiate those aristocratic ascetics who had attempted to take up the monastic life without severing the ties and privileges that Roman society accorded a man of standing. Cassian advocated a radical departure from what had been passing for asceticism among the Roman aristocratic class, the elimination of the artificial divisions of class and station that was the framework of the classical world. In its place he proposed a meritocracy, a monastic society based on Christ's precept that the last shall be first, and the servants shall be the leaders.<sup>2</sup> For Cassian, Christ was the great monastic exemplar; he was the celestial aristocrat who had turned his back on the glory of heaven to become the servant of all mankind. Any practice that diluted the perfect example, any accommodation that fell short of Christ's standard, was unworthy to be called asceticism.

Cassian was not reluctant to use the conventions of a shared literary culture to get this message across. We have noted his deft use of rhetoric throughout this study, his play on the dual themes of experience (to justify his right to write for a Gallic audience) and

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 3. 1.

<sup>2</sup> As modelled, for instance, in the washing of the disciples' feet (John 13: 3–18).

antiquity (to support his *instituta Aegyptiorum*) in support of his monastic legislation, and his oblique critique of his predecessors. All of these items were combined to improve the chances of his work winning a hearing with his audience.

This programme of justification was undoubtedly driven by the realization that what he offered would be inherently unpalatable to his aristocratic audience. Cassian's requirement that the monk accept a permanent diminution in status, the idea that one might make a clean break with the world — and never expect to re-establish relations with, or exercise authority in, the secular realm again — does not seem to have fit with the expectations or goals of those members of the elite classes who were drawn to the ascetic life.

Consequently, while Cassian would have a readership among western ascetics, we will search in vain for any instances of monasteries organized around *De institutis* in the west. Despite Eucherius of Lyons' claim that Lérins had inherited the mantle of Egyptian asceticism,<sup>3</sup> there is very little evidence that Cassian made much of an impact there. In fact, as Lérins became one of the major training schools for an elite class that had episcopal aims, it could be argued that Cassian's most unique contribution — the absolute renunciation of what lay beyond the walls of the monastery — failed to make an impact on western ascetics.

This is not to say that Cassian's ideas were completely ignored in the west. The theoretical aspects of his thought would continue to colour western ascetic practice, transmitted in mitigated form through the works of his successors, legislators such as Eucherius and Benedict. As a result, Cassian's lasting contribution was not institutional reform or a new world order, but rather the injection of Evagrian teaching into the mainstream of western monastic thought. Like his contemporary Palladius, Cassian portrayed his Egyptian ascetics as unrepentant Origenists. The theology that Theophilus of Alexandria had attempted to extirpate at the beginning of the fifth century made its way into the western monastic stream through Cassian's work. It was this aspect of his work, not his institutional reform, that earned Cassian his place among the great monastic legislators of the western world.

<sup>3</sup> Eucher. *Laud. her.* 42.

## APPENDIX 1

### Cassian of Marseilles?

It has long been assumed that John Cassian was intimately involved in some form of Massilian monastic project when he wrote his two great ascetic works. While scholars debate Cassian's place of birth, the length of time he spent in Egypt, and the historical reliability of his testimony about Egyptian monastic praxis, there has never been any challenge offered to the proposition that Cassian settled in Marseilles upon his arrival in Gaul. If there is one universally accepted fact in Cassian studies, it would be his identification with Marseilles and the burgeoning ascetic movement of that city.<sup>1</sup>

But is this biographical attribution correct? In fact, it hangs on a single explicit piece of evidence: Gennadius' assertion, nearly a half-century after Cassian's death, that Cassian had been a priest of Marseilles and had established two monasteries in or near Marseilles.<sup>2</sup> This is obviously a strong piece of evidence for a Massilian provenance, but it does not fit comfortably with

<sup>1</sup> See Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 41; Henri Marrou, 'Jean Cassien à Marseille,' *Revue du moyen âge latin* 1 (1945), 21–6; Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 15–16; Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 174–5; Philip Rousseau, 'Cassian: Monastery and World,' in *The Certainty of Doubt: Tributes to Peter Munz*, edited by Miles Fairburn and W. H. Oliver (Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University Press, 1995), 68; Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 35; Steven Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 1. This list could easily be expanded; I have yet to find any scholar who questions the attribution of Cassian to Marseilles. Conrad Leyser, 'This Sainted Isle: Panegyric, Nostalgia, and the Invention of Lerinian Monasticism,' in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, edited by William Klingshirn and Mark Vessey (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 192, approached the question when he wrote: 'Scholars have presumed that the unnamed parties at Marseilles referred to in the late 420s by the Augustinian Prosper of Aquitaine as dissenting from his master's predestinarian views are none other than John Cassian and the Lerinians.'

<sup>2</sup> Gennad. *Vir.* 61. A surprising number of modern scholars still assert that Cassian was the founder of St Victor's, despite the cogent argument to the contrary found in Simon Loseby, 'Marseille in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages,' unpublished D.Phil. dissertation (Oxford, University of Oxford, 1992), 139–42.

Cassian's attempt to insinuate himself into the literary/ascetic circles of Narbonensis Secunda.<sup>3</sup> If Cassian was part of a Massilian ascetic endeavour, why does he fail to mention any of the bishops, priests, or monks of that city in any of his works?

Where we might expect a Massilian priest to dedicate his ascetic treatises to the bishop of his own city (Proculus), a man who exercised a great deal of influence in south-eastern Gaul, Cassian confounds us by dedicating his works to the obscure Castor et al., bishops and ascetics of the nearby province of Narbonensis Secunda. If he was a priest of Marseilles, why would he risk offending Proculus in this way? The peculiarity of this action is heightened when we remember that Cassian wrote his works in the midst of a fierce struggle for the ecclesiastical control of south-eastern Gaul. A number of bishops, including the bishops of Narbonensis Secunda and the bishop of Arles, had banded together in an uneasy alliance to resist Proculus' attempt to exercise the rights of a metropolitan bishop over this region.<sup>4</sup> If Cassian was a priest of Marseilles, writing as a client of Proculus, why are all of his works dedicated to men who are (to a greater or lesser extent) Proculus' adversaries? Are we right, in fact, to read Gennadius' ambiguous entry for Cassian as proof that John Cassian lived in Marseilles throughout his Gallic sojourn?

I would like to propose an alternate theory about Cassian's provenance. While Gennadius may be right in claiming that John Cassian made an end to his life and writing in the city of Marseilles, there is nothing in Gennadius to prove his whereabouts before he died. In fact, the rest of our evidence strongly suggests that Cassian was not in Marseilles when he wrote his two ascetic treatises. If Cassian did eventually move to Marseilles (and this is a big *if* in my opinion) it was only after *De institutis* and *Collationes* had been completed. While this may strike some as a fairly minor point, my reinterpretation of the evidence does challenge three long-held suppositions about Cassian: first, that he was the leader of a Massilian monastic project; second, that he was the founder of St Victor's monastery; and third, that he played a central role in the 'semi-Pelagian' controversy that erupted in Marseilles during the second half of the 420s. This appendix will reassess the evidence for Cassian's Gallic biography, beginning with the political context within which Cassian wrote.

<sup>3</sup> See Richard J. Goodrich, 'Underpinning the Text: Self-justification in John Cassian's Ascetic Prefaces,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (2005), 411–36.

<sup>4</sup> For the tension between the sees of Arles and Marseilles that characterized this period: David Frye, 'Bishops as Pawns in Early Fifth-Century Gaul,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42 (1991), 349–61; Ralph Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 27–43.

### Proculus

The deep rift dividing the fifth-century Gallic episcopacy has received little notice in discussions of Cassian's provenance. Significant responsibility for this division must be borne by Proculus, bishop of Marseilles and one of the dominant ecclesiastical figures of late fourth- and early fifth-century Gaul.<sup>5</sup> Longevity was one reason for his success; it is possible that he controlled Marseilles for fifty years. His name appears among the bishops who attended the Council of Aquileia in 381,<sup>6</sup> and he may have still been alive in 428 when Pope Celestine wrote a letter to chastise the unseemly glee expressed by the bishop of Marseilles on learning of the demise of Patroclus of Arles.<sup>7</sup>

The later years of his bishopric featured a struggle for episcopal oversight of south-eastern Gaul. The references to the bishop in Gallic chronicles and papal letters create a picture of a man who was an active promoter of the superior status of his see. Proculus was determined to extend his influence as widely as possible, a desire that met with increasing resistance from many of his fellow bishops.

Proculus' early success in extending his hegemony came on the back of Constantine III's invasion from Britain. When the usurper took control of Gaul, Proculus wasted little time in using his support to alter the status quo among the Gallic bishoprics.<sup>8</sup> The *Gallic Chronicle of 452* (*Chronica gallica anno 452*) noted that in 408 Proculus instigated a commission to try one of his long-standing enemies (Remigius of Aix) on a charge of adultery.<sup>9</sup> Although the *Chronica* does not record the outcome of this trial, Pope Zosimus claimed that Remigius, unwilling to leave his see, had been driven

<sup>5</sup> Although his reputation was certainly not limited only to Gaul. 'You have that most learned and holy bishop Proculus,' wrote Jerome in 411 to a young man seeking ascetic counsel (Hier. *Ep.* 125. 20). This singular instance of Gallic holiness, noted Jerome, was able to offer more guidance to Rusticus through his example and daily homilies than Jerome could deliver in a letter. Naturally this did not stop Jerome from offering several pages of advice. Jerome's tribute to Proculus puts the Gallic bishop on a world stage; more than a remote bishop of an isolated backwater, Proculus' reputation extended beyond the borders of Gaul. See also Aug. *Ep.* 219 to Proculus.

<sup>6</sup> Louis Duchesne, *Fastes Épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule* (Paris: Thorin et Fils, 1894), 265–66.

<sup>7</sup> Caelestin. *Ep.* 4. 10. Cf. Jill D. Harries, 'Bishops, Senators, and their Cities in Southern and Central Gaul A.D. 407 to 476,' unpublished D.Phil. dissertation (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1981), 165.

<sup>8</sup> Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 352, sees Constantine III using Proculus' actions as a means of cementing control over Gaul.

<sup>9</sup> *Chron. Gall.* 452 408 [MGH aa 9: 652. 60]. The *Chronica Gallica anno 452* is a text that extended Jerome's *Chronica* from 379 to 452. It was written by an anonymous author who may have lived in southern Gaul — possibly Marseilles (Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 96).



out by force of arms and blood had been shed in the process.<sup>10</sup> The deposed bishop was replaced by a man of Proculus' choice, the former Martinian monk, Lazarus. Proculus' manoeuvring allowed him to replace a hostile bishop with a client. The pattern was repeated in the city of Arles, where Heros was elevated to the bishopric of this important see.<sup>11</sup> Backed by Constantine III, Proculus managed to staff these bishoprics with his own clients, solidifying his control over the south-eastern dioceses.<sup>12</sup>

Proculus' territorial expansion was short-lived. In 411, an imperial army under the leadership of Constantius and Ulfila surrounded Arles, and after three months compelled Constantine's surrender. The usurper sought ordination from Heros, apparently to escape execution, but his new career in the ministry was tragically brief; he was handed over to the imperial army by Gallic loyalists and executed en route to Ravenna.<sup>13</sup> The bishops installed during the reign of Constantine III fared slightly better than their patron: Heros was expelled from the bishopric of Arles<sup>14</sup> and Lazarus was turned out of Aix. Both men escaped into exile in Africa. Proculus, despite his close working relationship with the usurper, managed to retain his position, but his career had passed its apogee. He would never exercise as much influence as he had during the reign of Constantine III. The defeat of the usurper brought a new, unpleasant (at least for the claims of Marseilles) political situation to southern Gaul.

### Patroclus and Zosimus

With the defeat of Constantine III, Proculus lost his patron and was forced to deal with an altered political landscape. While the support of Constantine III had allowed him to make some short-term gains, these were largely negated when Constantius took control. One of Constantius' first acts was

<sup>10</sup> Zosim. *Ep.* 1. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Prosp. *Chron.* 412.

<sup>12</sup> This ordination of supporters seems to have been a standard practice in Gaul, a strategy frequently employed during times when a metropolitan felt especially threatened. See Charles Bobertz, 'Patronage Networks and the Study of Ancient Christianity,' *SPAT* 29 (1993), 23–4, for a discussion of Cyprian's practice of ordaining client presbyters, and Ralph Mathisen, 'Episcopal Hierarchy and Tenure in Office in Late Roman Gaul: A Method for Establishing Dates of Ordination,' *Francia* 17.1 (1990), 132, whose research highlights a sudden flurry of ordinations between 427 and 431, as Honoratus and Hilary attempted to consolidate their positions by ordaining supporters.

<sup>13</sup> John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court: A.D. 364–425* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 313; John Drinkwater, 'The Usurpers Constantine III (407–411) and Jovinus (411–413),' *Britannia* 29 (1998), 287.

<sup>14</sup> Prosp. *Chron.* 412.

to replace Heros with his own nominee, the ambitious and politically astute Patroclus.<sup>15</sup> At roughly the same time, Remigius was restored to the see of Aix. This reshuffling of bishops, combined with Constantius' active interest in the church, eroded Proculus' position. Mirroring the actions of Proculus under Constantine III, Patroclus wasted no time in solidifying his own position by placing his own men in the sees around him.<sup>16</sup> No longer the strongest player in southern Gaul, Proculus was forced into a defensive action against a bishop with an extremely powerful patron (Constantius). Yet this power was not absolute, as was demonstrated by Constantius' inability to dislodge Proculus and Hilarius of Narbonne.<sup>17</sup> The pair remained in place even after the defeat of the usurper. In fact, their power would not be seriously challenged until the death of Pope Innocent I in March, 417.

The accession of a new Pope in Rome marked a turning point in Gallic ecclesiastical politics. Zosimus, the man elected to succeed Innocent, has been characterized as a dupe (or debtor) of Patroclus,<sup>18</sup> a pawn of Constantius,<sup>19</sup> and a man with his own ambitions for asserting the ascendancy of the papacy over Gaul.<sup>20</sup> It is not clear from the evidence what role Patroclus might have played in Zosimus' election.<sup>21</sup> What is certain, is that four days after his accession, Zosimus issued the encyclical letter *Placuit apostolicae* (Mar. 22, 417), which granted sweeping rights to Patroclus. Asserting that Arles ought to be accorded primacy based on its apostolic foundation by St Trophimus, Zosimus promoted Patroclus' bishopric to metropolitan status over the three provinces of Viennensis, Narbonensis Prima, and Narbonensis Secunda.<sup>22</sup> This working agreement between Arles and Rome benefited both parties. Patroclus gained a lever for his ecclesiastical aspirations,

<sup>15</sup> Prosp. *Chron.* 412.

<sup>16</sup> Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 36–7.

<sup>17</sup> Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 354.

<sup>18</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 38.

<sup>19</sup> Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 354.

<sup>20</sup> Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 48–50; Michael Kulikowski, 'Two Councils of Turin,' *JTS* n.s. 47 (1996), 164–5.

<sup>21</sup> The traditional view has been that Patroclus was one of the electors in Rome who supported Zosimus' bid for the papacy, but see Kulikowski, *Two Councils*, 165, for the view that Patroclus had absolutely no role in Zosimus' election.

<sup>22</sup> Zosim. *Ep.* 1. 2; M. Heinzlmann, 'The "Affair" of Hilary of Arles (445) and Gallo-Roman Identity in the Fifth Century,' in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* edited by John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 244–5, follows Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 354, in seeing Constantius as the driving force behind Zosimus' elevation of Arles to a metropolitan see. This view is substantiated by the sudden reversal of fortune following Constantius' death (see below).

while Zosimus established a precedent for papal control over Gaul.<sup>23</sup> By accepting this elevation, Patroclus implicitly assented to the right of the Bishop of Rome to make arrangements for the church in southern Gaul.<sup>24</sup> Naturally this unilateral realignment was resisted by the other bishops of Gaul. Proculus of Marseilles, Simplicius of Vienne, and Hilarius of Narbonne all stood to lose by Patroclus' elevation.

Proculus soon found an opportunity to test the papal decree; he ordained two men, Ursus and Tuentius, for service in territory that had been reassigned to Patroclus.<sup>25</sup> Faced with defiance of his decretal, Zosimus convened a council to resolve the territorial disputes in Gaul. The results of this council may be found in the first two canons of the Council of Turin, which have long been erroneously dated to 398.<sup>26</sup> This council was convened to settle the vexed question of ordination rights in south-eastern Gaul. Proculus opted not to attend the gathering of Gallic bishops.<sup>27</sup> Several letters written by Zosimus<sup>28</sup> near the end of September 417 offer a glimpse of the working of this council (which opened on 22 September and ran for several days). The first report from the proceedings was Zosimus' letter stating that the council had supported the arrangements outlined in his earlier letter, *Placuit apostolicae*. Patroclus was to exercise metropolitan rights over the three provinces. He would also control access to the pope

<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Constantius (who may have orchestrated events) gained a tool to further bind the provinces to Rome (Stewart I. Oost, *Galla Placidia Augusta: A Biographical Essay* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968], 148; Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 355).

<sup>24</sup> Ralph Mathisen, 'Fifth-Century Visitors to Italy: Business or Pleasure?' in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* edited by John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 230–1, lists a number of examples of early fifth-century ecclesiastics travelling to Rome in order to lodge an appeal with the Pope.

<sup>25</sup> Zosim. *Ep.* 4. 1. Harries, *Bishops, Senators, Cities*, 168, assigns these ordinations to the disputed sees of Gargarius and Citharista (Narbonensis Secunda).

<sup>26</sup> The date of the eight canons of the Council(s) of Turin bears a date of 22 September, with no year. The first two canons of this document concern the ordination rights of Proculus (Canon 1) and the metropolitan rights assigned to the bishops of Arles and Vienne (Canon 2). The first argument for seeing these canons as part of the controversy over the metropolitan status of Arles, was advanced by E. Babut, *Le Concile de Turin* (Paris: Bibliothèque de Foundation Thiers 6, 1904), *passim*. This view has been supported and refined by Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 349–61, whose reconstruction of events I follow here.

<sup>27</sup> A fact Zosimus noted in his letter of 29 September (Zosim. *Ep.* 5. 1).

<sup>28</sup> Kulikowski, *Two Councils*, 167, who does not seem to be aware of Frye's earlier article, uses the quickness of Zosimus' responses to the developments of the Council to suggest that the Council had no connection to what was detailed in Zosimus' letters. More likely is the view of Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 356–7, who suggests that Zosimus was present at the Council.

by issuing mandatory letters of introduction (*litterae formatae*) to those seeking an audience in Rome. Finally, Proculus was to be denied the rights of a metropolitan bishop.<sup>29</sup> Proculus' ordination of Ursus and Tuentius was illegal, a decision that had been confirmed by Zosimus' council.<sup>30</sup>

Before the Council of Turin ended, Hilarius of Narbonne raised an objection to the elevation of Patroclus.<sup>31</sup> Hilarius' letter does not survive, but from Zosimus' reply, it would appear that the bishop of Narbonne questioned the validity of placing Patroclus over Narbonensis Prima. Hilarius argued that the status of Narbonne as the metropolitan seat for that province had been established by an earlier Roman pontiff.<sup>32</sup> He also objected to the ruling that all appeals to Rome required the approval of Arles (through the *litterae formatae*).

Zosimus responded to Hilarius' concerns in his letter *Mirati admodum* (29 September, 417). In this letter he argued that a respect for antiquity, especially the noble past embodied in St Trophimus, took precedence over Hilarius' opinions. As unlikely as it seems, this response may have pacified Hilarius. Four years later, Pope Boniface would receive an appeal from the people of Lodeve (a town located within the boundaries of Narbonensis Prima), complaining that Patroclus had consecrated a stranger for their church.<sup>33</sup> The fact that this appeal came from the church of Lodeve rather than from Hilarius suggests that he was not directly or openly resisting Patroclus.<sup>34</sup>

The next twist in the saga was the arrival of delegates from Marseilles, with a request to present the case for Proculus and Simplicius at the Council of Turin.<sup>35</sup> Zosimus' angry letter of 29 September, 417, *Multa contra*, aired his unhappiness over this turn of events. The council, sputtered Zosimus, had waited for Proculus, but the bishop had not deigned to travel to Turin. Patience exhausted, the council had judged against him, supporting Zosimus and Patroclus. Now the Bishop of Marseilles had the temerity to send delegates to urge the reconsideration of his case.<sup>36</sup> Despite Zosimus' disgust, the council honoured this eleventh-hour appeal, and the results are documented in Zosimus' letter of 1 October, *Reuelatum nobis*.<sup>37</sup> Here he stated that the

<sup>29</sup> Zosim. *Ep.* 7. 1.

<sup>30</sup> And reported in Zosim. *Ep.* 4. 1.

<sup>31</sup> See Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 353–4, for Hilarius' resistance to Constantius.

<sup>32</sup> Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 57–8.

<sup>33</sup> This appeal was noted in Bonif. I. *Ep.* 12. 1 [PL 20: 772A] (9 February, 422).

<sup>34</sup> For further evidence of Hilarius' cooperation with Patroclus, see Boniface's encyclical, *Valentinae nos*.

<sup>35</sup> Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 358.

<sup>36</sup> Zosim. *Ep.* 5. 1.

<sup>37</sup> This letter was listed among the spurious letters of Zosimus (PL 20. 704), but Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 356 n. 34, follows Babut, *Concile*, 243–65, in asserting its authenticity.

council had reversed itself and granted Simplicius of Vienne his traditional metropolitan rights to ordain clerics in his own province. This accords with Canon 2 of the Council of Turin, which divides the province (Viennensis) between the two bishoprics (Arles and Vienne) and states that the bishops of these cities may ordain priests in their respective halves.<sup>38</sup>

The other decision of the Council (Canon 1) was to preserve Proculus' traditional rights. Proculus was granted permission to continue to ordain priests where he had in the past, which included the territory of the province of Narbonensis Secunda.<sup>39</sup> The council justified this decision by noting Proculus' long-standing relationship with the churches of that province. Presumably, during the early years of his episcopate, Proculus had assumed the task of supervising the bishops of Narbonensis Secunda. In doing so, he might simply have been maintaining relationships that dated back several decades to a time when nearby towns, lacking their own bishops, had looked to Marseilles for leadership. But was this claim to a pre-existing relationship sufficient to justify Proculus' ongoing oversight? Not everyone in southern Gaul agreed with this premise. Dissatisfaction is suggested by the first canon of the Council of Turin, which states that some of the bishops of Narbonensis Secunda were unhappy with the arrangement.<sup>40</sup>

### Narbonensis Secunda vs Proculus

Even with the support of the secular arm of the imperial government, Patroclus, Pope Zosimus, and those bishops allied with their cause were unable to outmanoeuvre the wily Proculus. Although forced onto the defensive, Proculus had proven to be a shrewd counter-puncher, a bishop who could resist seemingly insurmountable forces. Not only was Proculus able to cling to his position after the defeat of Constantine III, but he also managed to regain his traditional rights over the province of Narbonensis Secunda despite the best efforts of his adversaries to curtail his activities.

Yet, notwithstanding the support he was able to muster at the Council of Turin, opposition to his hegemonic impulses seems to have persisted. As noted above, the first canon of the Council of Turin stated that certain bishops of Narbonensis Secunda were unhappy with Proculus' interventions in their province. This resentment would not have been dissipated by the ruling of the council. Indeed, it would not be too far-fetched to expect to

<sup>38</sup> *Conc. Taur.* Can. 2; Frye, *Bishops as Pawns*, 358.

<sup>39</sup> *Conc. Taur.* Can. 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Conc. Taur.* Can. 1 [SC 241: 136. 16–138. 2]: *e diverso eiusdem regionis episcopi aliud defensarent, ac sibi alterius provinciae sacerdotum praesse non debere contenderent.*

find these bishops aligning themselves with Patroclus and the subsequent bishops of Arles, if only to thwart Proculus.

But there was another issue dividing both the bishops (and the aristocrats) of Gaul: the question of self-determination. As discussed in Chapter 1, usurpers such as Magnus Maximus, Constantine III, and Jovinus had found ready support among the ruling elite simply because they represented local interests better than the distant and increasingly detached Roman emperors. Constantius had offered a reassertion of strong, local Roman rule, making Arles the centre of imperial government. Consolidation of imperial control was also reflected on the ecclesiastical plane with Constantius' appointment of Patroclus.

An important piece of evidence for the bishops who could be relied upon to carry out imperial desires is found in the addressees of Pope Boniface's letter, *Valentinae nos* (13 June, 419), which urged action against Bishop Maximus of Valence.<sup>41</sup> The list begins with Patroclus of Arles. Although Boniface would eventually disavow Patroclus' claim to metropolitan status, when this letter was written he still accorded him primacy.<sup>42</sup> Patroclus was ordered to assemble the bishops for a synod in the province no later than November so that Maximus could defend himself if he chose to do so. In this case, the province must have referred to Viennensis, and Patroclus' presence at the head of the list of bishops suggests that he was to convene the synod.<sup>43</sup>

The list of bishops continues with Remigius of Aix, Maximus, Hilarius, Severus, Valerius, Julianus, Castor, Leontius, Constantinus, John, Montanus, Marinus, Maurice, and the other bishops throughout Gaul and the seven provinces.<sup>44</sup> Although little is known about most of these bishops, there are some significant entries and omissions.

Bishop Remigius of Aix and Hilarius of Narbonne are once again associated with Patroclus. Remigius of Aix (expelled during the reign of Constantine III) was no friend of Proculus. While Remigius may not have been a fervent supporter of Patroclus' ambitions, he seems to have found himself on the same side of the fence as Patroclus (aligned by their mutual dislike for Proculus and a pro-Roman stance). Likewise, Hilarius of Narbonne had initially resisted Patroclus' exercise of metropolitan authority, but, as noted

<sup>41</sup> Bonif. I. *Ep.* 3.

<sup>42</sup> Boniface's recognition was politically expedient. Following Constantius' death in 421, the Pope wasted little time in restructuring the Roman position on Gallic territories. In his encyclical *Difficile quidem* (Feb. 9, 422), Boniface stated that every province should have its own metropolitan and no two provinces should be subject to a single bishop. (Bonif. I. *Ep.* 12).

<sup>43</sup> Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 62–4.

<sup>44</sup> Bonif. I. *Ep.* 3.

above, there is evidence that after the Council of Turin, he had submitted and allowed Patroclus to consecrate bishops in Narbonensis Prima. These addressees are joined by two less-well known bishops of Narbonensis Secunda: Castor of Apta Iulia and Leontius of Forum Iulii, the bishops who would serve as the first dedicatees for the works of John Cassian.

There are also some significant omissions from this list; two of the most influential bishops in southern Gaul (Proculus and Simplicius) were not named in Boniface's letter. This is nothing more than a tacit acknowledgement that there had been no rapprochement between Rome and the two anti-Patroclidean bishops. Moreover, as discussed above, in addition to his repeated attempts to frustrate Patroclus' exercise of metropolitan status, Proculus had been a client of the usurper, Constantius III. He could not be counted on to return a correct charge against Maximus, and Boniface was clearly able to distinguish between the two main factions in south-eastern Gaul at this time. His letter was addressed to those bishops who represented the best hope of carrying out the desires of Rome, the bishops aligned with Patroclus and the cause of Constantius.

### The Politics of Gallic bishops

Boniface's call for a council to try Maximus of Valence allows us to place two of Cassian's dedicatees (Castor and Leontius) on the political map of this great Gallic struggle. We have evidence that many of the bishops of Narbonensis Secunda were unhappy with the solution worked out at the Council of Turin, and the dedicatory preface of Boniface's letter surely provides the names of an anti-Proclidean faction. These bishops of Narbonensis Secunda were pro-Roman and resolutely opposed to oversight from Marseilles, and this antipathy did not end with the deaths of the two principal players in the drama, Patroclus and Proculus. To the contrary, the battle to assert the supremacy of Arles was ably continued by Patroclus' successors. Patroclus was (probably) followed by Helladius, an ascetic who served as the dedicatee for two of Cassian's prefaces.<sup>45</sup> His tenure was short—possibly no more than a year and nothing is known of his activities as bishop of Arles. He was followed by Honoratus of Lerins, another of Cassian's dedicatees. Their selection for this politically important bishopric suggests sympathy for the aims of the imperial administration centred in Arles. The city was simply too important to allow the accession of a man with questionable political views.

<sup>45</sup> The assignment of Helladius to Arles is by no means certain. See Stewart, *Cassian*, 153 n. 161, for a concise summary of the question. Based on the scanty evidence available, it still seems the likeliest of the possibilities.

Moreover, hints of Honoratus' connection to an anti-Massilian party may be found in the *Vita Honorati*. Honoratus, according to Hilary, resisted ordination in Marseilles. At one time, the city, with the approval of Proculus, nearly succeeded in seizing and ordaining Honoratus for itself.<sup>46</sup> Fortunately, the monk managed to flee Marseilles and after travelling to the east, finally returned to Gaul. When Honoratus established his monastery, he chose to settle on the island of Lérins because of its proximity to Bishop Leontius of Forum Iulii.<sup>47</sup> It is odd that Honoratus would scorn the neighbourhood of Proculus, especially as the bishop is thought to have been a great patron of asceticism. Yet Hilary explicitly states that Honoratus preferred Leontius, a bishop with demonstrably close links to Arles. Indeed, Hilary may also be offering a veiled reference to Proculus when he claimed that no bishop succeeded in exercising authority over Honoratus while Honoratus lived on Lérins.<sup>48</sup> Having just praised Leontius, it seems unlikely that this would be a reference to the bishop of Forum Iulii. Possibly it is an allusion to a failed attempt to exercise control over Lérins by an external (Massilian) force.

Honoratus ended his career by assuming the bishopric of Arles after the death of Helladius. Chosen by the clerics and decurions of Arles, his elevation suggests a close relationship between that city and the ascetics of Lérins, as well as his political acceptability. Once again the *Vita Honorati* suggests a contrast between Arles and Marseilles. Although Honoratus refused ordination to the Massilian priesthood, he did not offer even a sign of token resistance to his elevation to the bishopric of Arles. It is also suggestive that both Honoratus and Hilary pursued Patroclus' quest for control of the three Gallic provinces. As Mathisen has argued, there was a sudden increase in ordinations of bishops during the years 427–31, possibly signalling an attempt to solidify power and control.<sup>49</sup>

Hilary, Honoratus' successor, also vigorously championed the primacy of Arles. Hilary's policy of placing partisans in Gallic episcopates earned the eventual ire of Pope Leo.<sup>50</sup> Rather than accepting the formula of Boniface, who had stated that each province should have its own metropolitan, Hilary

<sup>46</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 13.

<sup>47</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 15.

<sup>48</sup> Hilar.-Arel. *Vit. Hon.* 16. Hakanson Lennart, 'Some Critical Notes on the *Vitae Honorati et Hilarii*,' VC 31 (1977), 56, suggests that the verb *computarent* which ends this line (16.10) should be emended to read [*non*] *computarent*, in order to correspond with the earlier line of this chapter, which claimed that the bishops treated Honoratus as an equal (rather than thinking him superior to them, as the text currently reads).

<sup>49</sup> Mathisen, *Episcopal Hierarchy*, 132; Heinzelmann, *Affair*, 243.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of this conflict: Heinzelmann, *Affair*, 239–51.



continued to dabble in the ecclesiastical affairs of the surrounding provinces.<sup>51</sup> The enmity between Marseilles and Arles did not come to an end with the death of Patroclus; the primates of the two cities continued to struggle for control of south-eastern Gaul.

### Proculus and Cassian

The preceding exposition of the political alliances of the early fifth-century Gallic bishops is intended to illuminate the context for John Cassian's ascetic treatises. As we have seen, south-eastern Gaul was divided into two intractably opposed factions, centred on the competing claims of Marseilles and Arles for metropolitan authority over the three provinces. The region also seems to have been separated by the question of self-determination versus ongoing Roman control. Sometime around the year 419, John Cassian made his appearance among these competing factions, offering his first ascetic treatise, *De institutis*.

The conventional view holds that Cassian came to Gaul after a sojourn of indeterminate length in the city of Rome.<sup>52</sup> It is believed that he first went to Rome as an emissary making an appeal on behalf of John Chrysostom; evidence for an extended stay is based on the evident friendship he had with the future Pope Leo, (then archdeacon of Rome). Once again, as with many items in Cassian's biography, there is little certain evidence to move this conjecture past a likely surmise.

We might expect, however, that if Cassian had spent time at Rome, and had built the relationships that are suggested by his apparent fondness for Leo, that upon reaching Gaul, he would have gravitated toward one of the places that had imperial favour, such as Arles. Yet, once again Cassian offers no grounds for such a conjecture in his works. His ascetic treatises manifest no awareness of Patroclus, just as he completely ignores the existence of his theoretical bishop, Proculus. With the exception of an implicit denunciation of Bishop Theophilus (see Chapter 3), Cassian remains strikingly apolitical, a stance that is consistent with his view that a monk should renounce affairs of the world.

The only sign of affiliation offered in Cassian's works is his use of literary dedications to insinuate himself into the ascetic/literary circle of Narbonensis Secunda. Cassian's dedications begin with Castor and his seat in Apta Iulia and then spread outward, like ripples from a pebble dropped into a pond, to

<sup>51</sup> For a recounting of Leo and Valentinian II's engineering of Hilary's fall from power: Heinzelmann, *Affair*, 239–51.

<sup>52</sup> Stewart, *Cassian*, 13–15; Karl Suso Frank, 'John Cassian on John Cassian,' *SPAT* 33 (1997), 420–1.

Forum Iulii, Lérins, and the Stochaedian islands. It is a pattern that strongly suggests a local author trying to influence a local group of ascetics.

In fact, there are no problems with this straightforward narrative until one tries to place him in Marseilles. This creates the difficulty of having to explain his dedications, coupled with his problematic failure to mention his bishop as a patron. Book dedications were a sensitive issue in the ancient world; they were the primary means for an author to honour the support of a patron, a way for the patron to be remembered, long after his or her bones had crumbled into dust. In a society where rank and standing were based in part on the nobility and deeds of one's ancestors, the literary dedication, by which a patron's name would remain evergreen, was a very important thing. Failure to honour one's patrons could lead to trouble for an author; we need look no further than the convoluted explanations Sidonius Apollinarius was forced to offer Lupus of Troyes when he dedicated one of his works to another man.<sup>53</sup>

The struggle for metropolitan primacy over the provinces of south-eastern Gaul was driven by the same desire for prestige that had galvanized the political struggles of aristocrats since the days of the Republic. Ordination rights over these provinces, the hotly contested issue, were important because they allowed a bishop to exercise patronage. He could make a gift of a bishopric to a man, thereby creating a client and increasing his own importance in society. Proculus' standing among his aristocratic peers was directly related to the amount of influence he could wield, and (as we have seen) he fought vigorously for the right to be able to offer this form of patronage.

If Cassian was a monk of Marseilles when he wrote his ascetic works, then his failure to dedicate them to his obvious patron, Bishop Proculus, violated the norms of his society. It would certainly have been regarded as a fiercely political act: everyone who read the books would recognize that he had spurned his local patron and chosen to dedicate his works to those men who were Proculus' adversaries.

We could also read Cassian's failure to mention Proculus as an act of *damnatio memoriae*. The *damnatio* was one of the traditional penalties the Roman Senate could impose as a posthumous punishment. It involved expunging all references to a political leader from the written records of the city. We find it, for instance, after the reign of the emperor Domitian. Statues were pulled down, written records were destroyed, inscriptions were defaced. Again, for a society whose members competed to create a lasting legacy, the wholesale effacement of a man's mark upon his times was a severe penalty.

<sup>53</sup> Sid. *Ep.* 9. 11; cf. Jill D. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinarius and the Fall of Rome, AD 407–485* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 8.

Cassian, by failing to mention Proculus, grants him no place among the ascetic fathers of early fifth-century Gaul. While his consignment of Proculus to silence might have been accidental, there is at least one point where he deliberately seems to excise Proculus from the record. This comes in his account of the rehabilitation of the Gallic monk, Leporius, in *De incarnatione*, 1. 4–5.<sup>54</sup> Here Cassian offered his version of the recantation of Leporius, a man who had been gulled by the teachings of Pelagius and had become one of the greatest Gallic exponents of that pernicious heresy. After a period spent in error, Leporius had been returned to orthodoxy. According to Cassian, Leporius was ‘admonished by us and corrected by God’.<sup>55</sup>

Who were the ‘us’ responsible for placing Leporius’ feet back on the orthodox path? A second description of the Leporius affair may be found in a letter from Augustine to his fellow presbyters, Proculus and Cylinnius, written c.418–21.<sup>56</sup> In this epistle, Augustine offered an account of Leporius’ restoration. The monk, justly rebuked and driven out of Gaul by Proculus and Cylinnius, had been received and restored by the African bishops. Proculus and Cylinnius had followed the apostolic injunction to censure the unruly, but Augustine had chosen to comfort the weak-minded. Under Augustine’s pastoral care, Leporius had been led to renounce his former Pelagian errors. He had made a complete confession of his errors (the *Libellus emendationis*), which had been endorsed by four bishops at a synod in Carthage.<sup>57</sup> This document was then attached to Augustine’s letter and forwarded to Proculus and Cylinnius to confirm Leporius’ return to orthodoxy.

In *De incarnatione*, 1. 5, Cassian quoted a portion of Leporius’ recantation. His version of Leporius’ rehabilitation squares with Augustine’s account. Cassian stated that after Leporius had been expelled from Gaul, he had sought refuge in Africa, where he was received and converted to an orthodox faith. As a sign of this new orthodox stance, Leporius wrote a full confession, which was signed by the African bishops, and sent to Gaul. Cassian appeared well informed about Leporius when he wrote *De incarnatione*. What is interesting about Cassian’s version of the Leporius affair is the way he treats Proculus of

<sup>54</sup> For a brief biographical sketch of Leporius, see André Mandouze, *Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire, I: Prosopographie de l’Afrique Chrétienne* (Paris: Centre national de la Recherche scientifique, 1982), 634–5.

<sup>55</sup> Cassian, *Incarn.* 1. 4 [CSEL 17: 241. 11–12]: *a nobis admonitus, a Deo emendatus*.

<sup>56</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 219. For the date see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Vol. I: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1965), 465. Augustine makes the only reference in patristic literature to Bishop Cylinnius — the location of his see and years he held it are not known.

<sup>57</sup> See Lepor. *Emend.* 12, for the subscriptions of Aurelius of Carthage, Augustine, Florentius, and Secundus. J. L. Maier, ‘La date de la retraction de Leporius et celle du “sermon 396” de saint Augustin,’ *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 11 (1965), 42, has argued that this took place some time between May and July 418.

Marseilles. Augustine cast Proculus and Cylinnius as central figures in the drama (they had chastised Leporius and driven the monk out of Marseilles). Cassian completely writes them out of the story. He situates Leporius in a Gallic, rather than a Massilian, context. Leporius was said to have been one of the earliest champions of Pelagianism in *Gaul*; when he repented, he wrote letters of confession to all the cities and bishops of *Gaul*.<sup>58</sup> Cassian did not mention Cylinnius, Proculus, or Marseilles in his version of the events.<sup>59</sup> Leporius had been a Gallic problem, and he had been censured 'by us'. In view of Cassian's emphases, the 'us' (*a nobis*) seems to signify a global or universal Gallic rejection. Proculus and Cylinnius were excised from their central role in the story and consigned to oblivion.

### Cassian of Narbonensis Secunda

In the preceding discussion, I have shown how Cassian's Gallic context and the social norms of Roman society make his location in Marseilles implausible while he was writing his early works. Before moving on to consider the evidence of Gennadius, I would like briefly to touch upon the other possible explanations for the incongruities we have noted.

To begin: what if Cassian's dedications did not have political significance? What if he (while living in Marseilles) was simply responding to a request from Castor, and had chosen to dedicate *De institutis* to him because he had asked for it? This theory has a simplicity that is immediately attractive, but it runs into problems when we think about subsequent works. If Castor had died after commissioning *De institutis*, why did Cassian dedicate his other works to Leontius *et alia* instead of turning to Proculus? The explanation breaks its back on the same reefs I have described above: Cassian may have been innocent in dedicating a book to the man who had requested it, but the moment he began choosing other dedicatees from among Proculus' opponents, he deliberately spurned his bishop.

Another possibility would have Cassian acting as an agent attempting to subvert the ascetics of Narbonensis Secunda and bring them under the control of Marseilles. By establishing the norms for asceticism in Narbonensis Secunda, he could be seen to be exercising influence on behalf of his bishop. Once again, however, this strikes me as extremely unlikely given the fundamental hostility toward Marseilles among Cassian's target audience. The ascetics of Narbonensis Secunda would have had to have been fairly dense for this to work, and there is no evidence to suggest that they ever came under the sway of Massilian bishops.

<sup>58</sup> Cities: Cassian, *Incarn.* 1. 4; Bishops: Cassian, *Incarn.* 1. 5–6.

<sup>59</sup> Nor, interestingly enough, does he mention Augustine.

Finally, Cassian simply could have been a monk of Marseilles who deeply loathed his bishop and wrote to his adversaries as a contumacious act. Jerome's troubled relationship with his bishop, John of Jerusalem, provides a clear precedent for this sort of behaviour. Yet we should remember that even in the case of a celebrated ascetic such as Jerome, bishops had weapons they could employ to crush dissident activity. Following Epiphanius' visit to Jerusalem, Jerome and John had a well-publicized falling out.<sup>60</sup> The relationship became so acrimonious that John excommunicated Jerome in 394<sup>61</sup> and eventually obtained a decree from the emperor to have Jerome exiled.<sup>62</sup> The controversy did not abate until 397 when Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria intervened as mediator between the pair.<sup>63</sup> Proculus, as we have seen, showed no reluctance to remove troublesome elements. When he had the opportunity, he eliminated those who opposed him, men such as Remigius of Aix. He was also credited by Augustine for driving Leporius, the Pelagian monk into exile in Africa.<sup>64</sup> It is difficult to imagine Proculus long tolerating a dissident at the seat of his power.

In fact, the least problematic explanation is undoubtedly correct: when John Cassian wrote his two treatises on the ascetic life, he was living somewhere in Narbonensis Secunda (possibly Apta Iulia). He dedicated his works to obscure local bishops and ascetics because these men were his patrons and he hoped to have an impact on his local situation. Proculus is not mentioned in Cassian's ascetic treatises because Cassian had no connection with the celebrated bishop of Marseilles. When we place him in his proper context, the serious problems delineated above vanish.

### Gennadius and Cassian

In the preceding exposition, I have focused on Cassian's location when he wrote his ascetic treatises, *De institutis* and *Collationes patrum*. As I have argued, there is no good reason to place Cassian in Marseilles while he wrote

<sup>60</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 82. The chronology of this controversy is elucidated in Pierre Nautin, 'Études de chronologie hiéronymienne (393-397),' *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 19 (1973), 76-86; a more detailed account of these events may be found in Pierre Nautin, 'L'excommunication de saint Jérôme,' *Annuaire-École Pratique des Hautes Études Section 5* 80-1 (1972-3), 7-37.

<sup>61</sup> Nautin, *Excommunication*, 14-17.

<sup>62</sup> Excommunication cf. Hier. *Adu. Io. Hier.* 42, Nautin, *Excommunication*, 14-17, and J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 201; for John's abortive attempt to exile Jerome, see Hier. *Ep.* 82. 10, Hier. *Adu. Io. Hier.* 43, Nautin, *Chronologie*, 78-9, and Kelly, *Jerome*, 203-4.

<sup>63</sup> Hier. *Ep.* 82 is Jerome's response to this intervention.

<sup>64</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 219.

these works, and compelling reasons to suggest he was not there. Were it not for the entry of Gennadius in his *On Illustrious Men*, (*De uiris illustribus*) we could probably leave Cassian safely up north. Unfortunately, Gennadius complicates this straightforward account of Cassian's Gallic career. In large measure the uncritical attribution of Cassian to Marseilles rests on the entry Gennadius made for the ascetic writer:

Cassian, by nationality a Scythian, ordained a deacon in Constantinople by Bishop John the Great, a presbyter in [near?] Marseilles, founded two monasteries, that is, for men and women, which endure to this day.

Cassianus, natione Scytha, Constantinopolim a Iohanne Magno episcopo diaconus ordinatus, apud Massiliam presbyter, condit duo id est virorum et mulierum monasteria, quae usque hodie extant.<sup>65</sup>

Gennadius then lists Cassian's works and concludes his entry with, 'he made an end to his life and writing in [near?] Marseilles (*apud Massiliam*) during the reign of Theodosius and Valentinian'.<sup>66</sup>

Although this seems straightforward, Gennadius' entry boasts several peculiar features. His *natione Scytha* has created well-known difficulties for scholars, who have been unable to reach agreement on what Gennadius meant by this obscure phrase.<sup>67</sup> Cassian's relationship to the Massilian church is also unclear. What does he mean by *apud Massiliam presbyter*?<sup>68</sup> Although the preposition *apud* is often taken as a reference to Cassian's ordination in Marseilles, this is reading more out of the phrase than is actually present. As Frank has suggested, Gennadius' entry does not require Cassian to have been ordained in the Massilian church.<sup>69</sup> Nor does the phrase clearly make Cassian a priest of the Massilian church.

There is also the problem of Cassian's monasteries. The hypothesized link between Cassian and Marseilles has long been buttressed by the fable that one of the monasteries Cassian founded was the monastery dedicated to St Victor. Unfortunately (and *contra* the innumerable secondary sources that

<sup>65</sup> Gennad. *Vir.* 62 [Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur 14: 82. 7–10].

<sup>66</sup> Gennad. *Vir.* 62 [Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur 14: 82. 31–2]: *et in his scribendi apud Massiliam et vivendi finem fecit Theodosio et Valentiniano regnantibus.*

<sup>67</sup> See the studies I have cited in the Introduction.

<sup>68</sup> Frank, *John Cassian*, 419–20.

<sup>69</sup> Frank, *John Cassian*, 420, argued that Cassian was not ordained in Marseilles, but rather in Rome. Unfortunately, he offered no evidence for a Roman ordination, although his argument that Gennadius is not telling the reader that Cassian was ordained in Marseilles is extremely plausible.

repeat the claim), as Simon Loseby has demonstrated in a very rigorous and convincing argument, this is unlikely.<sup>70</sup> The monastery of St Victor dates no earlier than the eighth century, and the first claim of Cassianic foundation does not occur until the eleventh. For centuries, the stones of St Victor's have stood as implacable witnesses to Cassian's role in Massilian monasticism, but if Gennadius was right, the two monasteries Cassian founded did not endure for long.

Finally, if the opening to Gennadius' entry on Cassian is odd, his concluding sentence does little to dispel our puzzlement. He finished his entry with the statement that Cassian made an end of writing and living, in (*apud*) Marseilles, during the reign of Theodosius and Valentinianus. Nowhere else does Gennadius repeat information about a subject's provenance. What is the point of emphasizing the fact that Cassian was a monk/priest *apud Massiliam*?

When I first looked at the problem of Gennadius' entry, I thought there might be grounds for discounting it as a forgery. His *natione Scythia* is so odd that it is impenetrable; his use of *apud* is very ambiguous; the claim that he had founded two monasteries in Marseilles is the sort of thing we might expect from a forger who was trying to create an illustrious past for a Massilian monastery.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately for the conspiracy theory, the entry for Cassian is secure in the earliest manuscripts of this work. Moreover, other references and allusions to Cassian in *De uiris* suggest that Gennadius held the monastic author in very high esteem: Cassian is integral to the text, rather than a later addition.

Two of Gennadius' other entries mention Cassian by name. The first, the entry for Eucherius, states that Eucherius had condensed certain works of St Cassian (*sancti Cassiani*) into a single volume.<sup>72</sup> The appellation Saint is rare in Gennadius, attached only to a handful of men (James, Paulinus of Nola, Martin of Tours, Cyprian, Stephen the first martyr, Ephrem, Venerius, and Eustathius). A number of notable figures, including Augustine and Jerome, do not win this accolade from Gennadius and thus we have a *prima facie* indication of Gennadius' regard for Cassian. The second reference to Cassian occurs in Gennadius' entry for Prosper of Aquitaine.<sup>73</sup> Here he attributes an anonymous work, presumably *Against the Conferencer* (*Contra collatorem*), to Prosper and notes that while Prosper deemed Cassian's works harmful, the

<sup>70</sup> Loseby, *Marseille*, 139–42.

<sup>71</sup> This has happened elsewhere; see, for instance, the attempt to improve Cassian's image that may be found in Prosper's *Chronicon* [PL 51:569A] which states that 'The monk John, surnamed Cassian, lived at Marseilles, an outstanding and eloquent writer.' Theodor Mommsen, *Chronica minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII*, MGH aa 9 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), 499, deemed this entry a fifteenth-century forgery.

<sup>72</sup> Gennad. *Vir.* 74.

<sup>73</sup> Gennad. *Vir.* 85.

church approved of them as beneficial.<sup>74</sup> Gennadius, as has been noted by a number of scholars, shares the anti-Augustinian views on grace and free will commonly referred to as semi-Pelagianism. It is no great surprise to find him taking Cassian's side against Prosper, who does not fare well in this entry.

Aside from these two direct references to Cassian, there is at least one literary borrowing from Cassian's *De incarnatione* in Gennadius' work. In his entry for Leporius, Gennadius reworks Cassian's description of the renegade monk's return to the orthodox path in Africa.<sup>75</sup> Cassian wrote that 'Leporius had been admonished by us and reformed by God.'<sup>76</sup> Gennadius echoes Cassian by writing that 'Leporius had been admonished by the Gallic teachers, and, in Africa, had been reformed by God, through Augustine.'<sup>77</sup> Gennadius' only significant change is to put Augustine back into the story.

A systematic forger could have gone through *De uiris illustribus*, adding these subtle signs of approbation, but it is less problematic to accept them and the entry for Cassian as Gennadius' own work. Clearly he held Cassian in high esteem, and this impression is buttressed by the observation that the second longest entry in *De uiris illustribus* is the entry for John Cassian. Even Augustine, a man with a demonstrably larger impact on the church, both in terms of literary output and fame, trails Cassian.

Gennadius' treatment of Cassian is designed to signal Cassian's importance as an ecclesiastical figure. This meshes with one of the larger goals of his work, the implicit claim that the church's teaching authority does not rest with the bishops alone.<sup>78</sup> Cassian, as one of the doctors of the church, was an important example for Gennadius' case: Cassian possessed theological authority not by virtue of his office, but because of the knowledge he contributed. He was one of the stellar examples of an alternate source of authority.

And, as Gennadius seems at great pains to emphasize, he was associated with the church at Marseilles. This point is so important for Gennadius, that he makes it twice. Should we accept his claim, or is he too eager to enlist Cassian among the famous doctors of Marseilles?

<sup>74</sup> Gennad. *Vir.* 85 [Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur 14: 90. 21–3]: *Legi et librum aduersus opuscula (suppresso nomine) Cassiani, quae ecclesia Dei salutaria probat, ille infamat nociua.*

<sup>75</sup> Gennad. *Vir.* 60.

<sup>76</sup> Cassian, *Incarn.* 1. 4 [CSEL 17: 241. 11–12]: *a nobis admonitus, a deo emendatus.*

<sup>77</sup> Gennad. *Vir.* 60 [Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur 14: 81. 20–1]: *Sed a Gallicanis doctoribus admonitus, et in Africa per Augustinum adeo emendatus.* Richardson's text reads *adeo* (indeed, truly), but surely *a Deo* (by God, through Augustine) is the correct reading.

<sup>78</sup> My thanks to Mark Vessey for his insight on this point.



In my view, the repetition of Cassian's location, *apud Massiliam*, suggests a concern to establish Cassian as a monk/priest of Marseilles in the face of competing claims by other groups or cities. If Cassian had spent most of his Gallic sojourn in Narbonensis Secunda, then Gennadius might simply be attempting to pre-empt a claim by northern ascetics. This obviously went on with the physical remains of saints; perhaps Gennadius was involved in a *translatio* of Cassian's literary legacy. Fifty years after Cassian's death, would there be anyone around to contradict Gennadius' relocation of Cassian to Marseilles? Moreover, if there was, does Gennadius preserve his credibility through his twin *apuds*? While the preposition can mean 'at' (as it surely must in the case of Vincent who was a presbyter *apud monasterium Lerinensis insulae*), it can also mean 'by' or 'near'. In geographic terms, Marseilles could be considered near Narbonensis Secunda.

But it also must be acknowledged that Gennadius might have been right. While Cassian did not begin his career in Marseilles, he might have ended it there. One other writer, Prosper of Marseilles, offers indirect evidence to support the proposition that Cassian was a late arrival in Marseilles.

### Prosper and Cassian

Outside of Gennadius' entry in *De uiris illustribus*, the only other evidence linking Cassian to Marseilles are the possible allusions to him in the writings engendered by the Massilian anti-Augustinian controversy.<sup>79</sup> These consist of Prosper of Aquitaine's *Epistle to Rufinus* (*Epistola ad Rufinum*),<sup>80</sup> *Epistle to Augustine* (*Epistola ad Augustinum*),<sup>81</sup> and *Against the Conferencer* (*Contra*

<sup>79</sup> This controversy has been traditionally (at least since the sixteenth century) referred to as the 'semi-Pelagian' controversy. This is a grave misnomer, as Harnack noted, since the Massilian party was in no sense of the word 'Pelagian' (A. von Harnack, *A History of Dogma* [London: Williams and Norgate, 1898], 245 n. 3). This group of writers was bound not by its espousal of Pelagian doctrine, but rather by its rejection of Augustine's overemphasis on predestination. Unfortunately, scholarly inertia ensures that the controversy continues to be labelled 'semi-Pelagian'. This misnaming will be resisted here.

<sup>80</sup> *PL* 51.77–90.

<sup>81</sup> Preserved among the letters of Augustine as Aug. *Ep.* 225. The dating of these letters is problematic. Aside from references to Augustine's *De correptione et gratia*, which may have reached Gaul in 427/8 (Rebecca Harden Weaver, 'Augustine's Use of Scriptural Admonitions in his Final Arguments on Grace,' *SPAT* 28 [1993], 424–5, see Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Economy: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996], 94, for the dating), there is little internal evidence to narrow the dates. Prosper's letter to Augustine is probably best located after the year 429. This is based on a reference to the 'holy Bishop,

*collatorem*),<sup>82</sup> as well as Hilary of Marseilles' *Epistle to Augustine* (*Epistola ad Augustinum*).<sup>83</sup> Although these works have been judged to contain references to 'Cassian and the monks of Saint Victor,'<sup>84</sup> this identification is imposed on, rather than substantiated by, these texts. The most widely accepted allusion to Cassian in any of the letters may be found in Prosper's letter to Rufinus:

But who does not know, why privately they might chatter from the gullet about these things, but publicly they fall completely silent concerning their advice? For wanting to glory more in their own righteousness than in the grace of God, they take it hard that we resist those who in many secret meetings oppose that man of most excellent authority. For they do not doubt that if they raised an investigation of the question in a crowd of priests or a gathering of the people, they would be opposed by a hundred books of the most blessed Augustine.

Sed quis nescit, cur ista privatim de stomacho garriant, et publice de consilio conticescant? Volentes enim in sua iustitia magis, quam in Dei gratia gloriari, moleste ferunt, quod his quae adversum excellentissimae auctoritatis virum inter multas collationes asseruere, resistimus. Nec dubitant, si quam hinc moverint quaestionem, in qualibet frequentia sacerdotum, in qualibet congregatione populorum, centenis sibi beatissimi Augustini voluminibus obviandum.<sup>85</sup>

Some commentators have taken Prosper's use of the word *Collatio* as a reference to John Cassian's *Collationes patrum*.<sup>86</sup> Of course Cassian did label his second work a *Collatio*, but this is nothing more than a description of the activity that produced the dialogues. A *collatio* is a meeting, or a conference,<sup>87</sup>

Hilary of Arles' (although Owen Chadwick, 'Euladius of Arles,' *JTS* 46 [1945], 203, takes this as a copyist's error; for a brief summary, including opposing views: Stewart, *Cassian*, 153 n. 161). Shared references to a deacon named Leontius (the courier for these letters) suggest that Hilary of Marseilles' *Epistle* may be dated to the same period (cf. Aug. *Ep.* 225. 1 and Aug. *Ep.* 226. 10 for the references). Most scholars have taken the position that Prosper's letter to Rufinus predates these letters, although this is by no means certain (Weaver, *Divine Grace*, 42, dates the letter to c.427).

<sup>82</sup> *PL* 51.215–76. For a discussion of this work: Weaver, *Divine Grace*, 121–31.

<sup>83</sup> Preserved among the letters of Augustine as Aug. *Ep.* 226.

<sup>84</sup> Stewart, *Cassian*, 20. See also Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 1st ed., 114, for the positive claim that Cassian 'was clearly indicted in the references to the monks of Marseilles'. Likewise B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988), 105, who asserts that while Cassian was never mentioned in these letters, he was to become the leading figure in the controversy.

<sup>85</sup> Prosper, *Ep. ad Ruf.* 5 [*PL* 51: 79C–80A].

<sup>86</sup> Stewart, *Cassian*, 20.

<sup>87</sup> See Cassian, *Inst.* Pref. 5, where he asserts that the monastic art is continuously discussed and refined in *collationes*.

possibly one in which those attending come together for hostile purposes. This would certainly fit well with the context for Prosper's use of the word: Augustine's adversaries are quite free with their opinions when meeting in private, but taciturn in public. This was for a good reason: if they dared to articulate their views openly, they would quickly be overrun by the crushing weight of Augustine's learned prose. Consequently, they sniped at the great man from the cover of secrecy, conducting their many meetings behind closed doors.

There is certainly ample precedent for Prosper's coincidental use of this word. This interpretation is also strengthened by those scholars who have argued that Prosper had not seen Cassian's *Collationes patrum* in 432 when he wrote *Contra Collatorem*.<sup>88</sup> Even if we assume that Prosper was making an allusion to Cassian in this letter, he still has not told his readers anything about where John Cassian might be living. All Prosper suggested is that there was a party of malcontents who were conspiring in secret against the teachings of Augustine. He does not indicate that this group has any single leader, nor does he restrict their activities to Marseilles.

Prosper returned to his attack on the anti-Augustinian camp in his letter to Augustine (*Epistola ad Augustinum*) which, as noted above, is probably to be dated to 429. Once again Prosper was extremely vague in his identification of Augustine's opponents. The adversaries are 'those servants of Christ who live in the city of Marseilles'.<sup>89</sup> Despite this, he also seems to have some extra-Massilian adversaries in mind as he notes that more than one of Augustine's opponents had been raised to the episcopacy,<sup>90</sup> and at least one of these men was the bishop of Arles (Hilary).<sup>91</sup> These references suggest that opposition to Augustine's ideas spread well beyond the city of Marseilles. There is no certain reference to Cassian in this letter, and even if Prosper had Cassian in mind, there is nothing here to place him in Marseilles.<sup>92</sup>

The notion that resistance to Augustine was not bounded by the city walls of Marseilles is confirmed by Hilary of Marseilles' letter to Augustine (*Epistola ad Augustinum*). In this letter, Hilary complained about those who were

<sup>88</sup> See M. Cappuyn, 'Cassien,' *Dictionnaire D'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques* 11 (1949), 1343; Chadwick, *John Cassian, 1st ed.*, 115; for the contrary view see Weaver, *Divine Grace*, 97.

<sup>89</sup> Prosp. *Ep. ad Aug.* 2 [CSEL 57: 455. 12]: *Multi ergo seruorum Christi qui in Massiliensi urbe consistunt.*

<sup>90</sup> Prosp. *Ep. ad Aug.* 2.

<sup>91</sup> Prosp. *Ep. ad Aug.* 9.

<sup>92</sup> In fact, the only named adversary is Hilary of Arles — one of the men who was active in Narbonensis Secunda. Weaver, *Divine Grace*, 97, suggests that Prosper might have mentioned Hilary but not Cassian because he was less concerned about the views of an abbot than an important bishop. Yet, in *Contra Collatorem*, Prosper seems very interested in the views of an abbot.

‘opposing Augustine in Marseilles and other parts of Gaul’.<sup>93</sup> Hilary confirms the hints served up in Prosper’s letters: the promulgation of these anti-Augustinian ideas in Marseilles was a concern for both men, but both indicate that the heresy was a Gallic problem. Like Prosper, Hilary suggested that a number of people opposed Augustine’s views and in no case did he identify Cassian, or even a leading ascetic figure among this rival faction.

These three letters have been interpreted as references to an opposition party that consisted of Cassian and the monks of St Victor’s. Nevertheless, as has been shown here, this is nothing more than a case of reading Cassian into these letters. The letters mention neither Cassian, nor a leading figure who galvanized the resistance to Augustine, nor the monks of St Victor’s monastery. Moreover, Prosper suggests and Hilary confirms the idea that the anti-Augustinian movement enjoyed a much wider sphere of action than just Marseilles. Even if Cassian was a target of these letters, he could have been one of those living somewhere else in Gaul.

The same cannot be said for Prosper’s next work on the subject. Prosper’s only direct attack on John Cassian came in his *Against the Conferencer* (*Contra collatorem*), written in 432.<sup>94</sup> The pointed and deliberate rebuttal of the views that Cassian had advanced in *Collationes* 13 leaves no doubt as to the identity of the ‘Conferencer.’ At this time the ‘Conferencer’ (whom Prosper never names) was said to be ‘living among them’.<sup>95</sup> By the time this work was composed Cassian could have come to Marseilles, and in fact an appearance in that city by the notorious author of *Collationes* 13 might have been just the spur required for Prosper to produce *Contra collatorem*. Prosper’s work offers a possible *terminus ante quem* for Cassian’s arrival in Marseilles. Sometime after the completion of *Collationes* and the production of *Contra collatorem*, John Cassian may have moved south.

As I have suggested in this appendix, a disproportionate weight has been assigned to Gennadius’ entry for Cassian in *De uiris illustribus*. For far too long, Gennadius’ assertions have been accepted uncritically. When coupled with the St Victor’s foundation myth, a tidy biography can be written, the story of Cassian as the leader of a Massilian monastic project that has been widely disseminated in scholarly literature.

Nevertheless, as discussed above, there are good reasons to question the conventional view. In view of Cassian’s failure to mention Proculus, the divisions that fractured the Gallic ecclesio-political map, and the apparent

<sup>93</sup> Hil. Mar. *Ep. ad Aug.* 2 [CSEL 57: 469. 4–5]: *quae Massiliae, uel etiam aliquibus locis in Gallia*.

<sup>94</sup> Prosper’s reference to Pope Sixtus substantiates a date of 432 (Prosp. *Coll.* 21. 4). Cf. Stewart, *Cassian*, 155 n. 189.

<sup>95</sup> Prosp. *Coll.* 2. 1 [PL 51: 218A]: *vir quidam sacerdotalis, qui disputandi usu inter eos*.

concentration on the local ascetics and bishops of Narbonensis Secunda, it seems much more probable that Cassian began his Gallic career in the north. If he eventually moved south (and Gennadius is not simply performing a *translatio* of Cassian's literary remains in order to bring glory to his city) it was after he had completed his ascetic treatises. The motivation(s) for a move to Marseilles must remain a mystery; perhaps he came after Proculus died or perhaps the loss of those he had known in Narbonensis Secunda (Castor, Leontius, Honoratus) led him to emigrate. Whatever the reason, our evidence is accommodated in a much neater fashion by introducing this two-locale career and moving Cassian out of his role as the Massilian abbot of St Victor's monastery.

## APPENDIX 2

### Textual problems in *De institutis* 3

Cassian's *De Institutis* 3. 4 poses a problem for liturgical historians that, despite the various explanations tendered over the years, remains, in the words of Robert Taft, 'the outstanding problem in the history of the formation of the Divine Office'.<sup>1</sup> *De Institutis* 3. 4–6 are, according to another historian, 'amongst the most problematic texts ever to confront the historian of monasticism'.<sup>2</sup> If we were to try to describe the problem in geological terms, these chapters would be an erratic: a large mass of stone transported for miles by a glacier and then dropped in a field where it has no business being after the ice melts.

The erratic in *De institutis* 3. 4 is a counting error. In *De institutis* 3. 3, Cassian provides biblical justification for two nocturnal monastic offices and three diurnal offices. The next chapter (3. 4) describes a monastic office that had been added to the cursus in Palestine. According to the writer of this chapter, this new office was not an inappropriate novelty, because it conformed to a line from a psalm of David: 'seven times in a day have I offered you praise on account of your just judgements'.<sup>3</sup> The problem arises from the fact that the five offices described in *De institutis* 3.3 plus a new Palestinian office only add up to six offices. A variety of ingenious theories have been proposed to reconcile this mistake, but none have won universal acceptance.

One solution that has found little support (and enjoyed even less discussion) is Owen Chadwick's theory that *De institutis* 3. 4–6 is a later addition to the text.<sup>4</sup> Cassian did not write these chapters, but rather they were inserted by a writer who sought to justify liturgical practices that post-dated

<sup>1</sup> Robert Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), 191. Taft's emphasis.

<sup>2</sup> Marilyn Dunn, 'Mastering Benedict: Monastic Rules and Their Authors in the Early Medieval West,' *English Historical Review* 105 (1990), 577.

<sup>3</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 4. 3 [SC 109: 104. 39–40] (citing Ps. 118: 164): *Septies in die laudem dixi tibi, super iudicia iustitiae tuae*.

<sup>4</sup> See Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 76–7, and the discussion that follows.

Cassian.<sup>5</sup> Cassian actually offered a five-office cursus, rather than the six or seven that most liturgical historians attribute to him. The counting error is simply a clumsy anachronism: six offices were in common use when our later writer added this text, and he simply overlooked the fact that Cassian had elsewhere only prescribed five.

This appendix will demonstrate that Chadwick's solution is both sound and quite likely correct. Moreover, in addition to the three chapters Chadwick singled out as suspect (3. 4–6), there is considerable evidence that Chapter 3. 8 is also a later addition to Cassian's work. A synthesis of traditional textual and new computer-based stylistic methodologies will be employed to probe these questionable chapters. I will begin with a contextual analysis, evaluating these chapters against the larger background of Cassian's work and then probing them for inconsistencies. As we shall discover, the most egregious problem is not arithmetic, but rather that these chapters are devoted to the justification of a period of sleep after Nocturns, a practice that Cassian opposed elsewhere. Moreover, outside of these chapters there is no evidence in Cassian's work for a six- or seven-office cursus, although there is abundant evidence for a five-office cursus.

The contextual argument will then be supported by computer stylometry. Advances in both methodology and reliability have provided the researcher with a powerful new tool for assessing questions of authorship. A stylistic assessment of *De institutis* will provide further evidence that the chapters in question are not consistent with the rest of *De institutis* 1–4. The cumulative value of the evidence garnered through these two approaches suggests that Chadwick's conclusion about this material is correct. *De institutis* 3. 4–6 and at least part of 3. 8 are the work of a later hand. Although this might seem a minor point, its significance for the history of the development of liturgy cannot be overstated. Cassian is one of the few reliable witnesses to early liturgical developments. A demonstration that he only knew and recommended a five-office cursus will alter our understanding of the development of monastic liturgy, and will solve 'the outstanding problem' in the history of the divine office.

### The problem

The stated purpose of *De institutis* 3. 4 is to add a new office to the five that had been described in the earlier chapters of the work. These five offices

<sup>5</sup> For a good overview of the practice of medieval forgery, see Elizabeth A. R. Brown, 'Falsitas pia sive reprehensilis: Medieval Forgers and Their Intentions,' *MGH Schriften* 33.1 (1988), 101–19. Nor was this practice strictly limited to the mediaeval period (see Eugene Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 45–6 for an account of writers attributing their works to Jerome).

(Nocturns, Terce, Sext, None, and Vespers) are secure in *De institutis*. The two nocturnal offices were discussed in *De institutis* 2. 6; likewise, the three diurnal offices (Terce, Sext, and None) are first specified in *De institutis* 3. 1. The problem begins in *De institutis* 3. 4, where a sixth office is proposed. According to the writer, the Gallic monks had adopted a morning office that had been instituted in Palestine. With the addition of this new office (concluded the author of this text), the monks would offer praise to the Lord seven times a day, just like David. Unfortunately, only six offices have been clearly enumerated in the text, despite the writer's claim to the contrary. The problem that has vexed liturgical historians, is trying to decide which of the offices found in later western rules—the *Rule of the Master* (*Regula Magistri*) and the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (*Regula Benedicti*)—is based on this new office. If the later cursus of offices evolved out of Cassian's recommendations,<sup>6</sup> then which of these later offices did Cassian propose (Matins, Prime, or Compline), and where is the missing (seventh) office?

In the second edition of his *John Cassian*, Owen Chadwick outlined the two positions most scholars have adopted on this question.<sup>7</sup> The first option has Cassian proposing Nocturns, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, and Vespers (seven offices). Lauds immediately follows the end of Nocturns, a conclusion that might be substantiated by *De institutis* 3. 4. This proposal has Cassian conflating Lauds and Nocturns in his description of the offices, but counting them separately when tallying them against the verse from the Psalter. Cassian's new office was Prime, the office that signalled the start of the day's work.<sup>8</sup> The problem with this proposal, as Chadwick noted, is that one must assume that Cassian indiscriminately used the phrase *matutina sollemnitatis* to refer to both Prime and Lauds.<sup>9</sup>

A second proposal suggests that Cassian actually wrote about the introduction of Lauds in Bethlehem. The office of Prime was a later innovation, one Cassian knew nothing about. As Chadwick observed, although this solution fits the text better, the explanation still has a problem: the reader is left to find another office. Nocturns, Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, and Vespers only add up to six offices. The advocates for the second proposal have turned to *De institutis* 4. 19, where Cassian mentions the psalms a monk was supposed to recite before retiring in the evening, and found there a seventh

<sup>6</sup> Adalbert de Vogüé and Jean Neufville, *La Règle de Saint Benoît*, Sources Chrétiennes 181 (Paris: Cerf, 1971), 101–3.

<sup>7</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 73–6.

<sup>8</sup> Owen Chadwick, 'The Origins of Prime,' *JTS* 49 (1948), 178–82, originally backed this position against the work of Dom Jacques Froger. By 1968 he had significantly revised his view.

<sup>9</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 74.



office, Compline. Unfortunately this office is not as neatly signposted as its supporters might lead one to believe.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, its dislocation from the two books that describe the other six monastic offices is rather curious.

Neither of these explanations is entirely satisfactory. They both require a creative reading of Cassian's text and neither adequately account for the missing office. Chadwick's contribution to the debate was the theory that Chapters 4–6 were a later addition by an unknown revisionist who was trying to provide a precedent for a liturgical practice that had evolved sometime during the centuries that post-dated Cassian.<sup>11</sup> As Chadwick argued, the lack of any manuscripts of *De institutis* earlier than the ninth century,<sup>12</sup> leaves ample time for accretions in the text. If an unknown monk wanted to create justification for a later monastic office, then an insertion into *De institutis* explaining where the new office originated would lend the imprimatur of antiquity to a new (or local) practice. These chapters would then be used to support the practice of allowing monks to have a short rest after Nocturns.

Chadwick also observed that Book 3 flows more naturally if Chapters 4–6 are removed from the text. Cassian listed five offices at the end of *De institutis* 3. 3; in *De institutis* 3. 7, discussing the differences in penance exacted from those who are late to the diurnal or nocturnal offices, he only mentions three day-offices (Terce, Sext, None) and refers to the nocturnal assemblies (Vespers and Nocturns), again for a total of five offices.

In fact, there are no references to the mysterious offices six and seven outside of these four chapters. Moreover, if we accept this block of text as inauthentic, then the problem of reconciling David's seven prayers with the monastic offices also vanishes. It is a mistake that is easily explained if the author who added these chapters lived at a time when a seven-office cursus was the practice of his monastery. The mistake points to a later period than the one in which Cassian wrote.

Chadwick was not dogmatic about this third proposal, and advanced it with 'hesitation'.<sup>13</sup> He did not view it as 'the most probable in the prevailing state of the evidence', but thought it ought to be kept in mind if 'further evidence of the earlier manuscript tradition should come to light'.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Contra Adalbert de Vogüé, 'The Master and St Benedict: A Reply to Marilyn Dunn,' *English Historical Review* 107 (1992), 101.

<sup>11</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 76–7.

<sup>12</sup> We actually do have a sixth-century palimpsest, (*Codex F-IV-1 N.16*), but this only has fragments of books 4, 6, 7, and 8.

<sup>13</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 76.

<sup>14</sup> Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 76–7.

His theory has engendered little debate. The only refutation of it came in the course of a response made by Adalbert de Vogüé to a paper published by Marilyn Dunn, who had argued against de Vogüé's position that the *Regula Magistri* had been written before the *Regula Benedicti*.<sup>15</sup> Dunn suggested that the case for the precedence of the Master was undermined by the theory that the offices of Prime and Compline were late liturgical developments.<sup>16</sup> In order to strengthen her argument, Dunn chose to follow Chadwick's proposal that *De institutis* 3. 4–6 was a later interpolation and that Cassian only advocated five offices.<sup>17</sup>

Two years later de Vogüé responded to Dunn's critique of his work. Because his rebuttal was aimed at defending the priority of the Master rather than the question of interpolations in Cassian, his response only addressed the question tangentially. He noted that the idea of a *septennium* went back to Eusebius who cited it in his exposition of Psalm 118, and consequently provided a precedent for Cassian; moreover, the fact that the passage in Cassian was obscure did not suggest inauthenticity, as obscurity was 'often the case with Cassian'.<sup>18</sup> Cassian's new office is an 'intentional ambiguity' which refers to both Prime and Lauds, and a 'bedtime prayer which is none other than Compline, appears in the following book of *Institutes*'.<sup>19</sup>

This strikes me as very unlikely; Cassian's emphasis on an orderly presentation argues against the idea that *De institutis* 4. 19 contains the missing

<sup>15</sup> See Dunn, *Mastering Benedict*, 567–93, and Vogüé, *The Master*, 95–103.

<sup>16</sup> Adalbert de Vogüé has argued that the Master composed his rule c.500–25 (Dunn, *Mastering Benedict*, 579). Benedict then used this rule in writing his own rule (c.530–50). According to Dunn, Prime does not appear until Caesarius, who wrote his rule in 534, and Compline first appeared in Italy 'in the 540s or 550s' (Dunn, *Mastering Benedict*, 578–80). Consequently, the *Regula Magistri* could not have the early date proposed by de Vogüé.

<sup>17</sup> Dunn, *Mastering Benedict*, 577–8.

<sup>18</sup> Vogüé, *The Master*, 100–1.

<sup>19</sup> Vogüé, *The Master*, 101. The view that Cassian was an unsystematic writer has been advanced by a number of different writers, including Peter Munz, 'John Cassian,' *JEH* 11 (1960), 1, and Philip Rousseau, 'Cassian, Contemplation and the Coenobitic Life,' *JTS* n.s. 26 (1975), 113, (although Rousseau softened this by defining unsystematic as allowing for an evolution of thought). Chadwick noted that he had once thought Cassian was very unsystematic, 'as unsystematic as is possible for the architect of a system,' but had revised his opinion to suspect interpolations and rearrangements of Cassian's works by later copyists (Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed., 43). Somewhat ironically, de Vogüé argued for the systematic quality of Cassian's exposition in his analysis of the structure of *Collationes* (Adalbert de Vogüé, 'Pour comprendre Cassien: Un survol des Conférences,' *Collectanea cisterciensia* 39 (1979), 250–72), and Lauren Pristas, 'The Unity of Composition in Book V of Cassian's *De institutis*,' *SPAT* 25 (1993), 438–43, argued that Chadwick's characterization of *De institutis* 5 as disordered was not the case but rather reflected a highly structured arrangement.

(seventh) office of Compline. Cassian opened his two-book exposition of the monastic office by stating that he was going to outline the most ancient arrangement (regarding the canonical offices) of the fathers for Castor's new monastery.<sup>20</sup> Cassian's goal was standardization. He wrote to replace the variant Gallic practices with one clear *cursus* of monastic offices. The two proposals which purport to explain Cassian's 'seven offices' fly in the face of the goals Cassian had stated, the line to which he closely hewed throughout his exposition of the offices (*De institutis* 3. 4–6, 8 excepted). If there were two morning offices between Nocturns and Terce, Cassian would have felt bound to separate, explain, and justify them both at length (brevity not being one of Cassian's shortcomings). Similarly, even if Cassian had inadvertently omitted Compline in this book (and bungled his maths) is it likely that he would relegate it to a parenthetical remark in a passage concerned with the time at which the weekly servers hand over their duties to the next group?<sup>21</sup> Cassian had devoted the better part of two books to describing the monastic *cursus*; it is inconceivable that he would have glossed over an office in this manner. This offhand mention of evening psalmody is so obscure that it could just as easily be a reference to the Vespers psalmody, which was described in *De institutis* 2. In fact de Vogüé offered nothing in his response that had not already been said by Chadwick, aside from accusing Cassian of obscurity and intentional ambiguity. Again, in view of de Vogüé's agenda (defending the priority of the anonymous Master), it is not surprising that Cassian was treated in such a cursory manner, although one might have hoped for a more substantial engagement with Chadwick's proposal.

### Contextual issues

One of the main factors underpinning the debate about Cassian's monastic *cursus* is the fact that both Benedict and the Master advanced an eight-office *cursus* (Nocturns, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline). It is widely assumed that both writers appropriated this structure from Cassian. This is not necessarily the case. To the contrary, when the rules are compared it becomes evident that the structure advocated by the Master and Benedict owe more to the arrangement of *The Rule of Saint Basil* than to Cassian.<sup>22</sup> Basil states that the monk must pray eight times each day: at dawn, the third, sixth, and ninth hours, at the end of the day, the beginning

<sup>20</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 4. 19 [SC 109: 146. 19–21]: *conuenientibus in unum fratribus ad concinendos psalmos, quos quieturi ex more decantant.*

<sup>22</sup> Bas. *Reg. fus.* 37.

Table 2: Proof texts for the monastic offices

Office	Bas. <i>Reg. fus.</i> 37	Cassian <i>Inst.</i> 3.3
Lauds	Ps. 118: 148	—
Prime	Ps. 27: 3; 5: 2–3	—
Terce	Ps. 51: 10–12	Acts 2: 14–18
Sext	Ps. 55: 17; Ps. 91	Acts 10: 13; Col. 2: 15
None	Acts 3: 1	Acts 10: 30; Acts 3: 1
Vespers	Ps. 4: 4	Ps. 140: 2
Compline	—	—
Nocturns/Vigils	Acts 16: 25; Ps. 118: 62	Ps. 118: 147–8

of the night, at midnight, and then again just before dawn. These eight times of prayer correspond to Benedict's eight monastic hours.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, both Basil and Benedict designate Vigils as the office that is one beyond the perfect *Septies dies*, and justify it with an appeal to Psalm 118:62.<sup>24</sup> Benedict and Basil also state that Psalm 90 is to be recited at Compline, a practice that Cassian does not mention.<sup>25</sup>

Cassian's independence from Basil's prescription is demonstrated by the different selection of proof texts used to justify the monastic offices, as indicated in Table 2.

The only clear overlap occurs where both Basil and Cassian use Acts 3:1 as a precedent for None. Psalm 118:148 provides a second point of contact for the two, but they differ in their use of the text; Basil assigns Psalm 118:148 to the office after Nocturns and Cassian employs it as a justification for Nocturns. Rather than following Basil's structure of proof texts, Cassian grounds his exposition in other patristic writers, appropriating the assignment of prayer times articulated by Clement, Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian.

Clement of Alexandria was the earliest church writer to provide evidence for set prayers at the third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day.<sup>26</sup> As Clement noted, these hours were used by those who would limit their prayers to certain times of day, rather than praying, as the gnostic does, without ceasing.<sup>27</sup> While there is no need to see Clement as a direct source for Cassian, it is intriguing to note that Cassian does echo Clement's formulation in his contrast between the less fervent Gallic monks (who need to keep set times of prayer) and the Egyptians, who are able to pray without ceasing.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ben. *Reg.* 16.

<sup>24</sup> Bas. *Reg. fus.* 37; Ben. *Reg.* 16.

<sup>25</sup> Bas. *Reg. fus.* 37; Ben. *Reg.* 18.

<sup>26</sup> Clem. *Str.* 7. 7. Cf. Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 14.

<sup>27</sup> Clem. *Str.* 7. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 2.

Origen follows Clement, asserting that while unceasing prayer should be the goal of all, a Christian should at the very least pray three times a day, in accordance with the example of Daniel.<sup>29</sup> Here is another point of contact with Cassian, who also uses the example of Daniel as a proof text for this prescription.<sup>30</sup> Another similarity can be found in their shared example of Peter praying on the roof at the sixth hour as a precedent for Sext.<sup>31</sup>

Cassian's justification of the three daily offices exhibits even stronger connections with Tertullian's *Concerning Prayer* (*De oratione*). In *De oratione* 25, Tertullian states that the observance of certain hours of prayer will be profitable for the believer, including those 'common hours' which have been deemed more solemn in the Scriptures. These are the third, sixth, and ninth hours. Cassian and Tertullian both use the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to justify the third hour,<sup>32</sup> Peter's vision for the sixth,<sup>33</sup> and Peter and John praying in the Temple for the ninth hour.<sup>34</sup> He also justified the custom of three daily prayers by a reference to Daniel's practice.<sup>35</sup>

Tertullian noted that the injunction to pray at these times tended to be more of a good idea than a command. It would benefit the believer who followed them as if they were a law (*quasi lege*).<sup>36</sup> Keeping this law would then ensure that the Christian was torn away from the distractions of work or other duties in order to pray at certain times, a sentiment echoed by Cassian who believed that the Gauls needed the structure of daily offices to keep them from drifting away from the duty of prayer.<sup>37</sup>

Although all of the writers surveyed here deploy similar proof texts to justify the three daily offices, Cyprian's *On the Lord's Prayer* (*De Dominica oratione*) contains so many parallels with Cassian's work that it would be remarkable if this work was not the model for Cassian's exposition. *De Dominica oratione* 32–35, Cyprian's discussion of when a Christian should pray is closer to Cassian than any other text. Both Cyprian and Cassian use Daniel as the justification for three daily offices, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the third hour, and Peter's vision at the sixth.<sup>38</sup> The prayers of Peter and John at the Temple are omitted by Cyprian.

In addition to the common ground Cassian and Cyprian share with other writers, there are several points where they cite the same texts in isolation from other writers. For instance, Cassian and Cyprian both place Cornelius in prayer at the ninth hour, and both highlight the angelic messenger who

<sup>29</sup> Or. Or. 32.      <sup>30</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 4; Or. Or. 32.      <sup>32</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 2; Tert. Or. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 4; Tert. Or. 25.      <sup>34</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 7; Tert. Or. 25.

<sup>35</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 1; Tert. Or. 25.      <sup>36</sup> Tert. Or. 25.

<sup>37</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 2.      <sup>38</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 1, 2, 4; Cypr. *Dom. orat.* 34.

tells Cornelius that God had accepted the centurion's prayers.<sup>39</sup> Another distinctive feature of their works is their development of the Christological justification for prayer. Both writers point to Christ's crucifixion at the sixth hour as justification for prayer at that time,<sup>40</sup> and they both develop the redemptive implications of Christ's crucifixion. Cassian states that Christ offered himself as a sacrifice to destroy the sins of the human race, taking on our debt, and thereby achieved victory over the powers and principalities.<sup>41</sup> Cyprian noted that Christ washed away our sins with his blood in order to redeem us, and achieved a victory through his passion.<sup>42</sup> The two writers ground the significance of the sixth hour in Christ's liberating victory. Cyprian is content to assert that the Lord's Passion stretched from the sixth to the ninth hours, but Cassian presses this point further by detailing how Christ descended into hell in the ninth hour and set the captives free.<sup>43</sup>

Two conclusions may be drawn from the preceding observations. The first is that despite the fact that Cassian was familiar with Basil's rules,<sup>44</sup> he chose to follow the line of argument developed by other ecclesiastical writers when justifying his monastic hours. The second point is that for Cyprian, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen, a Christian prayed three times during the day.

This is an important point; as noted above, the desire to see Cassian as the model for the *Regula Benedicti* and the *Regula magistri*, coupled with some muddled information in *De institutis* 3.4–8, is all that leads one to look for seven offices in Cassian. In fact, the evidence is much stronger for a five-office cursus.<sup>45</sup>

This evidence begins with Cassian's first reference to the offices maintained by the Gauls. In *De institutis* 2.2, while making an unfavourable

<sup>39</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3.3.7; Cypr. *Dom. orat.* 33. It should be noted that Cyprian uses the example of Cornelius in a slightly different manner than Cassian: whereas Cassian stresses the time Cornelius received his vision (during prayer at the ninth hour, thus a justification for this hour of prayer), Cyprian offers Cornelius as an example of someone who offered an effectual prayer (which happened to be at the ninth hour). Cyprian's point is that the believer may not pray in a distracted manner, but being in the presence of God, must focus on his task (a theme later developed by Bas. *Reg. br.* 201). This discussion of effectual prayer then leads directly into the hours for prayer, so if we are making a case for dependence, we could argue that it is there already in Cyprian, even though Cassian employed the verse in a slightly different manner.

<sup>40</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3.3.3; Cypr. *Dom. orat.* 34.

<sup>41</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3.3.3.

<sup>42</sup> Cypr. *Dom. orat.* 34.

<sup>43</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3.3.3.

<sup>44</sup> At least Rufinus' translation/codification of the work. It is intriguing to note that Basil's description of the offices (Bas. *Reg. fus.* 37) was not translated by Rufinus. One wonders if the only text Cassian knew was the Rufinian translation.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Hier. *Ep.* 22.37 [CSEL 54: 201.11–14], in which Jerome notes that 'everyone knows that the set hours for prayer are at the third, sixth, and ninth hours, at dawn and in the evening' (*horam tertiam, sextam, nonam, diluculum quoque et uesperam*

comment about the great variation to be found in the Gallic observances, Cassian noted that some of them (the Gauls) had thought it good, 'during the daytime offices of prayers—that is, Terce, Sext, and None—to match the number of psalms to the hour in which the office was rendered'.<sup>46</sup> There is no mention in this chapter of a fourth diurnal office. While Cassian's purpose at this point was not to detail these offices, it is intriguing that a morning office is omitted from the list. It would have posed no problem to add the office of Prime if there had been one. This omission is repeated in *De institutis* 3. 1, where Cassian, having finished his exposition of the nocturnal offices, does take up the task of fleshing out these offices: 'Now the offices of Terce, Sext, and None, which follow the rule of the monasteries of Palestine and Mesopotamia ought to be discussed by us'.<sup>47</sup> Cassian focuses his attention on the diurnal offices, but again there is no mention of a fourth morning office.

As detailed above, in *De institutis* 3. 3, Cassian supported Terce, Sext, and None with biblical proof texts. The parallels with Clement, Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian have already been noted, as has the fact that each of these writers wrote in support of the Christian practice of praying three times each day. Again, if Cassian had a fourth morning office in mind, why did he fail to mention it in any of these places, especially in *De institutis* 3. 3 where he laid out the biblical support for his cursus?

The other significant point to be drawn from this chapter is the fact that after Cassian justified the three diurnal offices, he retraced his steps and

*nemo, qui nesciat*). Other than moving Nocturns forward to dawn, Jerome's description overlaps perfectly with Cassian's recommendations. Unfortunately, Jerome is not consistent in his recommendations. A later letter (*Hier. Ep.* 107. 9 [CSEL 55: 300. 17–20]) to Laeta instructing her on how to raise her daughter as a holy virgin) does seem to have a six-office cursus in mind: 'She ought to become accustomed to rise in the night for prayer and psalms, to sing hymns in the morning, at Terce, Sext, and None to stand in the battle line as one of Christ's warriors, and when the time to light the lamp comes, to render the evening sacrifice' (*et adsuescat exemplo ad orationem et Psalmos nocte consurgere, mane hymnos canere, tertia, sexta, nona hora quasi bellatricem Christi stare in acie, accensaue lucernula reddere sacrificium uerspertinum*). This recommendation is substantiated in the panegyric Jerome writes about Paula (*Hier. Ep.* 108. 19 [CSEL 55: 335. 7–9]). Here, describing the offices kept in Paula's monastery he gives the following cursus: 'In the morning, at the third, the sixth, and the ninth hour, in the evening, and in the middle of the night, they were singing through the Psalter' (*mane, hora tertia, sexta, nona, uespera, noctis medio per ordinem Psalterium canebant*). Similar advice is given to Demetrias in *Hier. Ep.* 130. 15.

<sup>46</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 2. 2 [SC 109: 58. 2. 12–14]: *Sunt quibus in ipsis quoque diurnis orationum officiis, id est tertia, sext, nonaque id uisum est.*

<sup>47</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 1 [SC 109: 92. 1. 3–6]: *Nunc de sollempnitatibus tertiae, sextae nonaeque secundum regulam monasteriorum Palaestinae uel Mesopotamiae nobis est disserendum.*

offered biblical justification for the two nocturnal offices proposed in *De institutis* 2. 6. Five offices are substantiated from the Bible at the end of this chapter. Following this marshalling of proof texts, Cassian drew his chapter to a close with a summary justification. The parable of the vineyard owner (Matt. 20: 1–6) was offered to support the five office cursus. According to Cassian, ‘he [the vineyard owner] is described as having assembled them in the first hour of the morning, the time that denotes our morning office, thereafter at the third, the sixth, and after this the ninth, to the latest, the eleventh, by which the hour of lamp-lighting is signified’.<sup>48</sup>

One problem here might be the fact that Cassian has called the earliest of the offices (Nocturns) a morning office (*matutinam nostram sollemnitatem*). In describing this office in *De institutis* 2, he typically employed the adjective night (*nocturnus*).<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, in this chapter, it is only Cassian’s choice of terms that clouds the issue. Although it would have been more convenient if Cassian had labelled the first office a ‘night office’, his language is intended to cement the correspondence with the language found in the parable of the vineyard owner. This flexible word selection is also found in the earlier verses of this chapter where he linked the nocturnal offices to the twice-daily Temple sacrifices.<sup>50</sup> Vespers corresponded to the evening sacrifice and was further substantiated by the proposition that Christ instituted the Eucharist in the evening and was himself offered as an evening sacrifice the next day. Note that Cassian used the term evening sacrifice (*sacrificium uespertinum*) rather loosely here: he had stated (*De institutis* 3. 3. 3) that Christ had been offered at the sixth hour and had penetrated hell at the ninth hour (3. 3. 6). These precise definitions of time are conflated in 3. 3. 9 under the term evening sacrifice (*sacrificium uespertinum*). Cassian apparently uses evening as a catch-all term to describe any time after the sixth hour.

The same flexibility of language is found in his justification of Nocturns. This office was subsumed under the category of an evening (*uespentinis*) office (3. 3. 9), but when he discussed the two offices individually, Nocturns was labelled a morning office: *matutina sacrificia* (3. 3. 9); *matutina sollemnitate* (3. 3. 10). The biblical precedent for this office was the fact that the Jews had offered a sacrifice in the morning 3. 3. 9. But just as evening was stretched to include the hours after Sext in the case of Christ’s death, so, too, morning was extended to embrace all the hours before the first hour. The text of *De institutis* 3. 3 makes it clear that this *matutina vero sollemnitate*

<sup>48</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 11 [SC 109: 102. 110–14]: *Ita enim et ille primo mane conduxisse describitur, quod tempus designat matutinam nostram sollemnitatem, dein tertia, inde sexta, post haec nona, ad extremum undecima, in qua lucernaris hora signatur.*

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 4; Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 6; Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13.

<sup>50</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3. 9; Num. 28: 4.



does not refer to the new morning office established in *De institutis* 3. 4, but rather is the office of Nocturns that had been presented in *De institutis* 2. 6.

Having noted that Cassian linked Nocturns to the morning sacrifice in the Jewish Temple, it should come as no surprise that he once again called it a morning office. Surely his point was not to specify a time for the office, but rather to make his analogy work (the vineyard owner went out five times during the course of a day to recruit workers for his harvest). Cassian's five offices (which correspond to the vineyard owner's recruiting trips) are Nocturns, Terce, Sext, None, and Vespers. Sealing this interpretation is the fact that the analogy would be shattered if Cassian had intended the morning office to be Prime, for that would have yielded six offices.

The next three chapters contain the problematic recommendations for a new morning office. If these chapters are skipped in order to pursue the current line of investigation, the next chapter that seems to have come from Cassian's pen is *De institutis* 3. 7, which contains the penalties meted out to those who come late to the offices. Once again, five offices are listed: Terce, Sext, and None, and the night gatherings (Vespers and Nocturns are implied).<sup>51</sup> The monk must arrive before the conclusion of the first psalm during the diurnal offices, or before the conclusion of the second psalm at night if he is to avoid the penalty for tardiness. The interpreter is left with two options at this point: either there are no penalties for late arrival to the new morning office, or, on balance a good deal more likely, Cassian did not prescribe a morning office.

Finally, in *De institutis* 3. 11, Cassian claims that on Sundays a special concession is granted the monks: the offices of Terce and Sext are conflated and replaced by an Eucharistic Mass that is celebrated before the noon meal. The point of this relaxation is to provide a break from the normal strict observance, so that the monks will look forward to Sundays. Cassian stated that the monks only have one service before lunch, the mass (*missa*).<sup>52</sup> Moreover, he claimed that this single office was the product of merging Terce and Sext. Once again there is no indication of a morning office. If there had been a morning office, the monks would have had two obligations to fulfil before lunch: the morning office and the Eucharistic Mass. Yet Cassian indicated (*unam tantummodo missam*) that this was not the case.

### Chapters 4–6, and 8

As demonstrated in the preceding section, Cassian enumerated a five-office cursus at five different points in *De institutis*. It has also been noted that

<sup>51</sup> Terce, Sext, None: Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 7. 1 [SC 109: 108. 1]; nocturnal offices: Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 7. 2 [SC 109: 108. 11–12].

<sup>52</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 11 [SC 109: 116. 2]: *unam tantummodo missam*. On the problems of the *missa*, see the discussion below.

outside of *De institutis* 3. 4–6 and 3. 8, there is nothing in Cassian's works that would suggest anything other than a five-office cursus. This section will examine the substance of these dubious chapters. After a brief description of their contents, the chapters will be probed to see if they yield any grounds to suspect their provenance.

As stated above, the addition of a sixth office to the monastic cursus is the subject of *De institutis* 3. 4. In *De institutis* 3. 5, the writer draws a contrast between the Bethlehem practice and the current situation in Gaul (where a morning office has also been adopted, following the Bethlehem model). The problem in Gaul, according to the writer, is that after this morning office, the monks were returning to their beds. This showed that the Gauls had failed to understand the *raison d'être* for this morning office. Prior to its creation, certain monks in Bethlehem had been accustomed to return to bed after the conclusion of Nocturns. Lost in their dreams, they had slumbered until summoned for the next office of prayer (Terce). To counter this tendency to somnolence, a new morning office had been established. This morning office required the Palestinian monks to arise early and stay out of their beds for the rest of the day. The length of their post-Nocturns rest was sharply circumscribed. This new office had solved the problem in Palestine, but it had lost some of its force when transplanted into Gallic monasteries. Although the Gallic ascetics were rising from bed to celebrate the new morning office, they returned to their rest upon its completion, thereby defeating the office's rationale.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, in order to return to bed more quickly, the Gauls were rushing through the office in anticipation of further rest. This was a mistake for reasons that had already been detailed in *De institutis*.<sup>54</sup> The monks who return to sleep either lose the purity they have gained through prayer to the machinations of the Devil, or they will be torpid and sluggish throughout the length of the day. The Egyptians, however, avoided this trap by extending their vigils all the way to dawn, when they began work.

*De institutis* 3. 6 concludes the case for the morning office. The writer notes that although the elders in Bethlehem had added this office, it was not a novelty because they had not changed the order of psalmody. The hymns used in the morning office were sung by the Egyptians at the end of the Nocturns. These are: Psalms 50, 60, 89, and 148. The writer then makes a comment on secular liturgy, stating that Psalm 50 is also sung in the Italian churches in his day, a practice which he believes was derived from the Bethlehem cursus.

*De institutis* 3. 7 seems genuine. It simply offers the penances exacted for tardiness at either the diurnal or the nocturnal offices. Oddly, in view of the fact

<sup>53</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 5.

<sup>54</sup> A reference to Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13.

that the writer had just written three chapters in support of a new morning office, that office is not listed with Terce, Sext, and None in this chapter.

*De institutis* 3. 8 expands a reference made in *De institutis* 3. 4, where the writer had noted the change made 'especially on those days in which an extremely oppressive weariness was produced in those who celebrated the watches of the evening hours up until the neighbourhood of dawn'.<sup>55</sup> In this chapter the writer explains that reference by stipulating the practices that guide the Sabbath vigil. Every Friday evening the monks keep a watch through the night, that ends (in the winter) at the fourth cock crow, so that the monks may return to bed for two hours before rising to celebrate the morning office. This concession is granted so that the monks may take a little sleep and thereby have energy for the work of the following day. The body is otherwise unable to function, and will be overburdened with weariness if it is denied this rest. A period of sleep that is as short as even a single hour will preserve all the good that was won by staying awake through the night. Stretching the vigil all the way to dawn is considered an irrational act. A three-part office is prescribed, and the monks are allowed to sit during the office to alleviate weariness.

### The problem of sleep

The provision for a special time of sleep after the office of Nocturns (or an all-night vigil in the case of 3. 8) is the common thread joining *De institutis* 3. 4–6 and the first part of 3. 8. This provision was contraindicated by the sharp warnings against post-Nocturns sleep found in *De institutis* 2. 13. These warnings are actually an extension of a theme that closed *De institutis* 2. 12. Cassian had concluded his discussion of Nocturns by noting that after the prayers were finished, the monks returned to their cells where they did not relax into sleep, but rather remained awake and prayed until dawn. At this time, they began their day's work.<sup>56</sup>

*De institutis* 2. 13 opened with a statement of just how serious the issue of sleep was for Cassian: 'if we desire perfection, then we must agree to diligently observe the same practice'.<sup>57</sup> The practice is that of staying awake after Nocturns. Although Cassian had stated in a number of places that he was

<sup>55</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 4. 2 [SC 109: 104. 20–2]: *in his praesertim diebus, quibus a uespertinis horis excubias usque ad aurorae uiciniam celebrantibus nascebatur onerosior lassitudo.*

<sup>56</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 12. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13. 1 [SC 109: 82. 4–5]: *Quod nos quoque, si perfectioni studemus, eadem diligentia conuenit obseruare.*

going to water down the stricter Egyptian observance for the weaker Gauls,<sup>58</sup> he did not compromise on the provision of a morning rest in *De institutis* 2.

Two reasons are advanced to support the practice of a post-Nocturns watch. The first is that sleep lowers a monk's defences. The spiritual benefit that a monk gains by rising to celebrate Nocturns may be easily dispersed once he slips back into sleep, the state in which Satan can poison a monk's mind with impure dreams. Consequently, the monk is better off to remain awake after Nocturns, guarding his thoughts against the attacks of a jealous enemy.<sup>59</sup>

The second reason is that the desire to snatch more sleep is actually a form of spiritual sloth. It makes a monk lazy, and engenders a torpor that will blunt his acuity for the rest of the day. The true monk resists the demands of sleep, just as he fights his other carnal urges. A similar line of reasoning may be found in Basil's directives concerning sleep. The Cappadocian Father saw the desire for excessive sleep as a symptom of spiritual sickness. The monk who was lazy in his devotion to the pursuit of God would inevitably discover sleep stealing up on him.<sup>60</sup> A craving for sleep was a sign of spiritual sloth. The soul could make no progress toward God while the body dozed. Sleep was so fundamentally opposed to the monastic vocation that a monk should be grateful when he received the summons from the monk whose duty it was to wake the brothers for prayer.<sup>61</sup>

Sleep has an interesting (and perhaps under-studied) place in the accounts of Egyptian monasticism. Victory over the need to sleep was as pivotal an ascetic discipline as fasting. The Egyptian sources contain stories about the ascetic battle against sleep, and the greatest of the fathers are portrayed as having limited its claim on their lives. One representative account concerns the famous monk Arsenius. Daniel (his disciple) reported that Arsenius' usual custom was to pass the entire night without sleeping, and when morning came, would say to sleep, 'Come here wicked servant' and then sleep for an hour.<sup>62</sup>

The goal of the monk was an ascent to God, transcending the bodily needs that bound him to the material world. The incredible feats of asceticism described in the sources — the unceasing prayer, prolonged fasting, meagre fare, and sleepless vigils — were designed to demonstrate how completely the masters of asceticism had shifted their lives into the spiritual plane. They were imitators of the angels, those spiritual beings who neither ate nor slept, but rather spent all of their time engaged in the unceasing worship of God.

<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the addition of three diurnal offices represents a modification for Gauls of the more pristine two-office Egyptian system (Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 2).

<sup>59</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13. 1–2.

<sup>60</sup> Bas. *Reg. br.* 32.

<sup>61</sup> Bas. *Reg. br.* 43.

<sup>62</sup> *Apophth. Patr.* Arsenius 14. Arsenius also asserts that a monk only requires an hour of sleep every night if 'he is a good fighter' (*Apophth. Patr.* Arsenius 15).

The conflict between sleep and the angelic life was illustrated in Palladius' account of his ascetic instructor, Dorotheus. Palladius claimed that he never saw Dorotheus lay down on a mat to sleep.<sup>63</sup> To the contrary, Dorotheus' custom was to stay awake all night, praying and weaving palm ropes. Palladius, wanting to know if this had always been the old man's practice, questioned Dorotheus' other disciples about the master. These men averred that Dorotheus had never voluntarily taken a rest, but slept only when overpowered by drowsiness. Sometimes his treacherous foe would seize him while eating, and food would fall out of his mouth as Dorotheus slipped into an uneasy slumber. On one occasion Palladius tried to convince his master to lay down for a rest, and Dorotheus replied, 'If you succeed in persuading angels to sleep, then you will also persuade the zealous man.'<sup>64</sup>

These stories offer a context for the views Cassian expressed about sleep. His recommendations in *De institutis* 2. 13 were firmly rooted in the Egyptian ethos. Sleep was a barrier to spiritual progress. It was a form of spiritual sloth and represented a dangerous time when the enemy could pollute the unguarded mind. Cassian's identification with this view is also confirmed with a story drawn from *De institutis* 5. Here he recounts an instance when he was caught sleeping after the evening office (*uespertina sollempnitate*) by Abba Theodore. 'Oh John,' said the old man sadly, 'How many at this hour are conversing with God and embracing him to themselves and retaining his company? Yet you are cheated out of such great glory, lost in the stupor of sleep.'<sup>65</sup> Time lost in sleep was time stolen by Satan, time in which the monk made no spiritual progress. This proposition is also substantiated in *Collationes*, where Cassian notes that three, or at most, four hours of sleep were all that a monk required.<sup>66</sup>

The writer of the *De institutis* 3. 4–6, 8 does not seem to share this view of sleep. To the contrary, sleep was a necessity, something a monk required if he was to function during the day, rather than a seductive pleasure that impeded spiritual growth. Sleep snatched between the end of Nocturns and the beginning of the new morning office was permissible; sleep must

<sup>63</sup> See also *Apophth. Patr.* Bessarion 6, where the old man claims to have slept standing or sitting for fourteen years.

<sup>64</sup> Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 2. 3 [Butler (1904): 18. 1–2]: 'Εὰν πέισης τοὺς ἀγγέλους κοιμηθῆναι, πείσεις καὶ τὸν σπουδαῖον. See also *Apophth. Patr.* Poemon 185, where the old man claims that he cannot do without food, clothing, or sleep, but he can restrict his dependence on these things. A similar emphasis on limiting the bodily need for sleep may be found in *Apophth. Patr.* Sarmatas 3.

<sup>65</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5. 35 [SC 109: 246. 7–10]: *quanti, inquit, o Iohannes, hora hac Deo conloquuntur eumque in semet ipsis amplectuntur ac retinent: et tu fraudaris tanto lumine, inertis sopore resolutus?*

<sup>66</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 12. 15; Cassian, *Coll.* 13. 6.

be taken at the end of the Sabbath vigil if the monk was to avoid torpor and weariness in the next day (advice that is diametrically opposed to what was offered in *De institutis* 2. 13). Clearly a very different frame of reference undergirds the recommendations of *De institutis* 3. 4–6, 8.

These disputed chapters contradict Cassian's earlier statements. What is extremely odd, is that when *De institutis* 3. 5 is examined closely, it appears to be a reworking of *De institutis* 2. 13, but a reworking that reaches a different conclusion. Certain key phrases in *De institutis* 3. 5 have simply been copied from *De institutis* 2, and then redeployed like a cento to support an entirely different view. This becomes evident in the clause that offers the first reason for avoiding morning sleep: *ne purificationem nostram confessione supplici et antelucanis orationibus adquisitam*.<sup>67</sup> This clause marks the start of the dependence on *De institutis* 2. 13: *Prima, ne forte purificationem nostram nocturnis psalmis et orationibus adquisitam*.<sup>68</sup>

The next clause, *uel emergens quaedam redundantia umorum naturalium polluat*,<sup>69</sup> may have been drawn from a later work; Cassian had not written about the problem of the nocturnal emissions to this point, and his fullest discussion of the subject occurs in *Collationes* 12. 8, where we find the phrase: *per soporem caro eius uelut redundantiam superflui umoris expellat, condicionem modumque naturae certissime deprehendet, et ita cum expegefactus inuenerit carnem suam post longa tempora se inscio atque ignorante pollutam*.<sup>70</sup> It is possible that the writer of this text, familiar with Cassian's later work on nocturnal emissions, thought that this was a danger Cassian would have brought out in his discussion. Nevertheless, Cassian had not mentioned this problem. The inclusion of this statement might actually point to the same sort of anachronistic carelessness that led to a miscounting of offices in the preceding chapter. Of course it is also possible, if these lines are by Cassian, that he is simply anticipating his later discussion.

The next clause (in *De institutis* 3. 5) lists the illusions stirred up by the Devil as potential polluters of purity during sleep: *uel inlusio corrumpat inimici*.<sup>71</sup> This brings us back to the reasons Cassian had listed for the dangers of sleep in *De institutis* 2. 13: *inuidus inimicus... quadam somni inlusione contaminet*.<sup>72</sup>

Another worry, that the restoration of sleep itself can cool spiritual fervour: *uel certe intercedens etiam puri ac simplicis somni refectio interrumpat*

<sup>67</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 5. 1 [SC 109: 106. 10–11].

<sup>68</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13 [SC 109: 82. 6–7].

<sup>69</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 5. 1 [SC 109: 106. 11–12].

<sup>70</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 12. 8 [SC 54: 135. 9–13].

<sup>71</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 5. 1 [SC 109: 106. 12–3].

<sup>72</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13. 1 [SC 109: 82. 7–9].

*spiritus nostri feruorem*<sup>73</sup> is matched by a phrase from *De institutis* 2. 13: *intercedens etiam purus sopor*.<sup>74</sup> This can lead to a spiritual torpor that will stretch throughout the day: *ac tepefactos somni torpore per totum diei spatium inertes deinceps ignauosque traducat*,<sup>75</sup> another phrase paralleled by *segnemque torporem inferens menti per totum diei spatium uigorem eius obtundat*.<sup>76</sup>

The next sentence of *De institutis* 3. 5 follows the thought of 2. 13, although it does not contain the strong verbal parallels found above. Both sentences state that after the completion of Nocturns (*missa canonica* in this verse, *orationum canonicarum* in 2. 13), the Egyptians do not return to sleep, but rather prolong their private prayers to daybreak. At this time they begin the day's work. Where Cassian had condemned the practice of returning to bed after Nocturns, the writer of this chapter states that the unlawful practice was to return to bed after the new morning office — the resumption of sleep after Nocturns was fine. No attempt is made to reconcile this new directive with what had been offered in *De institutis* 2. 13.

Another contradiction of *De institutis* 2. 13 may be found in *De institutis* 3. 8. Rather than contributing to torpor, the writer claims that the extra period of sleep is necessary to avoid sluggishness throughout the rest of the day.<sup>77</sup> The period of sleep after the long vigil is not a time of spiritual danger, but rather is required if the monk is to function at peak efficiency over the next day. This inconsistency is followed in the next chapter (3. 9), by an argument that would seem to oppose this practice. Here Cassian noted that the Sabbath vigil was observed to commemorate Christ's crucifixion. On the night that Christ was crucified, the distraught disciples watched throughout the entire night, *granting no rest of sleep to their eyes*.<sup>78</sup> Because of this precedent, a special office was appointed to commemorate this night on a weekly basis, and it is kept *in the same way*, to this day, throughout the east.<sup>79</sup> The disciples did not return to their beds after the vigil — they granted no rest of sleep to their eyes. If the monks celebrated the office in the same way, as Cassian asserted that they did, then clearly they would not be allowed to return to their beds at the conclusion of the Sabbath vigil.

<sup>73</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 5. 1 [SC 109: 106. 13–15]

<sup>74</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13. 3 [SC 109: 82. 20].

<sup>75</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 5. 1 [SC 109: 106. 15–16].

<sup>76</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13. 3 [SC 109: 82.21–3].

<sup>77</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 8. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 9. 1 [SC 109: 112. 6–7]: *nullatenus quietis somnum suis oculis indulgentes*.

<sup>79</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 9. 1 [SC 109: 112. 9–10]: *in hodiernum diem per uniuersum Orientem similiter obseruatur*.

### Benedict and the Master

It was suggested above that modern interpretations of Cassian's *cursus* are skewed by the fact that both Benedict and the Master recommended an arrangement of eight offices. It was also proposed that the first step in an unbiased examination of Cassian would be to stop viewing Cassian through the window of these later developments and consider the *cursus* he advanced based on the evidence that may be drawn from his work. This has been the burden of the preceding sections of this appendix.

Nevertheless, there are some interesting observations to be drawn from an examination of the later rules: Benedict, unlike the Master, but following Cassian, does not allow his monks to return to bed after Nocturns. 'In the time remaining after Vigils, those who need to learn some of the Psalter or readings should study them.'<sup>80</sup> Both Benedict and Cassian believed that the period following Vigils was to be employed constructively, not wasted in sleep.

This advice stands in stark contrast to that offered by the anonymous Master, who permitted the monks in his monastery to return to bed after celebrating the office of Matins. After the extra rest offered by this nap, the brothers would be fresh for both work and prayer throughout the remainder of the day. This practice was justified by the example of a certain St Helenus, who was said to have taken a rest after Matins.<sup>81</sup>

Adalbert de Vogüé's demonstration that Benedict used the Master's rule in formulating his own work has been widely accepted for more than twenty-five years.<sup>82</sup> If, as has been suggested, Benedict relied upon the Master, what does his deviation from the Master on the issue of post-Nocturns sleep suggest? One wonders if he might not be looking back to an earlier text, perhaps Cassian's unaltered text, which offered an extensive justification for not returning to bed after Nocturns.

It should also be noted that the disputed chapters in Cassian broadly correspond to the Master's views on sleep (as expressed in the quote above). The brothers should have no qualms about returning to sleep, according to the Master. There is apparently no danger of satanic pollution. Moreover, the extra period of sleep ensures that the monk will be rested for the work of

<sup>80</sup> Ben. Reg. 8. 3 [SC 182: 508. 4–6]: *Quod uero restat post uigilias a fratribus qui psalterii uel lectionum aliquid indigent meditationi inseruiatur.*

<sup>81</sup> Reg. Mag. 33.

<sup>82</sup> Although not universally accepted. See the objections raised in: Dunn, *Mastering Benedict*, 567–93, and Marilyn Dunn, 'The Master and Saint Benedict: A Rejoinder,' *English Historical Review* 107 (1992), 104–11, as well as the response to these arguments in Vogüé, *The Master*, 95–103.



the day that follows, a sentiment that corresponds to *De institutis* 3. 5 and 3. 8, and contradicts *De institutis* 2. 13.

Another point may be drawn from the Master's legislation: according to the Master, the proper time for the Nocturns office was determined seasonally in relationship to the cockcrow (*cantum pullorum*).<sup>83</sup> Benedict, on the other hand, placed Nocturns at the eighth hour of the night.<sup>84</sup> In this, Benedict is much closer to Cassian, who in *De institutis* 2. 17 stated that the monks are summoned to Nocturns by a monk who remains awake all night, praying and keeping track of the time by the movement of the stars until the appropriate hour arrives. Astronomy, not agriculture, was the basis for starting the office.

A search of all of Cassian's works (*De institutis*, *Collationes*, and *De incarnatione*) for references to roosters reveals that a similar term (*gallorum cantum*) is used in only four places: three times in *De institutis*, and once in *Collationes*. The single use of the term in *Collationes* comes in a discussion attributed to Abba Theonas, in which the old man ties the beginning of Easter (and the cessation of a fast) to the cock's crow at dawn.<sup>85</sup> The three uses of the term in *De institutis* all occur in the disputed chapters of *De institutis* 3. In *De institutis* 3. 5, the writer states that the Egyptians are accustomed to rise, 'even before the cocks' crow' (*etiam ante gallorum cantum*) in order to participate in Nocturns. In *De institutis* 3. 6, the writer notes that the Nocturns are customarily ended after the cocks' crow (*post gallorum cantum*). Finally, in *De institutis* 3. 8, the elders are said to limit the Nocturns to the fourth cocks' crow (*quartum gallorum cantum*) during the winter months so that the monks can get more sleep.

Cassian's undisputed chapters and Benedict agree in the assignment of the start of Nocturns to an hour of the night. The disputed chapters and the Master both measure time by the cock's crow. Again there is the suggestion of Benedict agreeing with Cassian against the Master. These correspondences between the *Regula magistri* and Cassian's disputed chapters (against the correspondences between Benedict and the undisputed Cassianic text) provide the basis for an extremely tentative suggestion about the provenance of the changes made to Cassian's work. Perhaps the text was changed in sixth-century Italy, in the same monastic milieu that produced the Master's work.

While speculative, the proposal that *De institutis* 3. 4–6, 8 were inserted in an Italian monastery also has the merit of making sense of the odd sentence that closes *De institutis* 3. 6, in which the writer stated that in his day, Psalm 50 was used in all the churches throughout Italy.<sup>86</sup> It is not immediately apparent

<sup>83</sup> The cock's crow is mentioned several times in *Reg. Mag.* 33.

<sup>84</sup> Ben. *Reg.* 8. <sup>85</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 21. 25. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 6 [SC 109: 108. 13–15]: *Denique per Italiam hodieque consummatis matutinis hymnis quinquagensimus psalmus in uniuersis ecclesiis canitur.*

why Gallic monks would be persuaded to adopt a practice based on its universal use in Italian churches. On the other hand, this sentence certainly could be read as an unconscious slip by a later writer working in an Italian context, who was trying to provide a precedent for a later Italian practice.<sup>87</sup>

### Suspect words

The presence of a rooster in Cassian's disputed chapters is suspicious. In concluding the contextual analysis of these chapters, it should also be noted that there are two other terms that strike one as anachronistic insertions rather than genuine Cassianic prose. These words are *missa* and *hymnus*.

*Missa* is the most problematic of the pair. In later centuries the church used the word to signify the Eucharistic Mass, but this was a gradual transformation of meaning that had only begun to be adopted in Cassian's time.<sup>88</sup> The earliest term the church used for the Eucharist was the 'Lord's Supper' (κυριακὸν δεῖπνον).<sup>89</sup> In the first century, this ceremony came to be called the Eucharist (εὐχαριστία).<sup>90</sup> In the Latin West, writers used the terms *oblatio* and *sacrificium* to describe this event.<sup>91</sup> According to Jungmann, *oblatio* was the standard name for the mass. This did not begin to change until the sixth century.<sup>92</sup>

*Missa* from the Latin verb *mitto* originally meant 'sending out or sending away'. In late Latin it signified the dismissal from a service.<sup>93</sup> This service was not necessarily ecclesiastical as the term was also used to describe people leaving law courts. St Avitus of Vienne (c.500) noted that the *missa* was pronounced in the churches and in the palaces or praetor's courts when the people were sent away from the event.<sup>94</sup>

The one time Cassian employs the word in *Collationes*, it serves as a participle ('sent').<sup>95</sup> A similar use may be found in the single instance of the word in *De incarnatione*.<sup>96</sup> The limited usage of *missa* in these two

<sup>87</sup> The same sort of slip has already been noted in the numbering of the monastic offices.

<sup>88</sup> For the connection between *missa* and the Eucharistic Mass, see, Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite* (London, 1959), 129–33; F. Brunner, 'Roman Mass,' *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* 9 (1967), 414.

<sup>89</sup> 1 Ep. Cor. 11: 20 [UBS 4: 592].

<sup>90</sup> See, for instance, *Did.* 9. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Jungmann, *Mass*, 130.

<sup>92</sup> Jungmann, *Mass*, 130.

<sup>93</sup> Isid. *Orig.* 6. 19. 4. Egeria (*Pereg.* 24. 3) describes the end of the mixed morning service in Constantinople (monks, virgins, and laity) as a *missa*.

<sup>94</sup> Alcim. *Ep.* 1.

<sup>95</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* 18. 16 [SC 64: 36. 19].

<sup>96</sup> Cassian, *Incarn.* 7. 11 [CSEL 17: 367. 10]: 'Having been sent by God' (*a deo missa*).

lengthy texts would seem to suggest that Cassian did not use the term very often in his writing, but to the contrary, the word occurs ten times in *De institutis*. In five of these instances, he uses the term in the way just described, to signify dismissal from some event.<sup>97</sup>

Of the other five occurrences of this word in *De institutis*, one seems to refer to the Eucharistic Mass, and the other four to monastic offices. In *De institutis* 3. 11, Cassian states that on Sunday, only one Mass is celebrated before lunch.<sup>98</sup> The connection between *missa* and the Eucharist was not well established by the time Cassian wrote, although Ambrose had used the term in this way.<sup>99</sup> Since Cassian was referring to the service where the monks received communion, it may be possible that the term was coming into use at this time.<sup>100</sup> Such a usage is rare in late fourth- and early fifth-century writers, but Ambrose does offer a precedent for it.

The other four occurrences of *missa* in *De institutis* are very peculiar. It is apparent from the context in which these terms appear that *missa* is intended to mean office. Significantly, all four of these occurrences are in disputed passages.<sup>101</sup> What makes this usage even odder is that *sollemnitatis* is the word Cassian normally uses for office.<sup>102</sup> The sudden appearance of the *missa* in *De institutis* 3. 4–8 is suspicious. This sense of disquiet is further heightened by the observation that there is another place where *missa* occurs in *De institutis*, a place that is almost certainly the work of a later hand: *missa* appears, meaning office, in some of the chapter headings that have been inserted into the extant manuscripts of *De institutis*. The chapter title for *De institutis* 2. 13, for instance, reads *Quare post missam nocturnam dormire non oporteat*.<sup>103</sup> Significantly, the chapter itself does not use the word *missa*. Nor does *De institutis* 2. 15, which bears a similar title.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>97</sup> In Cassian's classic story on vainglory, the elder claims that he had arrived just as the younger monk was dismissing his imaginary catechumens *modo, inquiens, ueni, quando tu missam catechumenis celebrabas* (Cassian, *Inst.* 11. 16 [SC 109: 442. 17–18] [two instances in this chapter]). Also in Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 7; Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 3; Cassian, *Inst.* 7. 27.

<sup>98</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 11 [SC 109: 116. 1–2]: *die dominica unam tantummodo missam ante prandium celebrari*.

<sup>99</sup> Ambr. *Ep.* 5. 33.

<sup>100</sup> Of course it is equally possible that a later copyist altered whatever term Cassian might have selected to *missa*.

<sup>101</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 5; 3. 6; 3. 8. 2 (twice).

<sup>102</sup> A short list from just the undisputed chapters of Book 3 would include: Cassian, *Inst.* 3. 1; 3. 2. 3; 3. 3. 1; 3. 7. 1; 3. 9. 2, 3. Additional examples could be added from *De Institutis* 2.

<sup>103</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 13 [SC 109: 56].

<sup>104</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 2. 15 [SC 109: 56]: *Qua lege modestiae post orationum missam unusquisque ad suam cellulam redeat, et cui increpationi subdatur is qui aliter fecerit*.

In these titles, which were added by a later hand,<sup>105</sup> *missa* has been inserted as an anachronism. It was not Cassian's term, but one placed in the text by whomever added the headings, writing at a time when the monastic office was called a *missa*. If this conjecture holds, then the view that *De institutis* 3. 4–6; 8 are also the work of a later hand is further strengthened by the presence of this word in them.

Another word that may be significant is the word *hymnus*. Despite the fact that Cassian wrote extensively about the offices and psalmody, the word *hymnus* only occurs four times in Cassian's works. Two of these occurrences are in the disputed *De institutis* 3. 6. 2 and 3. 6. 4. Another occurrence is to be found in *De institutis* 4. 19. The final use of the word is in *Collationes* 21. 26, where it is used in reference to men (the context suggests that they are not monks) who, upon rising, offer the first fruits of their day to the Lord by singing hymns, praying, or hurrying to church. Although there is an obvious parallel between the worldly men who rise and sing hymns before embarking on the day's business, and monks engaged in the office of Nocturns, Cassian is discussing the monastic offices in this chapter. He uses the word *hymnus* simply to describe something that Christians sing, rather than as a term that is broadly equivalent to monastic psalmody (as it is used in our disputed chapters). The *hymnus* plays no part in his other discussions of the monastic offices. Once again, the curious use of a term that would gain currency in later usage is suspicious.

### A Statistical investigation of Chadwick's proposal

As noted above, Chadwick's explanation for the problems found in *De institutis* 3. 4–6 were advanced with some hesitation. He suggested that without a new manuscript find to corroborate his view, the theory would have to remain tenuous. The preceding sections of this appendix have considered the place of these chapters within the overarching context of

<sup>105</sup> In the course of producing his critical edition, J. C. Guy consulted the oldest extant manuscript of *De institutis*. This manuscript, a sixth-century palimpsest, is located in the Biblioteca nazionale de Turin, *Codex F-IV-1 N.16*. This partial work contains fragments of *De institutis* 4. 40–41, 6. 1, and 7. 30–8. 1. Guy noted that while this manuscript did not add anything significant to the later texts, it did support a hypothesis advanced by Petschenig, that the book and chapter headings we find in most manuscripts were added by a later hand. Petschenig had suspected this possibility based on the absence of the headings in his oldest manuscript, *Casinensis Rescriptus* 295. The absence of these headings in *Codex F-IV-1 N.16* led Guy to confirm Petschenig's view that the headings were a seventh-century addition for the convenience of later readers (Jean Claude Guy, *Jean Cassien: Institutions cénobitiques*, SC 109 [Paris: Cerf, 1965], 14).

Cassian's work. As has been demonstrated, there are good contextual reasons to doubt the Cassianic authorship of these chapters.

Although there have been no new manuscript finds to cast fresh light on this question, the past thirty-three years have witnessed the development of computer-based, statistical methodologies for the determination of authorship. One of the best of these methods, an application of multivariate statistics, was developed by John Burrows and described in a series of papers in the early 1990s. This method allows a researcher to distinguish between the works of different authors with exquisite accuracy; in the absence of a new manuscript find, this methodology may be employed to shed new light on the question of the disputed chapters in *De institutis*.

### Background

The quest for a statistical methodology to allow researchers to solve questions of authorship dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Modern stylometry began with the suggestion of Augustus de Morgan (in 1851) that a measure of the average length of words in a text might be used to discriminate between authors. This average was attained by dividing the total number of characters found in a text by the number of words in the text. While this suggestion seems reasonable (some authors habitually use polysyllabic words while others employ simpler and shorter words), it did not prove to be a credible methodology. Years after making this suggestion, it was discovered that the average word length of texts often varied by genre. Consequently, different works by the same author might demonstrate variations in average word lengths, an observation that invalidated this test for authorship attribution.

The next step forward came in 1938 when statistician G. Udney Yule studied sentence length distributions in the writings of various authors. He discovered that authors tended to employ a consistent mix of sentence lengths, which given a large enough sample, could be quantified. The distribution of sentences provided an authorial fingerprint that could be used to suggest authorship. Yule's methodology was applied to the problem of the anonymous *Imitation of Christ*. Two authors had been proposed for this work, Thomas à Kempis and Jean Charlier de Gerson. Yule calculated the sentence length distributions for the known works of both authors, and then compared these distributions to the distribution for *The Imitation of Christ*. Yule concluded that à Kempis was more likely to have been the author of the work than Gerson.<sup>106</sup> A further refinement to this

<sup>106</sup> G. Udney Yule, 'On Sentence-Length as a Statistical Characteristic of Style in Prose: With Application to Two Cases of Disputed Authorship,' *Biometrika* 30 (1938), 377.

approach was to be found in W. C. Wake's study of sentence length in Greek authors. Building on the work of Yule, Wake's research revealed that Greek authors tended to write sentences that fell into certain patterns of sentence distributions that could be used to differentiate between authors.<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately, this technique was not completely reliable; one of its great problems (especially with unpunctuated classical texts) was the definition of exactly what a sentence was. Moreover, the technique also suffered when making comparisons across different genres.

The next advance in statistical methodology was the landmark study of the *Federalist Papers* conducted by Moesteller and Wallace. The *Federalist Papers* are a collection of articles written to develop support for the United States Constitution. These eighty-five essays were published anonymously under the pseudonym 'Publius'. Two days before his death in a duel with Aaron Burr (1804), Alexander Hamilton left a list that revealed the names of the three authors who had contributed to the collection. The three authors were Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. Several years after Hamilton's death, one of Madison's friends challenged this list, stating that Madison had actually written some of the papers claimed by Hamilton. As a result of this counterclaim, the authorship of twelve of the *Federalist Papers* was no longer certain, and the question of correct attribution exercised literary critics and historians for the next century.

Moesteller and Wallace decided to use computer stylometry to attack the attribution problem. Their approach was to develop a list of seventy function words that were found in each of the tracts of the *Federalist Papers*. They defined a function word as one that holds a sentence together: articles, prepositions, pronouns, and other particles. These words are found in all forms of writing; their frequency of use is not likely to vary between genres or works that treat different subjects. From this list of function words, Moesteller and Wallace then identified the words that proved useful in discriminating between Madison and Hamilton's undisputed works. By analysing the relative frequencies of these discriminators in the twelve disputed papers, Moesteller and Wallace demonstrated that Madison had actually written the unattributed papers.<sup>108</sup>

A revolution in stylometric studies came in 1987, when John Burrows began to publish a series of papers describing a new, multivariate technique

<sup>107</sup> William Wake, 'Sentence-Length Distributions of Greek Authors,' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A* 120 (1957), 345.

<sup>108</sup> A detailed description of this project may be found in Ivor Francis, 'An Exposition of a Statistical Approach to the Federalist Dispute,' in *The Computer and Literary Style*, edited by J. Leed (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1966), 38–77.

for authorship analysis.<sup>109</sup> Burrows' technique represents the closest that statisticians and textual critics have come to finding the 'holy grail' of authorship attribution tools, and is now 'the standard first port-of-call for attributional problems in stylometry'.<sup>110</sup>

The fundamental premise underlying the methodologies of Moesteller, Wallace, and Burrows, is the idea that authors tend to use certain words at constant rates. The Burrows Method exploits this tendency in a manner that is more mathematically sophisticated than the method employed by Moesteller and Wallace. The Burrows Method projects text samples into multi-dimensional space and groups them by their proximity to one another in this space. A brief illustration of this concept may prove helpful.

For instance, let us suppose that an analyst wished to compare three text samples. Each sample is 1,000 words long. A fairly crude way to judge the similarity between the samples would be to compare the frequency of a single word across the three texts. If the texts were in English, one could count and compare the instances of the word *and*. Let it be supposed, (somewhat arbitrarily) that *and* occurs 11 times in the first text sample, 21 times in the second, and 23 times in the third. These three data points can be plotted on a single line as shown in Figure 1. In this univariate representation of the three texts it is evident that text 2 and text 3 are more alike than text 1 and text 2, or text 1 and text 3.

A second variable may be added to the graph. Here the occurrences of the word *but* will be counted for each text. Again, let us suppose that the word *but* occurs 15 times in text 1, 30 times in text 2, and 28 times in text 3. This bivariate data can be plotted on two axes of a graph (Figure 2). The frequency of the word *and* is plotted on the x-axis and the frequency of the word *but* is placed on the y-axis. Again, by visual inspection, it is clear that text 2 and text 3 are more similar to each other than they are to text 1.

An initial foray into multivariate space is made with the addition of a third word, *the*. In this case we shall assume that the word *the* occurs 8, 19, and 27 times, respectively. The frequency of this third word is now plotted on the z-axis of the graph, yielding a representation in three-dimensional space

<sup>109</sup> See John F. Burrows, 'Not Unless You Ask Nicely: The Interpretative Nexus Between Analysis and Information,' *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 7 (1992), 91–109, for a complete description of his technique. I am grateful to Professor Burrows for his willingness to read this chapter, in order to validate my conclusions and ensure that I had not misunderstood his technique.

<sup>110</sup> David Holmes, 'The Evolution of Stylometry in Humanities Scholarship,' *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 13 (1998), 114. Holmes also cites a number of studies that have employed the technique.

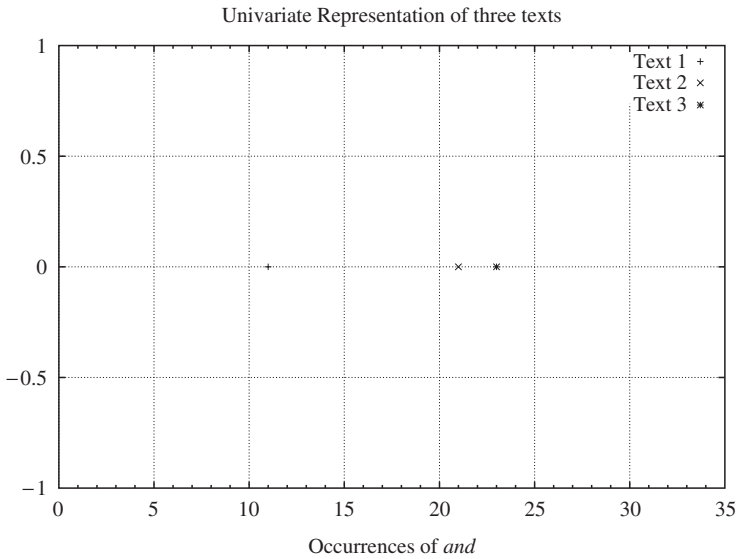


Figure 1: Univariate representation of three texts

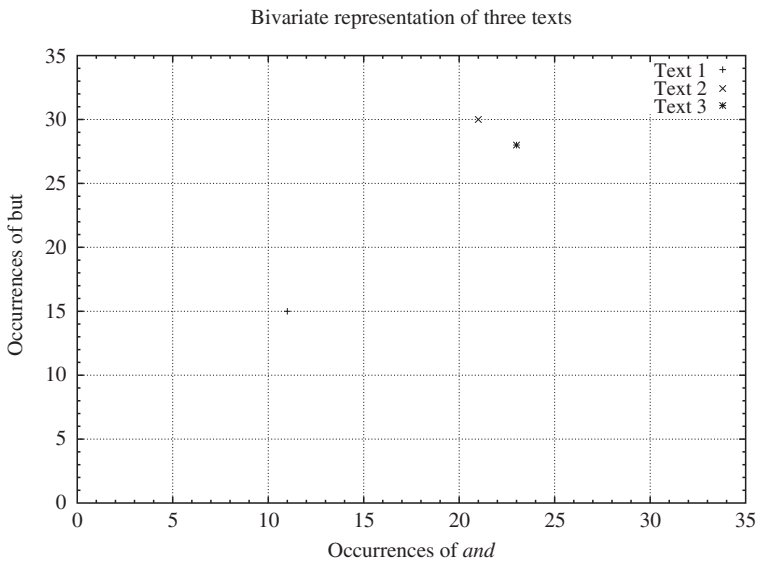
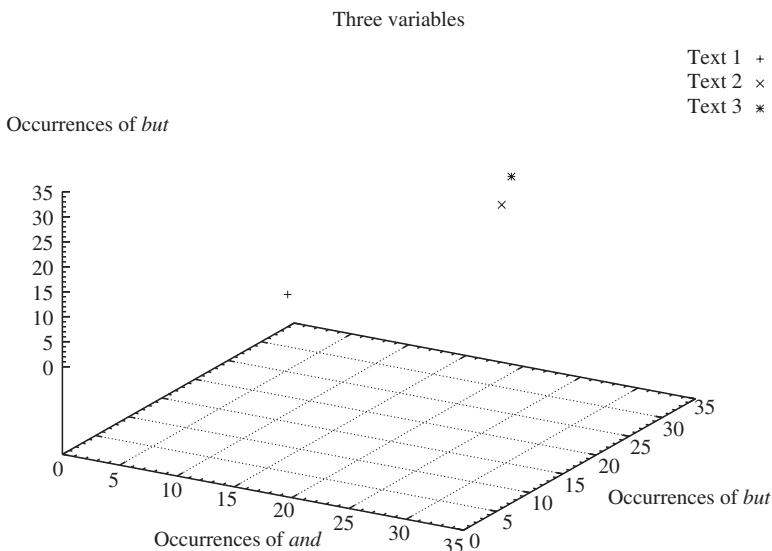


Figure 2: Bivariate representation of three texts





**Figure 3:** Three-dimensional representation of three texts

(Figure 3). Once again, text 2 and text 3 appear more alike in their word usage than either text 1 and 2, or text 1 and 3. Additional words may be added to the list indefinitely; unfortunately, once the number of variables passes beyond three words, the human ability to visualize the additional dimensions fails. Nevertheless, using Euclidean distance formulas, the multivariate distances between points may still be measured mathematically. This is the fundamental principle underlying the Burrows Method: text samples that are similar will be close to one another when projected into multidimensional space.

In order to conduct an analysis of one or more texts using the Burrows Method, the subject texts are divided into blocks of a consistent length.<sup>111</sup> In the following examples, each text has been divided into blocks that are 1,000 words long. All of the words in the sample texts are then counted by the computer, and a list of the most common words, sorted in descending order

<sup>111</sup> As a general rule of thumb, the procedure works better with larger samples, as small aberrations are smoothed out over the course of a longer text. In the study of *De institutis* 1–4, 1,000-word text blocks were used. This length was selected because the questionable text sample (*De institutis* 3. 4–6, 8) totals 1,017 words. The Burrows Method, as will be demonstrated below, is able to separate samples of known authors, even with blocks this small.

**Table 3:** The most common words in *De institutis*, 1–4

Word	Number of occurrences
et	287
in	264
non	199
vel	178
ad	160
ut	155
ac	137
quae	115
cum	100
est, sed, quod, qui, per, etiam	99–90
de, si, quam, atque, ab, ne, pro	89–60
a, ita, nec, eius, quoque, ex, hoc, secundum,	
enim, quidem, haec, se	59–40
his, eum, nos, quibus, quo, velut, usque,	39–30
esse, id, huius, post, sunt	
scilicet, ea, hac, nisi	29–20

by frequency, is produced. Table 3 shows the fifty most common words in *De institutis* 1–4.

Assuming that these words are suitable for use in the analysis,<sup>112</sup> the computer is then instructed to tally the number of times each of these words occurs in each 1,000-word text block. The resulting data matrix is standardized for each word in the list (converting the frequency scores for each word into standard units with a mean of zero), and a principal components analysis is conducted on the table.<sup>113</sup> The two primary principal

<sup>112</sup> It has been my practice to eliminate words that are context sensitive from consideration when conducting a study of this type. Context-sensitive words would include nouns, most adjectives, and most verbs. These types of words are often related to the subject matter of the text under consideration. If, for instance, one text used the adjective Roman frequently, while another text used the adjective Greek, the differences observed between the two texts would not necessarily imply a different author as much as they would imply a different subject matter. Once the context-related words are removed, what remains are the structural words, those words that occur no matter what subject is treated. Of course it should also be noted that it is quite rare for a context-sensitive word to make the top 50 word list, as these words are usually crowded out by the more common structural words.

<sup>113</sup> The reader who is interested in a fuller discussion of the statistical methodology underlying the Burrows Method is encouraged to consult Burrows, *Not Unless You Ask Nicely*, 91–109. Multivariate data is transformed into a two-dimensional representation using principal components analysis, and the programmes I have designed to perform this analysis are based on an algorithm found in Ben Bolch and Cliff Huang, *Multivariate Statistical Methods for Business and Economics* (New

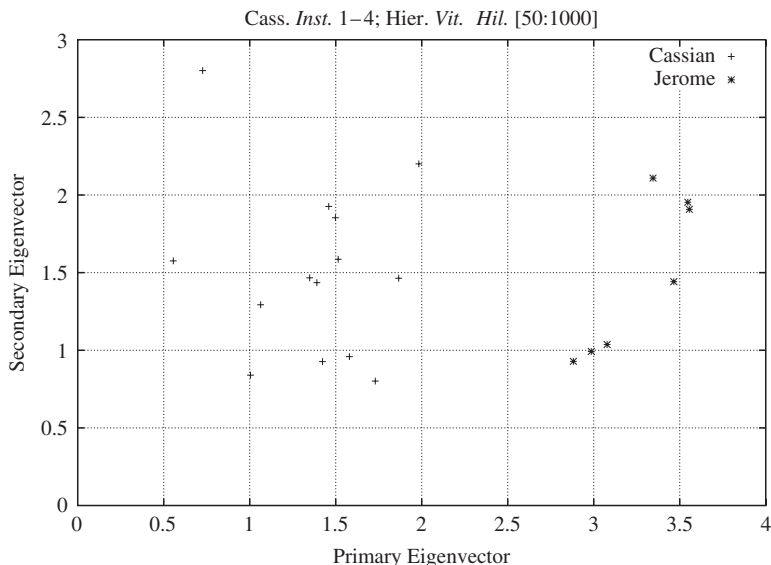


Figure 4: Cass. *Inst.* 1–4 compared to Hier. *Vit. Hil.*

components are extracted, and each text block is plotted on a two-dimensional graph.<sup>114</sup>

The next series of charts demonstrate the results of the Burrows Method. In Figure 4, Cassian's *De institutis* 1–4 has been plotted with Jerome's *Vita Hilarionis*.

The points that represent 1,000-word segments of *De institutis* appear on the left side of the chart, while the points that correspond to segments of

Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 39–40. Another good, introductory description of principal components analysis may be found in Brian Manly, *Multivariate Statistical Methods: A Primer* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1986), 59–71.

<sup>114</sup> Holmes describes the process this way: 'Principal components analysis is a standard technique in multivariate statistical data analysis. It aims to transform the observed variable to a new set of variables which are uncorrelated and arranged in decreasing order of importance. These new variables, or components, are linear combinations of the original variables, and it is hoped that the first few variables will account for most of the variation of the original data, thereby reducing the dimensionality of the problem. Typically the data are plotted in the space of the first two components, enabling a two-dimensional graph to portray the configuration of the data in multivariate space. No mathematical assumptions are necessary; the data 'speaks for itself'. Clusterings of points, each representing a sampled text, are clearly visible, as are outliers which do not conform to any pattern.' Holmes, *Evolution*, 113.

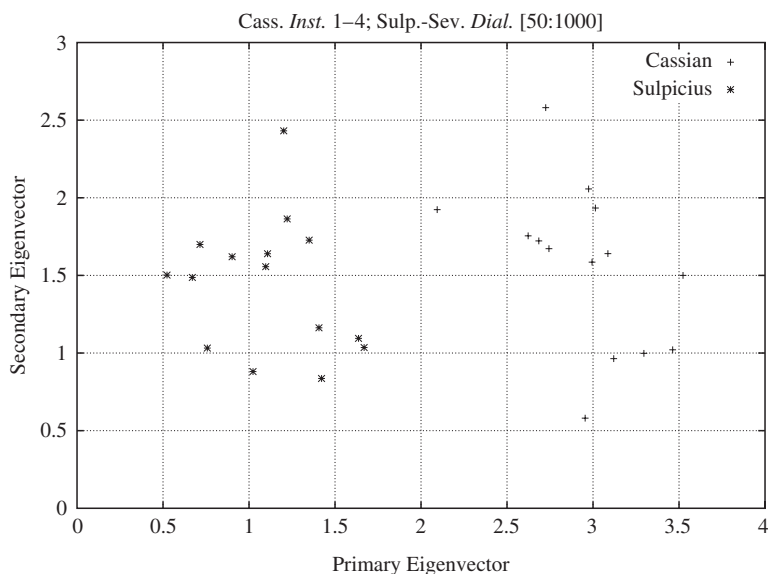


Figure 5: Cass. *Inst.* 1–4 compared to Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.*

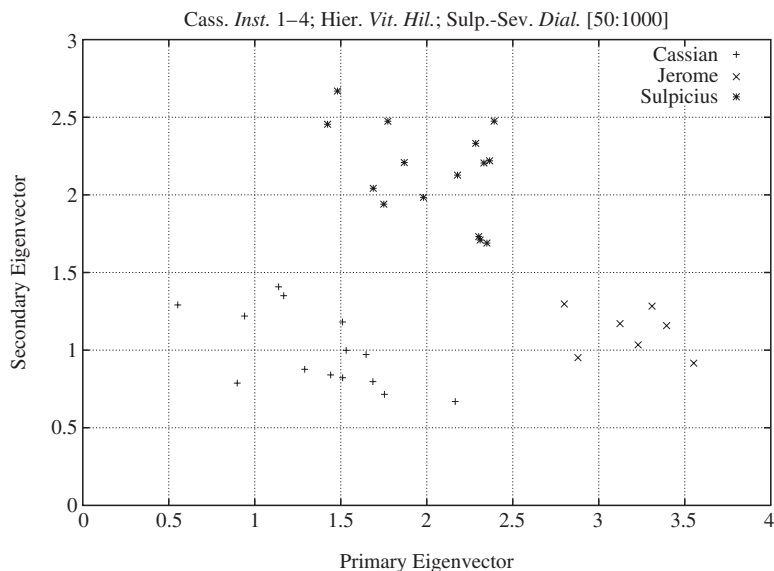
*Vita Hilarionis* are found on the right side of the plot. A similar effect is produced when Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi* (Figure 5) is compared to Cassian.

Figure 6 offers an example of all three of these texts (Jerome, Cassian, and Sulpicius Severus) processed together. Once again, the works by these three authors have been separated into discrete regions.

Each of these charts was processed in an identical manner, and each demonstrate that the Burrows Method is able to separate texts by different authors, based on the relative frequencies of the fifty most common words in the texts.<sup>115</sup>

As we have seen in the preceding consideration of the theoretical basis for the Burrows method, texts by different authors can be separated based on

<sup>115</sup> Although only three examples have been offered here, further comparisons between Cassian and other Latin authors have been made. In my experience, the Burrows Method has yet to fail to separate works by known different authors. The technique has been confirmed by a number of independent studies (see, for instance, David Holmes and R. Forsyth, 'The *Federalist* Revisited: New Directions in Authorship Attribution,' *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 10 (1995), 111–27, and Fiona Tweedie, David Holmes, and Thomas Corns, 'The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Attributed to John Milton,' *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 13 (1998), 77–87. Tweedie et al., commenting on the technique states, 'The "Burrows Technique" as it has come to be called, appears to be a proven and powerful tool in authorship studies' (Tweedie, Holmes, and Corns, *Provenance*, 78).



**Figure 6:** Cass. *Inst.* 1–4 compared to Hier. *Vit. Hil.* and Sulp.-Sev. *Dial.*

the relative frequencies of one, two, or three words. The Burrows Method groups texts based on their similarity across a fifty-dimensional spectrum. This space is then reduced through principal components analysis to create the two-dimensional charts seen here. The points plotted on the chart are the product of two equations which consist of fifty variables representing individual words and their weighted coefficients. The coefficients of these equations may also be used to produce a scaled loading chart, a graph that shows which words are significant discriminators between various texts.

Figure 7 is a scaled loading chart for the two texts that were analysed in Figure 4. A comparison of this chart to the one examined earlier (Figure 4) reveals that the points on both charts produce similar contours. The scaled loading chart allows the analyst to identify the words that make the largest contribution to the separation between authors found on the Burrows Chart. The words that fall on the extreme right and left edges of the word clusters are greater contributors to the separation: that is, the principal components analysis has assigned a greater weight to them when producing the two equations that map the fifty-dimensional space onto two dimensions.

The value of the scaled loading chart is that it allows us to make some observations about the way Jerome and Cassian write. For instance, in

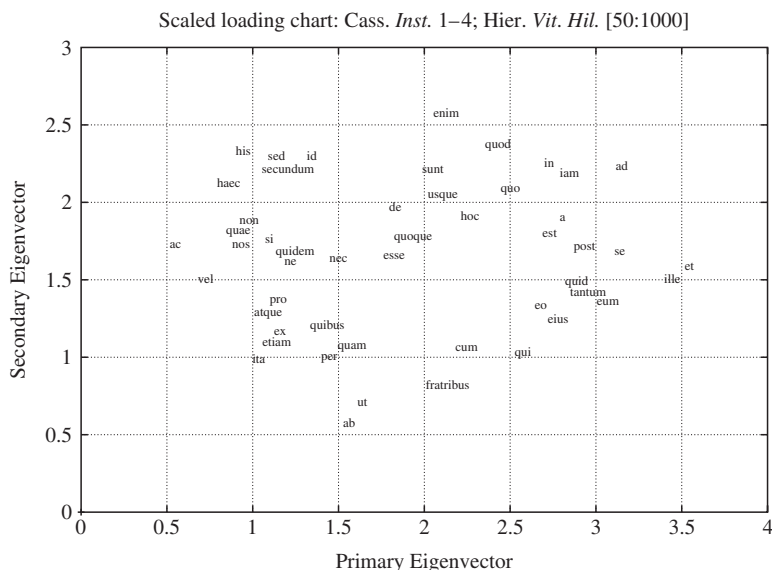


Figure 7: Scaled loading chart for Cass. *Inst.* 1–4 compared to Hier. *Vit. Hil.*

Figure 7, the conjunction *ac* is found on the extreme left edge of the word cluster. On the right edge, we find the word *et*. Both authors use these conjunctions in their writings, but the scaled loading chart suggests that they use them at different rates. In fact, in the texts chosen for analysis, Cassian seems to prefer *ac* while Jerome regularly utilizes *et*. This is an important stylistic difference between the two writers, one that is revealed by the scaled loading chart.

### *De institutis* 3

Having established the usefulness of the Burrows Method in separating texts, attention may now be focused on Cassian's work. Figure 8 shows a plot for Cassian, *De institutis* 1–4 by itself. Most of the data points are grouped in a cluster that is centred in the middle of the chart. Two points, however, stand as outliers to this main group. One point (labelled 'a') is located near the top of the chart; the second outlier (labelled 'b') is found near the left edge of the chart.

The first outlier (point a) is the text block that runs from *De institutis* 4. 34 to the end of Book 4. This section contains a speech that was delivered by Abba Pinufius on the occasion of the reception of a young novice into

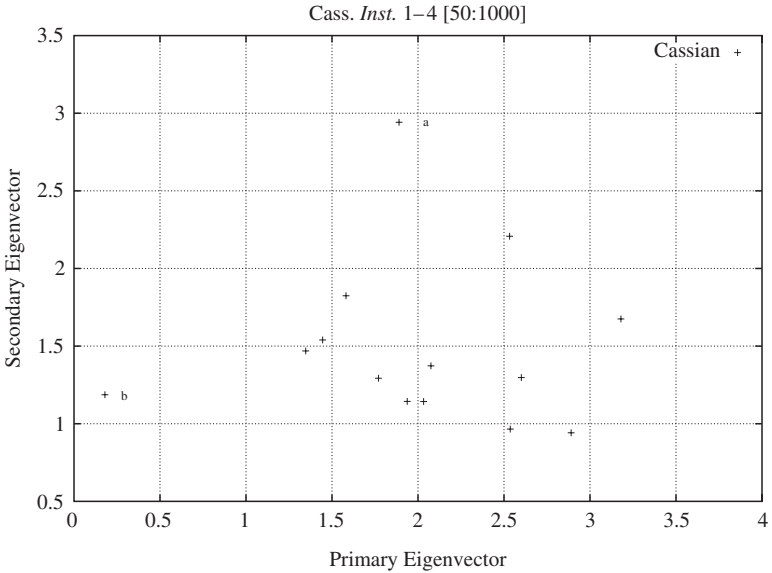


Figure 8: Cass. *Inst.* 1–4

Pinufius’ monastery. Two points need to be made about this text block. The first point is that variation along the x-axis of this chart (the horizontal axis that displays the primary Eigenvector) is more significant than variation along the y-axis (which records the secondary Eigenvector). The primary Eigenvector in a Burrows Chart is always the Eigenvector that produces the largest range of data variation. Consequently, point a is not as significant a variation as point b. Nevertheless, there is still some variation there, and one wonders if this was not related to a change in an author’s style when trying to reproduce a speech.<sup>116</sup>

The variation displayed in the case of point b is not explained as easily. This data segment consists of 1,000 words that begin near the end of *De institutis* 3. 3 and run to the beginning of 3. 8. These are the chapters that this appendix has argued are later interpolations. What the Burrows Method suggests is that there is something quite different about these suspect chapters. They are isolated from the main cluster, a trait that has been shown (above) to signal authorship differences.

<sup>116</sup> This is an intriguing possibility and clearly further research is needed into the statistical effects of reported speeches in an author’s work.

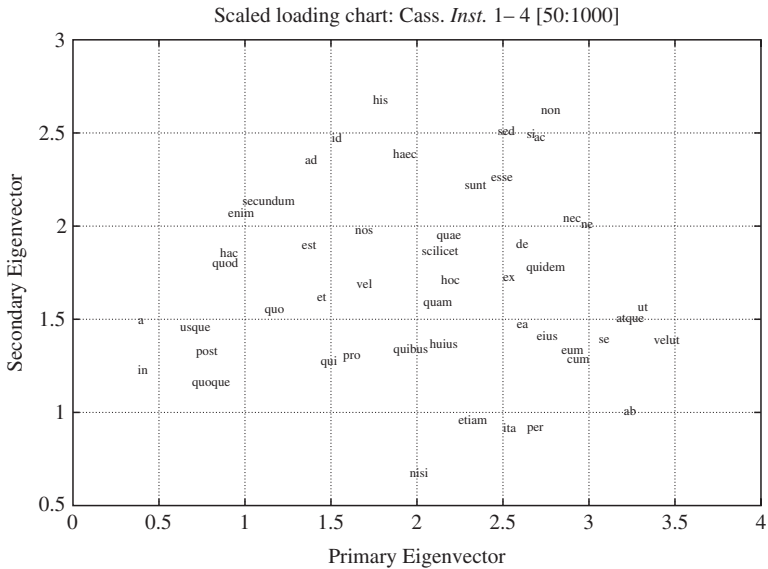


Figure 9: Scaled loading chart for Cass. *Inst.* 1–4

Of course this is not in any sense proof that these chapters are by a different author. The Burrows Method is nothing more than an indicator of variations in word usage over a large subject array. Nevertheless, it is striking that the analysis by the Burrows Method supports the more traditional textual analysis made in the preceding sections. These chapters do display a marked and demonstrable variation from the other chapters in *De institutis*.

The differences between point b and the rest of *De institutis* 1–4 can be investigated with the scaled loading plot. Figure 9 shows the contributions each word makes to the separation found in *De institutis* 1–4.

At the left edge of the plot (corresponding to the displacement noted for Point 6), are five words that are making a large contribution to this separation: the prepositions *a*, *in*, and *post*, and the adverbs *quoque* and *usque*. Table 4 compares the frequencies of these words in *De institutis* 3. 4–8 to the rest of *De institutis*, as well as to Cassian's other works.

This table highlights Cassian's use of these five words in his works. Column 1 contains the word and column 2 lists the number of times this word occurs in *De institutis* 3. 4–8.<sup>117</sup> Columns 3–5 contain averages for the number of times each word occurs (per 1,000 words) in *De institutis*, *Collationes*, and *De*

<sup>117</sup> All of the word-frequency averages are given in number of occurrences per 1,000 words. *De institutis* 3. 4–8 actually contains 1,017 words. As the difference between a standardized value (a rate for 1,000 words) and the displayed value is



Table 4: Frequencies of selected words (per 1,000 words)

Word	<i>Inst.</i> 3.4–8	<i>Inst.</i> Ave.	<i>Coll.</i> Ave.	<i>De Inc.</i> Ave.	All works Ave.	Min.	Max.	Std. Dev.
a	6	3.55	4.30	5.41	4.34	1	7	1.77
in	24	17.77	16.89	25.82	18.65	10	31	4.90
quoque	5	3.46	2.82	1.59	2.74	0	7	1.77
post	9	1.45	0.98	1.35	1.14	0	6	1.80
usque	11	1.12	0.46	0.15	0.54	0	3	1.92

*incarnatione*. Column 6 contains an average for all of Cassian's works. Columns 7 and 8 contain the range for the word in *De institutis* (the fewest and greatest number of times the word is used in a block of 1,000 words).<sup>118</sup> The final column contains the standard deviation for each word in *De institutis*,<sup>119</sup> a measure of the spread of the data observations around the mean.

Although the scaled loading plot has indicated that the words *a*, *in*, and *quoque* are large contributors to the variation shown on the chart, in the case of *De institutis* 3. 4–8, the values are not that extreme. In a normal distribution, it would be expected that 84 per cent of all the data points would fall within 1 Z score of the mean. The first three words in Table 4 all have Z scores of less than 2.0<sup>120</sup> Each of the readings could be attributed to the random variation that occurs in a normal distribution.

The same cannot be said about the preposition *post* and the adverb *usque*. The Z score for *post* is 4.19, and the Z score for *usque* is 5.15. Both of these values would be termed statistically significant, and it is extraordinarily unlikely that they are the product of simple random variation. This observation is strengthened by an examination of the range for these words. Within *De institutis*, *post* never occurs more than 6 times in a 1,000-word block. On average, *post* only occurs 1.45 times every 1,000 words in *De institutis*, 0.98 times for every 1,000 words in *Collationes*, and 1.35 times in every 1,000 words in *De incarnatione*. These statistics suggest that Cassian was not in the habit of using *post* in his writing. Yet, in the disputed chapters, the word occurs 9 times.

negligible, the actual word counts for this block will be used for ease of discussion. The standardized values for the five words are: 5.8997 (*a*), 23.5988 (*in*), 4.9164 (*quoque*), 8.84955 (*post*), and 10.816 (*usque*).

<sup>118</sup> *De institutis* 3. 4–8 was not used in calculating the range.

<sup>119</sup> Based on the samples in all of *De institutis*.

<sup>120</sup> The Z scores for *a*, *in*, and *quoque* are 1.4, 1.27, and 0.87. A Z score is calculated by subtracting the reading from the average and dividing this difference by the standard deviation. 84.13 per cent of all Z scores in a normal distribution should be 1.00 or less; 97.72 per cent of all Z scores should be 2.0 or less; 99.87 per cent of all Z scores will be less than 3.0. Data points that deviate from the mean by a Z score that is greater than 3.0 are thought unlikely to be the result of simple random variation.

The adverb *usque* demonstrates an even more dramatic quality. Outside of our disputed chapters, this word never occurs more than 3 times in a 1,000-word block in any of Cassian's writings. It occurs, on average, 1.12 times per 1,000-word block in *De institutis*, 0.46 times for every 1,000 words in *Collationes*, and 0.15 times in every 1,000 words in *De incarnatione*. Yet in the 1,017-word block that covers *De institutis* 3. 4–8, the word occurs 11 times. The Z score of 5.15 suggests that this text sample was not drawn from the same population that produced the other text samples.

If one is going to argue that Cassian wrote *De institutis* 3. 4–6, 8, then some explanation will have to be offered for the unusual frequency of *usque* and *post* in these chapters. In all of Cassian's other works, he never used *usque* more than 3 times in any given 1,000-word block of text, and on average, he only used the word once in every 2,000 words (or 0.54 times per 1,000 words). Based on his normal usage of the word *usque*, it is extremely unlikely that Cassian wrote these chapters.

Although the unprecedented density of *usque* and *post* tend to heighten the feeling that something is not quite right with these chapters, it must be noted that the Burrows Method does not depend on the frequency of these two words alone. In fact, if *usque* and *post* are removed from consideration (ignored as if they were context-sensitive nouns) the suspect chapters still separate from the main cluster, as shown in Figure 10.

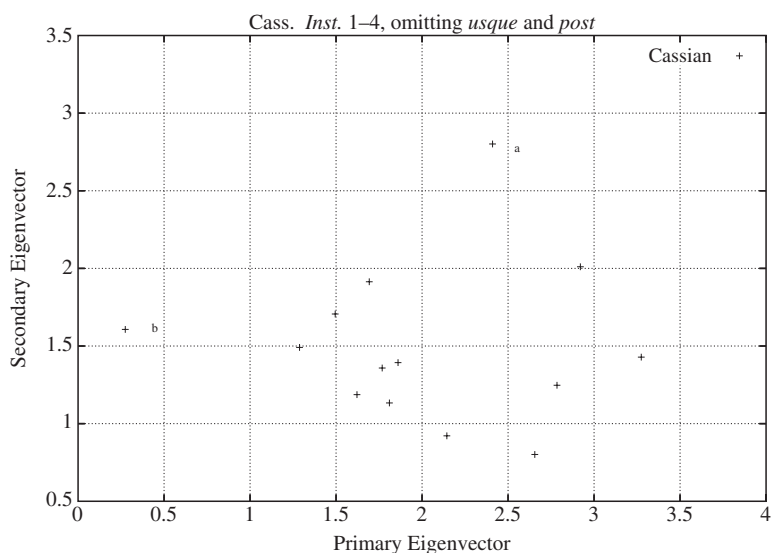


Figure 10: Cass. Inst. 1–4 omitting *usque* and *post*

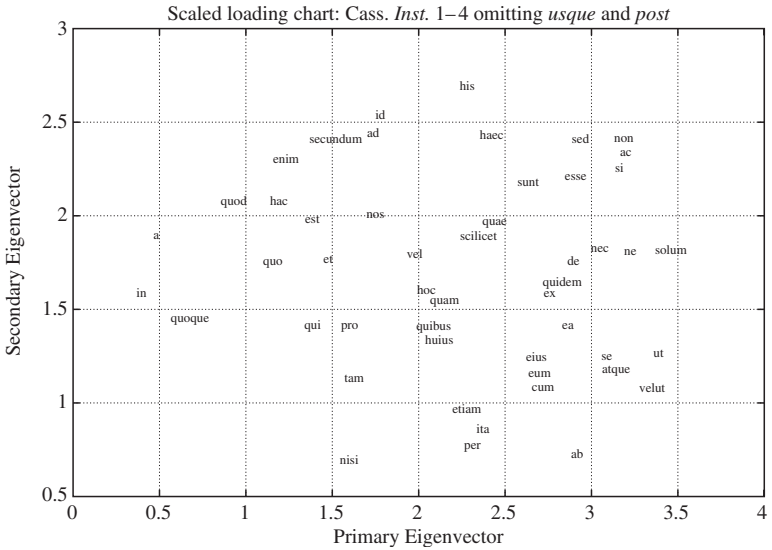


Figure 11: Scaled loading chart for Cass. *Inst.* 1–4 omitting *usque* and *post*

As the scaled loading chart (Figure 11) demonstrates, even when the effects of *usque* and *post* are factored out, the variations in usage of other words continue to separate the suspect chapters from the main body of *De institutis* 1–4. In this case, the influence of *a*, *in*, and *quoque* pull the texts apart, as does the relative absence of words that Cassian normally uses, such as *solum* and *uelut*. While the differences in *usque* and *post* are the dramatic variations, these chapters appear as an outlier to the main cluster because they vary across a wide spectrum of words. The Burrows Plot has demonstrated that the chapters that make up *De institutis* 3. 4–8 are statistically different from the rest of *De institutis*.

The apposite judgement of David Holmes bears repeating at this juncture: The evidence brought forward here should not be regarded as superseding that of the more traditional kind. In attribution of authorship, stylistic evidence must be weighed in the balance along with that provided by more conventional scholarship. Stylometry does, however, have a role to play despite the suspicions of those who mistrust the application of statistical and computing techniques to literature and the analysis of texts.

The way forward in problems of authorship lies in a combination of statistical techniques with more orthodox methods. If the computer reveals unusual,

quantifiable properties in a text, it is for the scholar in the field concerned to identify the features which are producing these effects.<sup>121</sup>

The approach to Cassian's *De institutis* 3. 4–6, 8 in this appendix has been to combine a stylometric textual analysis with an analysis of the passage using more traditional methods. It has been argued that these chapters do not fit into the contextual background for them supplied by the surrounding text. Cassian had argued emphatically against monks returning to sleep after the end of Nocturns. This view had been explicitly expressed in *De institutis* 2, and was entirely consistent with the teachings of the Desert Fathers reported in other sources. Nevertheless, the writer of *De institutis* 3. 4–6, 8 stated that there was nothing wrong with this practice, and indeed the monk must return to bed after the Sabbath Vigil if he was to remain awake the next day.

Cassian was also very consistent in his tallying of the offices that made up the monastic *cursus*. At five different points (including immediately before and after the disputed chapters) he listed five offices of prayer. Nowhere, outside of *De institutis* 3. 4–6, 8, can a certain reference to a sixth or seventh office be found.

In this context, the use of the word *missa* is an anachronism, and the suspicion engendered by this word's appearance in the questionable chapters is heightened when one notes that it also occurs (as a reference to the monastic office) in titles that were inserted at a later date into *De institutis*. A possible connection of these chapters with the Italian monastic milieu of the sixth-century Master has also been suggested; moreover, it has been observed that at certain points (most notably in the issue of a return to sleep after Nocturns) Benedict and the undisputed chapters of Cassian agree against the Master.

And finally, an analysis using a proven statistical method has disclosed the fact that these chapters are demonstrably different in terms of word usage from the rest of *De institutis* 1–4. The author of these passages relies heavily on the terms *usque* and *post*, words which are rarely found in any of Cassian's other writings. When these words are removed from consideration, these chapters still exhibit variation, which suggests that it is unlikely that they were written by John Cassian.

The collective mass of these observations provide a firm foundation for doubting the Cassianic authorship of these chapters. While this contention may not be proved with complete certainty, enough objections to the text have been proffered to substantiate grounds for doubt. Chadwick's 'hesitation' about his theory, while judicious, seems less necessary in the face of this new research.

<sup>121</sup> David Holmes, 'A Stylometric Analysis of Mormon Scripture and Related Texts,' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A* 155 (1992), 118–19.

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