

The Active Life, the Contemplative Life
and the Mixed Life

A study of the three lives, with
special reference to Walter Hilton

A thesis submitted in candidature for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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November 1976

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank Professor Elizabeth Salter and Professor Derek Pearsall for their contribution to this study. The inspiration of their ideas and suggestions was crucial in its inception, and it was guided by their generous and enthusiastic help.

ABSTRACT

The writings of Walter Hilton, an Austin Canon, were widely disseminated during the late fourteenth century and after. His ideas are therefore of importance in matters of late mediaeval spirituality, and an area of his beliefs, which is of considerable interest, concerns the type of religious experience which is available to lay people. In order to understand these beliefs, it is necessary to examine the history of the concepts of the active life, the contemplative life and the mixed life, because it is through the concept of the mixed life that much mediaeval thought on this subject is articulated. This study does not attempt a comprehensive examination of every writer who deals with these concepts, but makes a careful selection of those who are either representative of an attitude or a period, or who are important in their own right. S. Augustine of Hippo, S. Gregory the Great and S. Bernard of Clairvaux are major figures in this survey, as well as a number of other twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth century writers.

The emphasis of this study falls on the mixed life, for the reason given above, and this concept is shown to be much more complex than is generally realized. A close analysis of S. Augustine's works, particularly, reveals the problems involved. This is followed by an account of the many modifications of this concept which took place during the Middle Ages. Walter Hilton's adaptation of this concept is analysed in detail, and it is suggested that he is much more ready to concede the possibility of mystical experience to lay-people than has been appreciated. Corroborative evidence is sought in the works of other writers of the fourteenth century, and particular attention is given to the interesting points which arise from an analysis of the writings of Uthred of Boldon, a Benedictine monk. These points suggest that Hilton is less unorthodox in this area than appearances might suggest.

The works of Walter Hilton, which emerge as particularly important for these ideas, are the Scale of Perfection, a guide for recluses, and the Epistle on Mixed Life, a letter to a worldli lord on how to combine a life of affairs in the world and religious experience. The Scale of Perfection, with its wide and inclusive terms of reference, reveals Hilton's readiness to concede that high religious experience can be available to lay people.

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>EETS</u>	<u>The Early English Text Society</u>
<u>Med Aev</u>	<u>Medium Aevum</u>
<u>PL</u>	<u>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina</u> 221 tom. ed by J.P. Migne (Paris 1844-64)
<u>PMLA</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association</u>
<u>RES</u>	<u>Review of English Studies</u>

Introduction

The richness and diversity of the works of fourteenth-century spiritual writers derives in part from the consciousness on the part of these writers that they were charting crucial areas of religious experience. Added vigour was gained from a reaction to the uncertainties of the ecclesiastical world and its organization, which, in addition to causing grave concern, precipitated a determination to re-examine and re-assert a number of fundamental religious truths; amongst these was the deeply held belief that the Divine and Eternal can be sought by the individual within his own heart. Walter Hilton, an Austin Canon who lived during the later part of the fourteenth century, wrote a number of very important treatises about the search of the individual for advanced religious experience, and his enquiries led him to a subtle appreciation of the complexities involved. One of the complex subjects he examined had to do with the type of religious experience available to lay people who lived beyond the walls of convent and monastery. The aim of this thesis is to attempt to understand the beliefs of Hilton, and of a group of other fourteenth century writers on this subject, and to set the problem in an historical context. It will be shown that these beliefs were moulded by a theological tradition which concerned the concepts of the Active Life, the Contemplative Life and the Mixed Life. One of the essential tasks in understanding these concepts is to see how they originated in Ancient Greek philosophy, were adapted by early Christian writers and modified unceasingly during succeeding centuries. There will be no attempt at an exhaustive examination of every writer on this subject; instead, a group of writers, as indicated below, who were either representative or important on their own account, will be analysed to give a clear understanding of a nexus of ideas within a narrowly defined area.

This study has two distinct parts. The first explores in detail a selection of authors who wrote in what may be considered a Latin European tradition which constitutes the mainstream of Western Christian philosophy on the relevant concepts. This examination reveals the bedrock on which all later ideas are founded, and considers the development of the concepts up until the thirteenth century. The major writers considered in this section are S. Augustine of Hippo, S. Gregory the Great, and S. Bernard of Clairvaux. Richard of S. Victor, S. Bonaventura, and the author of the Meditationes Vitae Christi are also of importance. The second section of the thesis undertakes an analysis of writings on action and contemplation in England, which, in association with the first section, provides a background to the concepts both in insular and continental terms. The focus is then drawn in to a group of fourteenth-century English writers, especially Walter Hilton, whose works constitute an important development of ideas on action and contemplation. Treatises entitled Pore Caitif, Dives et Pauper, and The Book of Vices and Virtues, written for various categories of lay people, reveal what was being read by the laity, and these contrast with the Cloud of Unknowing which was written for an intending recluse. The works of Uthred of Boldon reveal the thoughts of a highly-educated Benedictine monk who wrote for the academic and theological world, and the works of Richard Rolle, who wrote for a very diverse audience, are interesting both in themselves and for their popularity. It is possible, when this panoramic view of fourteenth-century writings on the subject has been unfolded, to understand Hilton's works more fully, and to appreciate their significance better. The more specific focus of this thesis is the so-called Mixed Life, and it will be shown that this concept undergoes considerable modification during the development of contemplative philosophy. It will be seen

that the question of the availability of religious experience to lay people, which was mentioned earlier, is intimately and fundamentally related to the concept of the Mixed Life, though it is not until the fourteenth century that the relationship is made explicit by spiritual writers, especially Hilton.

At the end of this study there is a brief chapter which speculates on some of the possible applications to Piers Plowman of the findings of this enquiry into the Three Lives.

PART I

Western European Concepts of the Three Lives during
the Middle Ages : 400-1300

1. The origins of the concepts in Patristic writings

S. Augustine of Hippo

Mediaeval Christianity took its characteristic qualities in many areas of life and thought from the writings of S. Augustine. Mediaeval conceptions of action and contemplation contain evidence of his influence, and reveal the way he moulded diverse traditions into new or changed forms.¹ The ideas of the neo-Platonists, the attitudes of the desert fathers of Syria and Egypt, and the concepts discussed by John Cassian were drawn together and transformed into a tradition which was to endure, despite some important modifications, until the Reformation. S. Gregory the Great had a crucial part in the subsequent development of the tradition, and it was variously interpreted by such figures as S. Benedict of Aniane and S. Bernard of Clairvaux; later it was influenced by the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius when they became widely known. Despite a number of later adaptations, Augustine can be seen to have turned the stream of thought into the course in which it was to run for centuries, and to have established the principal elements which were to remain basic for the various interpretations it was to be given.

John Cassian² (c.360-435) inherited the same tradition on action and contemplation as Augustine, and an examination of his writings in this field can be of assistance in understanding the ideas of his contemporary. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-220) and Origen (c.185-253) were influenced by Plotinus, and they transmitted a partly neo-Platonic tradition concerning action and contemplation to Cassian through Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius of Ponticus (d.393). An important part of this tradition was the tenet that happiness consists of the pursuit of wisdom, and that various stages in this pursuit have to be undertaken. When translated into a Christian context, this is concerned with the vision of God as the ultimate happiness, and the individual's progress through

ascending stages in the spiritual life to this summum bonum. Classical writers had spoken of the *βίος Πρακτικός* and the *βίος Θεωρητικός* as two different types of life, but Philo (c. 25 B.C.-40 A.D.) had re-interpreted them as complementary and successive stages within the same spiritual life.³ Cassian received this tradition in its Philonic form, and in his writings the two stages became the vita actualis (or vita practica) and the vita contemplativa (or vita theoretica). An examination of these concepts in Cassian's philosophy makes possible a clearer understanding of the intellectual background against which Augustine wrote.

Cassian's belief in the dual nature of the spiritual life is formulated in Collatio xiv:⁴

"Cuius quidem duplex est scientia. Prima practice, id est, actualis, ... altera theorice, id est, ... in contemplatione."
(ibid. xiv.1)
("[Spiritual] knowledge is two-fold: first practical, that is actual ... secondly theoretical, that is ... in contemplation.")

The theoretic branch, or vita contemplativa is the aim of the spiritual life, and it consists in the contemplation of divine things:

"in contemplatione divinarum rerum et sacratissimorum sensuum cognitione consistit." (ibid.)
("consists in the contemplation of things divine and the knowledge of most sacred thoughts.")

The vita actualis is achieved by purification:

"emendatione morum et vitiorum purgatione perficitur." (ibid.)
("is brought about by an improvement of morals and purification from faults.")

and is two-fold:

"Haec autem actualis perfectio duplici ratione subsistit. Nam primus eius modus est, ut omnium natura vitiorum et curationis ratio cognascatur. Secundus ut ita discernatur ordo virtutem, earumque perfectione mens nostra formetur." (ibid. xiv.3)
("But this practical perfection depends on a double system: for its first method is to know the nature of all faults and the manner of their cure. Its second, to discover the order of the virtues, and form our mind by their perfection.")

The first part of this branch is the training of the self in the suppression of sin:

"Frustra igitur ad conspectum Dei tendit, qui vitiorum contagia non declinat." (ibid. xiv.2)

("In vain does one strive for the vision of God who does not shun the stains of sin.")

and is clearly ascetic in its nature. The second part is explicitly the discovery of virtue, and can only be a reference to the moral virtues, subsumed under the major headings of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, and the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Chapter VI of Collatio XI speaks of faith and hope as the property of those who, in the search for goodness, have not yet learned the love of virtue, and charity as belonging specially to God and to those who have received into themselves the image and likeness of God. This exclusive statement does not, however, make allowance for the complexity of the concept of charity which led later mediaeval writers to speak of the two parts of this virtue, of which the higher related to love of God, and the lower to the love of man. Cassian's own discussions of virtue make it clear that he thought of love of one's neighbour as within the reach of ordinary men and experience, and not a privilege of an elect. The spiritual life is formulated by Cassian, therefore, as the inner suppression of sin, the practice of virtue and, finally, the contemplation of God. This is a progression of the individual through the stages of developing perfection which culminates in the vision of God, and there is every indication that Cassian was not referring to separate lives or modes of life. This interpretation is borne out by a statement which discusses the stages as succeeding one another:

"Gradus enim quidam ita ordinati atque distincti sunt, ut humana humilitatis possit ad sublime conscendere: qui si invicem sibi ea qua diximus ratione succedant, potent ad altitudinem perveniri, ad quam sublato primo gradu non potest transvalari."

(Collatio, xiv.2)

("For there are certain stages, so distinct, and arranged in such a way that man's humility may be able to mount on high; and if these follow each other in turn in the order of which we have

spoken, man can attain to a height to which he could not fly, if the first step were wanting.")

This is corroborated by a statement which refers to practical knowledge, rather than a practical life, and the evident intention that the two aspects are conceived of in one life:

"Nam haec practice absque theoretica possideri potest, theoretice vero sine actuale omnimodis apprehendi non potest."
(ibid.)

("Practical knowledge can be acquired without the contemplative, but the contemplative cannot possibly be gained without the practical.")

Further evidence of this intention is implicit in the statement that the vita actualis can be undertaken in a number of different types of monastic life:

"Haec igitur practice quae duobus ut dictum est, subsistit modis, erga multas professiones studisque dividitur." (ibid. xiv.4)

("This practical life then, which as has been said, rests on a double system, is distributed among many different professions and interests.")

and Cassian enumerates some of them, referring to:

"eremi secreta" (ibid.)

("the secrecy of the anchorite")

"institutionem fratrum" (ibid.)

("the system of the brethren")

"xenodochij et susceptionis pium delectat obsequium" (ibid.)

("the kindly service of the guest-house and reception")

"aegrotantium curam" (ibid.)

("the care of the sick")

"intercessionem quae pro miseris atque oppressis impenditur" (ibid.)

("intercession which is offered up for the afflicted and the oppressed")

and

"eleemosynam pauperibus largientes" (ibid.)

("almsgiving to the poor")

He says later in the same treatise,

"Multis enim viis ad Deum tenditur; et ideo unusquisque illam quam semel arripuerit, irrevocabili cursu sui intentione conficiat, ut sit in qualibet professione perfectus." (ibid.,xiv.6)

("In many ways men advance towards God, and so each man should complete that one which he has once fixed upon, never changing the course of his purpose, so that he may be perfect in whatever line of life his may be.")

Since this unchanging state refers to the multus professiones studiacue, they are of a totally different nature to the two stages of life which have to give place, one to the other, in the spiritual life:

"Quisquis igitur ad Theoreticen voluerit pervenire, necesse est ut omni studio atque virtute actualem primum scientiam consequatur." (ibid., xiv.2)

("Whoever would arrive at this theoretical knowledge must first pursue practical knowledge with all his might and main.")

It can thus be seen that Cassian believes in a spiritual life which grows and changes within the individual, and also in an unchanging life of the professio, in which the individual monk works in relation to the world. This distinction will be of importance in considering Augustine's concepts of action and contemplation. A second point of significance which emerges from Collatio xiv is that Cassian's two-fold vita actualis can be seen to correspond to the stages of purgation and illumination, and his vita contemplativa, to the stage of unification, indicating both his neo-Platonic heritage and his part in the development of the western mystical tradition. It will be seen later that Augustine⁵ refers to purgatio peccatorum ("purgation of sin") as a part of action which is a necessary prelude to contemplation, and also to operibus justitiae ("works of justice"), which can be interpreted as related to Cassian's formation of the mind by the pursuit of virtue. Augustine's concept of contemplation, as will be seen later, corresponds to unification. His two parts of the activa virtus⁶ (purgatio peccatorum and operibus justitiae) are not, however, divided explicitly in terms of function within the spiritual life, as are Cassian's corresponding parts of the vita actualis, and this can lead to confusion in regard to the exact frame of reference of some of his discussions. These extracts also reflect Cassian's narrow frame of reference. The lives he discusses

are all monastic in character, ranging from the almost total seclusion of the hermit to vocations amongst the needy. Cassian is not concerned with any non-monastic way of life, and his discussions reflect his specialized and narrow range of interest. This will contrast with Augustine's concern with the whole of society, where any Christian life comes within his purview.

Augustine's terminology is different from that used by Cassian, but his discussions of action and contemplation make it clear that the matter is similar. Cassian spoke of the part of spiritual knowledge of which the function was to know faults and their cure:

"omnium natura vitiorum et curationis ratio cognascatur"
("know the nature of all faults and the manner of their cure")

and Augustine speaks, in De Consensu Evangelistarum, of:

"duae virtutes ... una activa, altera contemplativa" (ibid.i.8)
("two virtues ... one active, the other contemplative")

and the active is defined in that treatise as one of labour in spiritual works:

"laboratur, ut cor mundetur ad videndum Deum" (ibid.)
("he labours to purify his heart for the vision of God")

He adds that the active virtue

"est in purgatione peccatorum" (ibid.)
("is in the purgation of sins")

In Joh. Evang. speaks of action which

"carnales libidines frenat" (ibid. cxxiv.5)
("bridles the lusts of the flesh")

and

"bona et mala discernit" (ibid.)
("discerns good and evil")

These refer to the same knowledge of sin and its cure as Cassian's discussions under the first heading of his vita actualis. The second part of that life is to discover the virtues:

"discernatur ordo virtutem" (Collatio xiv.3)
("discover the order of the virtues")

in order to form the mind by their perfection. If Augustine's discussions of charity, traditionally the greatest virtue, can be accepted as relating to the same concept as the second part of Cassian's vita actualis, then Augustine's activa virtus can be seen as a two-fold stage of the spiritual life. The purgative element has just been seen, and the element relating to the virtues is seen in what follows. Contra Faustum refers to two lives which are exemplified in the Body of Christ:

"Duae vitae nobis in Christi corpore praedicantur; una temporalis in qua laboramus, alia aeterna in qua delectationem Dei contemlabimur." (ibid. xxii.52)

("Two lives are held out to us in the body of Christ; the one temporal in which we labour, the other eternal in which we shall contemplate the delights of God.")

Under the heading of the life of labour he includes

"operibus justitiae" (ibid.)

and "

"administrandis Ecclesiasticis curis" (ibid.)

("administration of ecclesiastical charges")

This virtue increases the numbers of the redeemed:

"Labor enim justorum maximum fructum habet in eis quas regno Dei generant inter multas tentationes et tribulationes praedicando Evangelium." (ibid.)

("The labour of the just bears great fruit in those they beget for the kingdom of God by preaching the Gospel.")

and it is stated that mankind has great appreciation of that virtue

"qua eorum infirmitatibus necessitatibusque consulitur" (ibid.)

("by which their infirmities and necessities are cared for")

In Joh.Evang. refers to action which

"subvenit indigentia" (ibid. cxxiv.5)

("assists the needy")

and Martha is told:

"ministras esurientibus, ministras sitientibus" (ibid.)

"You minister to the hungry, you minister to the thirsty."

This aspect of activa virtus is related to the works of charity by which the corporal and spiritual needs of the people are attended to. This can be seen to be at least analogous to Cassian's second part of vita actualis, and may be its exact counterpart. In any case, it is clearly a part of the spiritual life, and not a separate life. None of the extracts quoted refers to vita activa, but to activa virtus or vita ... temporalis in qua laboramus. Augustine's activa virtus is thus closely related to Cassian's two-fold vita actualis, and is a prelude to the contemplativa virtus. The similarity of the views of Augustine and Cassian regarding the spiritual life can be shown in chart form, and this is on the following page. Discussions of Augustine's "Different Modes of Life in the World" appear on pages 21 to 24.

The contemplative virtue is discussed at length by Augustine, and an examination of his ideas can reveal its nature as a continuing spiritual development in the growth of the individual toward union with God after death. For Augustine, the basis of contemplation is the belief that the bliss of heaven consists of the knowledge and vision of God. We are denied this supreme happiness by our exile in the flesh, and we constantly yearn for a return to fulfilment:

"Quia fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec
quiescat in te." (Confessiones 1.1)

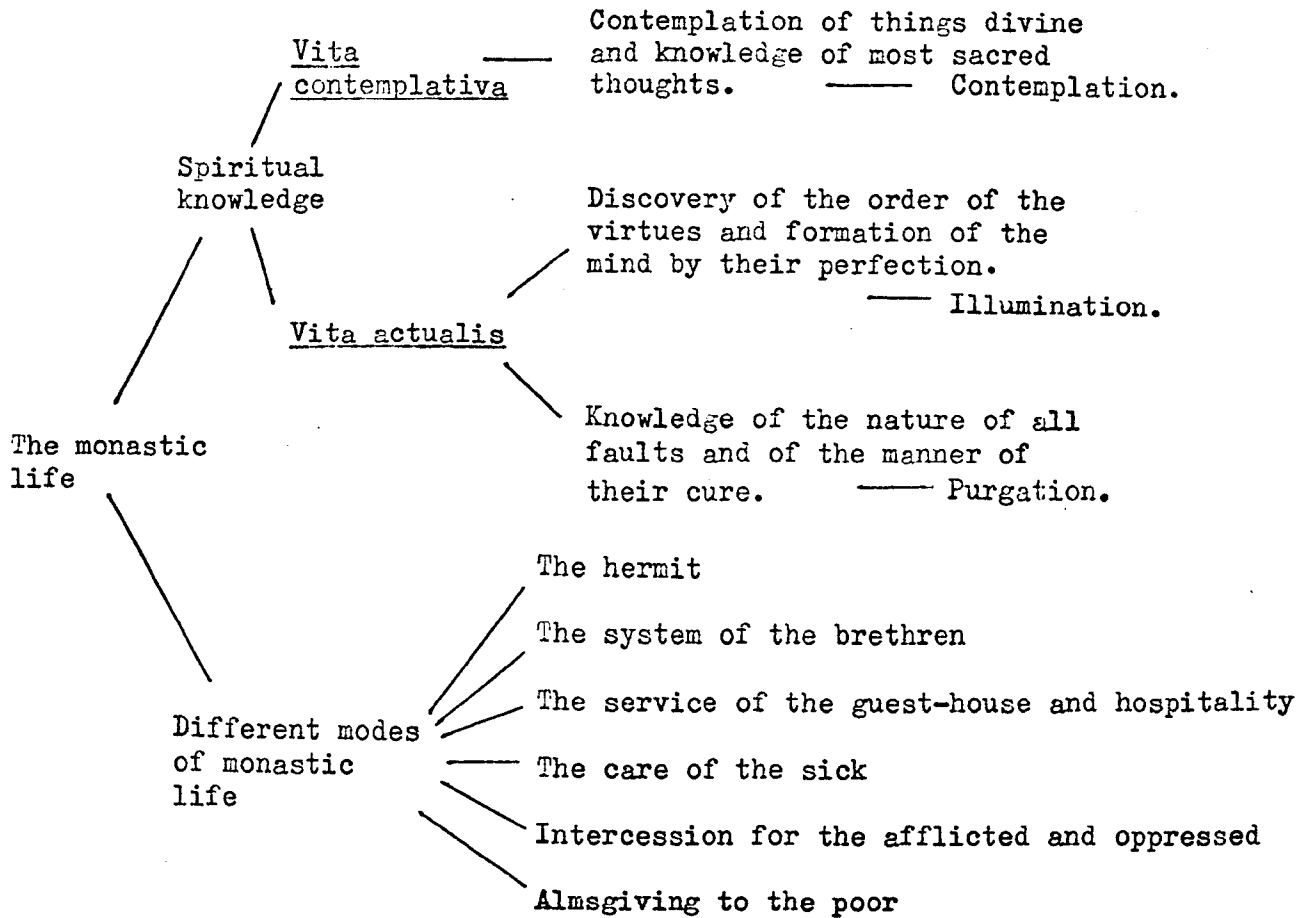
("Thou hast made us for thee and our heart is unquiet till it
finds its rest in thee.")

Our present imperfection is not a total denial of the possibility of contact with the Creator, but it ensures that any glimpse we may be granted is transient and incomplete:

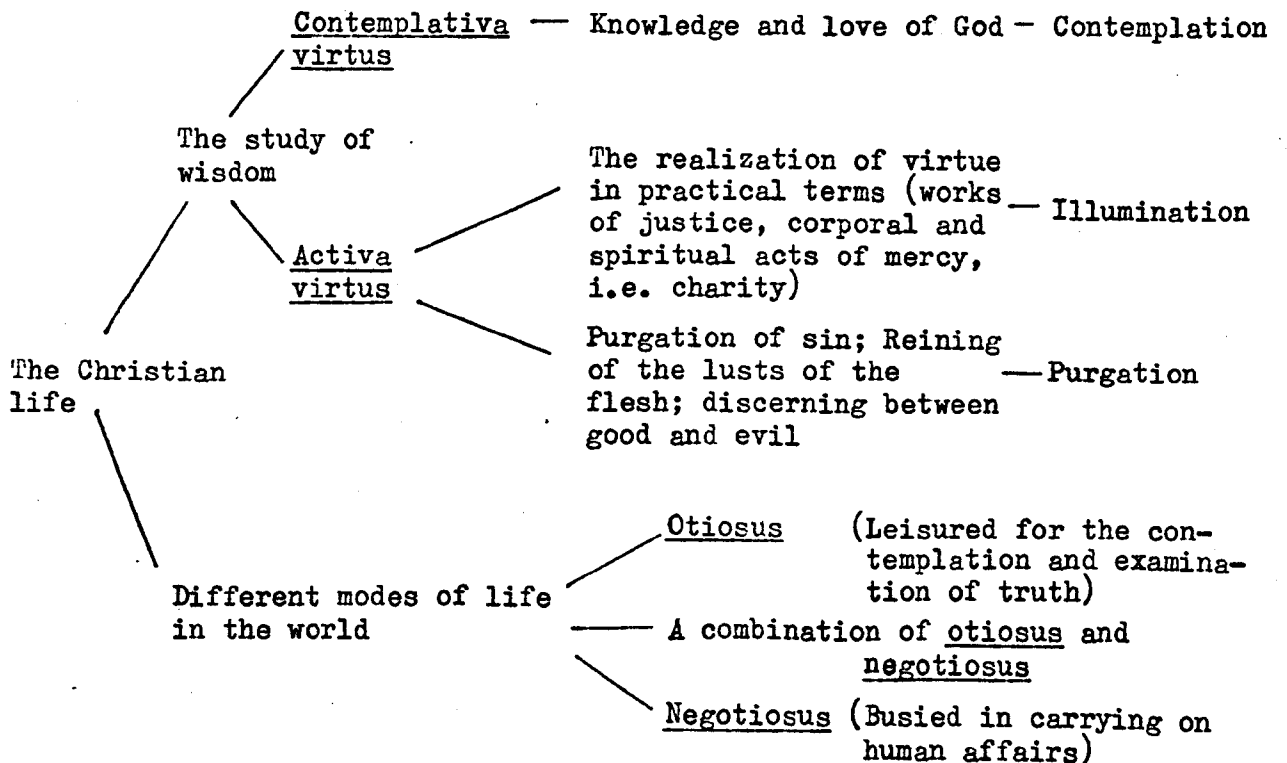
"differtur illa complenda post huius saeculi sinem, sed in
futuro saeculo non habet sinem." (In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus
cxxiv.5)

("It is deferred to be finished after the end of this age, but in
a future age it will have no end.")

John Cassian



S. Augustine



The completion of this ephemeral experience is the reward of the just and faithful after death, when Christ shall bring them to

"quam visionem dicit Apostolus, 'facie ad faciem'."
(De Trinitate 1.17)

("that sight which the Apostle calls the vision 'face to face'.")

This is seen later in the same book:

"ad contemplationem Dei, ubi est finis omnium bonarum actionem, et requies sempiterna, et gaudium quod nunquam auferetur a nobis."
(ibid. 1.20)

("the contemplation of God. There is the end of all our good deeds, and the eternal rest and joy which will never be taken from us.")

This high state is the joy of heaven which will be the reward of those who follow Christ's teachings.

As implied in the extract from In Joh.Evang., Augustine believes it is possible to have a glimpse of the Divine Being in this life,⁷ but only after a long and rigorous preparation followed by the process of contemplation. This preparation is the practice of asceticism, or the vita actualis of John Cassian, which had long been recognised as part of the religious life at the time of Augustine.

Asceticism is implicit in certain aspects of Augustine's activa virtus and also in his discussion of the 'acts of the soul' in De Quantitate Animae (see lxxix, lxxx). These "acts" are in seven categories of which the fourth is virtue, and the fifth is tranquillitas, or 'the calming of the passions'. These two are the preliminaries to contemplation, the seventh act, and are the practical branch of spiritual knowledge. Without this purging of sin and cultivation of virtue, contemplation is not possible. Augustine records the result of unreadiness for the ecstatic vision:

"Et cum primum cognovi, tu assumpsisti me ut viderem esse quod viderem, et nondum me esse qui viderem." (Conf. vii.16)
("When first I knew thee, thou didst take me up to thee, so that I might see that there was something to see, but that I was not yet ready for the vision.")

and again:

"neque ullo modo dubitabam esse cui cohaererem, sed nondum esse me qui cohaererem." (ibid. vii.23)

("I was in no way doubtful that there was someone to whom I should cling, but I, who should cling, was not yet ready.")

This belief in the necessity of asceticism with its concomitants of solitude and self-denial is akin to the harsher austerity of the desert fathers, and to the tradition of asceticism, which was to be variously interpreted through the monastic centuries and later.

When the lusts and sins of the flesh have been conquered, the individual is ready to begin the ascent to God. Augustine recognised two phases of final preparation, 'recollection', and 'introversion'. The former is the concentration of the mind by the suppression of all external thoughts and images in order to silence the intellect. When this has been achieved, 'introversion' is possible, and the mind is able to concentrate on its innermost parts. This process is seen in

Enarrationes in Psalmos xli:

"immo vero ab omnibus corporis sensibus, tamquam impediens et perstreptibus abstrahit se ad se, ut videat in se, ut noverit se apud se." (ibid. 7)

("the mind abstracts itself from all the bodily senses, as interrupting and confounding it with their din, in order to see itself in itself, and know itself as mirrored in itself.")

and again, it is by abstraction from physical things that the soul arrives at God:

"abstrahens se ab omni strepitu carnis et sanguinis" (ibid. 9)

("abstracting itself from all the noise of flesh and blood")

Augustine records the vision granted during this experience:

"Tu autem eras interior intimo meo, et superior summo meo." (Conf.iii.11)

("Thou wert more inward to me than my most inward part, and higher than my highest.")

This concept of the meeting of God and man at the centre of the soul has been passed down through Christian tradition. Augustine describes the nature of the vision in terms which derive much from neo-Platonic ideas, and much from S. John. The words chosen also echo Old Testament

phraseology:

"Mens mea pervenit ad id quod est in ictu trepidantis aspectus."
(*ibid.* vii.23)

("In the flash of a trembling glance my mind came to that which is.")

The act of contemplation lies in knowing God:

"cognito et dilectio eius quod semper est et incommutabiliter
manet, quod Deus est." (*Enarr. in Psalm.* cxxxv. 8)

("in cognition and love of that which always is and unchangeably
abides, namely God.")

and it is:

"Appetitio intelligendi ea quae vere summeque sunt."
(*De Quant. Anim.* lxxv)

("the striving to understand those things that really are.")

It lies in trying:

"perventuri ad summam illam Causam, vel summum Auctorem,
vel summum Principium rerum omnium." (*ibid.* lxxvi)

("to arrive at that highest Cause, or highest Author, or highest
Origin of all things.")

It is not possible in this life to achieve perfect vision, and Augustine
qualifies the clarity of sight which is achieved, comparing what we shall
see after death and what is available now:

"Est autem alia vita immortalis, ... ibi facie ad faciem
videbimus, quod hic per speculum et in aenigmate videtur."
(*In Joh. Evang.* cxxiv.5)

("The other life, however, is immortal, ... There we will see face
to face what here is seen through a mirror and in a riddle.")

Augustine comments that:

"Si continentur hoc, ... et haec una rapiat et absorbeat et
recondat in interiora gaudia spectatorem suum, ... nonne hoc
est, Intra in gaudium Domini tui?" (*Conf.* ix.25)

("Were this state prolonged, and the vision to ravish and absorb and
wrap up its beholder in inward joys, ... were not this the meaning
of Enter into the joy of thy Master?")

but according to the commentary on Psalm xli, it is only to be enjoyed
briefly. A passage from Conf. laments the end of the vision:

"sed rapiebar ad te decore tuo; moxque deripiebar abs te
pondere meo, et ruebam in ista cum gemitu; et pondus hoc,
consuetudo carnalis." (*ibid.* vii.23)

("I was snatched up to Thee by thy glory, but was soon snatched away from Thee by the natural weight of my will, and I fell back on these lower things with a groan. This was the weight of carnal custom.")

and this is seen again:

"Sed quia, ... et corpus quod corrumpitur aggravat animam, et deprimit terena inhabitatio sensum multa cogitantem: etsi utcumque nebulis diffugatis ambulando per desiderium, ad hunc sonum pervenerimus interdum, ut aliquid de illa domo Dei nitendo capiamus: onere tamen quodam infirmitatis nostrae ad consueta recidimus, et ad solita ista dilabimur."

(Enarr. in Psalm. xli)

("But seeing that the corruptible body presses down the soul, even though we have in some way dispersed the clouds by walking on as longing leads us, and for a brief while have come within reach of that sound, ... yet through the burden of our infirmity we sink back to our usual level.")

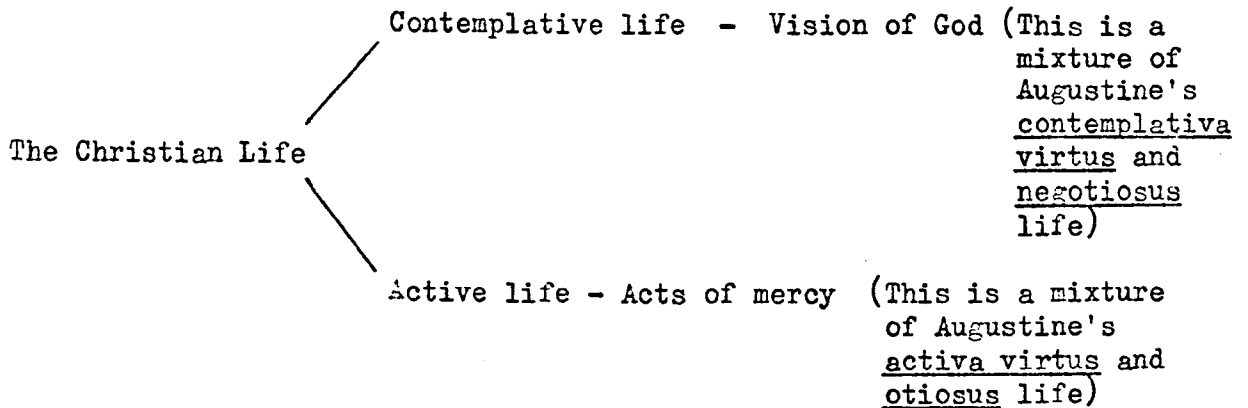
In De Quant. Anim. Augustine discusses the results of contemplation, and in addition to the love of God being increased, he mentions an increase in the depth and clarity of perception of the truths of the faith. A further result of contemplation is the desire to spread the faith, and in Contra Faustum he speaks of the contemplativa virtus being productive in this way, because it is

"ipsa procreandi caritate inardescit." (ibid. xxii. 52)

("itself aflame with the love of generating")

The virtutes activa et contemplativa can thus be seen to be two stages in the growth of the spiritual life of the individual. Abbot C. Butler in his pioneering work, Western Mysticism (London, 1922: revised 1927; third edition with contribution by D. Knowles, 1967), defined the characteristic features of each of these virtues, but by constantly referring to them as vita activa and vita contemplativa (Augustine only refers to them as eae vitae or virtutes), he clouded their exact significance. He incorrectly interpreted Augustine's discussion of the otiosus and negotiosus lives as references to the active and contemplative virtues, and these lives (the otiosus and the negotiosus) receive, therefore, the erroneous names of the active and contemplative

lives.⁸ When Butler came to discuss the activa virtus and the contemplativa virtus, he consistently translated virtus as life and interpreted the two parts of the spiritual life as separate lives, and identified the two virtues with the two alternatives of involvement and withdrawal. His concept of Augustine's formulation of the Christian life is simplified therefore, and can be shown by a chart, which can be compared with the chart of Augustine's ideas on page 11 .



When Butler returns to discuss the otiosus and negotiosus lives, he is left with no alternative than to regard them as identical in scope to the active and contemplative "lives", and the only way in which Augustine's reference to a combined life can be accommodated is by simply regarding it as a mixture of the two elements in the above chart.

The crux of the misunderstandings which have arisen regarding Augustine's teachings on action and contemplation has been, as is indicated above, a misreading of discussions which do not refer primarily to the inner spiritual life, but to the life of the individual in the world. An inevitable degree of similarity in tone and subject matter has caused these two related but separate groups of concepts to be discussed as if they were identical in scope, and certain terms which are partly analogous have been taken as synonymous. It will be seen that Augustine compares the two parts of the spiritual life and reaches certain conclusions regarding their relative merits. He also discusses

the way in which the good man should arrange his life in relation to the world. These two areas of thought must not be confused or merged into one, however, and to clarify the distinctions between the two groups of concepts, they will now be considered separately.

The first group is the contrast between the two virtues of action and contemplation. De Civitate Dei defines the area with which each is concerned:

"Itaque cum studium sapientiae in actione et contemplatione versetur, unde una pars ejus activa, altera contemplativa dici potest; quarum activa ad agendam vitam, id est, ad mores instituendos pertinet, contemplativa autem ad conspiciendas naturae causas et sincerissimam veritatem."(ibid.viii.4)

("Now the pursuit of wisdom follows two avenues - action and contemplation. Thus, one division of philosophy may be called active; the other part contemplative. The former deals with the conduct of life, that is to say, the cultivation of morals. Contemplative philosophy considers natural causality and truth as such.")

This teaching is repeated in De Cons.Evang.

"duae virtutes propositae sunt animae humanae, una activa, altera contemplativa; ... illa est in praeceptis exercendae vitae hujus temporalis, ista in doctrina vitae illius sempiternae ... Ac per hoc in hac vita mortalis, illa est in opere bonae conversationis; isto vero magis in fide."
(ibid. i.8)

("Two virtues are set before the soul of man, the one active, the other contemplative; ... the one lies in the precepts for carrying on this temporal life, the other in the doctrine of that life which is eternal. ... Hence it is that in this mortal life, the former consists in the work of leading a good life, the latter more in faith.")

These passages illustrate a number of points previously made. There is no mention of the active and contemplative lives here; action and contemplation are two avenues in the pursuit of wisdom, are duae virtutes, and refer to the same area of concern as Cassian's vita actualis and vita contemplativa. Action is defined by Augustine as the conduct of life interpreted as the cultivation of morals, or the maxims of the temporal life, and when this is compared with his statements on the nature of action on the lower half of page 9 above, it is seen that it

refers to the same concept. Similarly, contemplation is the consideration of natural causality and truth, and also is concerned with faith. This is the concept of contemplation considered on pages 12-16 above.

The superiority of the contemplative state has been implicit in most of Augustine's works quoted so far, but this is made explicit in passages from Contra Faustum and Sermo clxix, which contrast the two virtues:

"duae vitae nobis in Christi corpore praedicantur, una temporalis, in qua laboramus, alia eterna in qua delectationem Dei contemplabimur. ... Admonent nos ad hoc intelligendum illarum etiam nomina feminarum. Dicunt enim quod Lia interpretatur Laborans, Rachel autem Visum principium, sive Verbum ex quo videtur principium. Actio ergo humanae mortalisque vitae, in qua vivimus ex fide, multa laboriosa opera facientes, ... est Lia. ... Spes vero aeternae contemplationis Dei habens certam et delectabilem intelligentiam veritatis, ... est Rachel." (Contra Faustum xxii.52)

("Two lives are held out to us in the body of Christ - the one temporal, in which we labour; the other eternal in which we shall contemplate the delights of God. ... Even the names of the women teach us this. For it is said that Lia is interpreted Labouring, and Rachel the beginning Seen, or the Word by which is seen the beginning. Therefore the action of human and mortal life, in which we live by faith doing many laborious works, ... is Lia ... But the hope of the eternal contemplation of God, which has a sure and delightful understanding of the truth, ... is Rachel.")

The spiritual life is by its nature a progression, and its ultimate aim is the vision of God. Since this is the reward of the faithful in the after-life, it is natural that any glimpse given in this life should be considered eternal in its character, as opposed to the essentially mortal nature of labour in the world, which is temporal both in character and duration. Thus the terminology and phraseology of the comparisons of the active and contemplative virtues reflect both an empirical fact regarding the contrast, one being actually temporal, the other actually eternal, and also the inevitable analogy of the contemplative virtue as a pre-figuring of eternity, and action as an epitome of mortal life. These fine distinctions between the actual and the analogical make it easy to confuse the issues by a failure to realize the precise and subtle way

in which Augustine is discussing the two stages of the spiritual life, and erroneously to conceive of the two stages as separate lives. This possibility of error is magnified by Augustine's use of separate and successive lives in the cases of Lia and Rachel and Martha and Mary, to illustrate his point. When he quotes Christ's words in Sermo clxix, he is emphasizing the superiority of the contemplative over the active virtue, and revealing that the former is eternal in nature and the latter temporal, but he is not saying that there are two lives. Christ says to Martha:

"Ministras esurientibus, ministras sitientibus, ... omnia ista transeunt. Erit tempus ubi nemo esuriat, neque sitiatur. ... Ergo cura tua auferetur ab a te. Maria meliorem elegit partem, quae non auferetur ab ea." (ibid. cixix.17)

("You minister to the hungry, you minister to the thirsty ... all this will pass away. There will be a time when no-one hungers, nor thirsts. ... Therefore your care will be taken from you. Mary chose the better part, which will not be taken from her.")

Mary did not choose the better life, but the better part:

"Maria meliorem elegit partem." (ibid.)

These extracts echo the specific references from Conf. vii.16,23, and from De Quant. Anim. on page 10 above, that action must precede contemplation, and that the latter is more delightful than the former. This is again seen in Contra Faustum:

"Nam quis tandem amaverit in operibus justitiae laborem actionem atque passionem. Quis eam vitam propter se ipsam expeteverit." (ibid. xxii.52)

("No-one in the works of justice loves the actual toil of the things done and suffered, no-one strives for that life for its own sake.")

and is stated in philosophical terms in De Trin.:

"Satis egimus discernere rationalis mentis officium in temporalibus rebus, ubi non sola cognitio, verum et actio nostra versetur, ab excellentione ejusdem mentis officio quod contemplandis aeternis rebus impenditur, ac sola cognitione finitur." (ibid. xiii.1)

("We have distinguished the function of the rational mind in things temporal wherein not only cognition but also our action is concerned, from that more excellent function of the same mind which is exercised in contemplating things eternal, and is completed in cognition alone.")

Augustine discusses the concepts in terms of vitae, partes, and officia, and is referring to the two parts of the spiritual life. He accepted received doctrine on the relative merits of the two parts, and passed it on in equally emphatic terms. It is important not to lose sight of the fact, however, that he is discussing the two aspects of the growing spiritual life in these passages from his works, and not a distinct contrast of two lives which are separate and unrelated. This is not to say that all people actually arrive at contemplation, but that it is the natural sequel to action rather than a different mode of existence.

Augustine also discusses the way in which the individual should order his life in relation to the world, and this is the second group of concepts referred to earlier. He assumes that the pursuit of the spiritual life through action and contemplation will continue, and examines the different ways in which it can be related to life in society. Cassian asserted in his Collatio xiv (see pages 5 and 6 above), that there are multas professiones from which a man can choose a way suited to him, and specifically mentions monasticism, the life of the hermit, the institutions of charity, and so on. Augustine is less explicit, but nevertheless discusses the different kinds of life which one can follow. The individual can choose a life which is leisured, one which is busy, or one which combines the two:

"In tribus quoque illis vitae generibus, uno scilicet non segniter, sed in contemplatione vel inquisitione veritatis otioso, altero in gerendis rebus humanis negotioso, tertio ex utroque genere temperato." (De Civ.Dei xix.2)

("Moreover, there is in the case of the three kinds of life, one which, not lazily, but in the contemplation and examination of truth,

is leisured; another which is busied in carrying on human affairs; and a third which combines both of these.")

The terms reflect the difference between the subject being discussed and the stages of the spiritual life. The first life in the extract above is not specifically contemplative, but otiosus, and presumably the individual would pursue both the active and contemplative virtues in this state. The second is negotiosus, a term which excludes in this context any suggestion of asceticism, and does not necessarily imply even the works of charity. The third is a combination of these two modes of living. The first is otiosus for the examination of truth, and while leisure would enable the individual to pursue contemplation, this term cannot be considered a synonym for the state of ecstasy and intellectual vigour which characterizes contemplation. Augustine also feels he has to distinguish the type of leisured life to which he is referring from an idle existence, and he would not feel this to be necessary if he were thinking in terms of his vita contemplativa. The life which is negotiosus is purely concerned with human affairs according to the extract, whereas the discussions of activa virtus above make it clear that an indispensable part of this virtue is the inner purgation of sin. The concept of the activa virtus is entirely different in toto from the life to which Augustine is referring here. The life which combines both the leisured (otiosus) and involved (negotiosus) states was considered good by Augustine, the two elements being the study of truth (Chapter I of Book XIX refers to scholarly leisure) and the administration of human affairs (the same chapter refers also to state affairs and other human enterprises). Although Augustine is referring to the City of God, and it is implicit that all its members are bound to God and each other by love, there is a pervading Platonic tone, and the discussion seems to encompass all mankind. Though the "earthly man" is explicitly excluded from the Civitate Dei, Augustine's wide interest in humanity contrasts strongly

with Cassian's narrower frame of reference which pertains only to the monastic life.

The need to fulfil what later mediaeval writers referred to as the lower part of charity is discussed in Contra Faustum, where Augustine reveals his belief in the necessity of the ecclesiastical part of the social organism:

"vita quae studio contemplationis ... vacare vult ab omni negotio, et ideo sterilis ... injustum est autem ut eam consequatur, si ... administrandis Ecclesiasticis curis aptum et idoneum, in otio detinet, nec gubernationi communis utilitatis impertit... in otio discendi." (ibid. xxii.52)

("Life given up to the pursuit of contemplation desires to be free from all business, and is therefore sterile, ... It would not be right, moreover, if it followed that ... one fit and apt for the administration of ecclesiastical charges should be kept in leisure, or that those who are worthy of being entrusted with the government of the church ... should bury themselves in contemplation.")

This is re-stated with more secular reference in De Civ.Dei, though with a warning also against the opposite imbalance of neglecting contemplation:

"Nec sic quisque debet esse otiosus, ut in eodem otio utilitatem non cogitet proximi, nec sic actuosus, ut contemplationem non requirat Dei." (ibid. xix.19)

("No-one should be so at leisure as in his leisure not to think of his neighbour's welfare; nor so busied as not to seek after the contemplation of God.")

It is morally contingent that neither the service of society nor the personal spiritual development are neglected, and it is useful to refer very briefly to the ideas of writers who preceded Augustine in this area of philosophy.

The two main founders of the cenobitic life, Pachomius and S.Basil the Great, rejected the extreme eremitic life practiced by the desert hermits of Egypt and Syria. Pachomius instituted a large group of monasteries,⁹ thus rejecting the solitude of the desert fathers, and S.Basil founded a system embracing orphanages, hospitals and other homes of charity, within a cenobitic framework.¹⁰ The idea of a life which

was concerned with spiritual development but which was not confined wholly to the pursuit of the spiritual life was not, therefore, introduced by S. Augustine, but since he had such a profound influence on the philosophy of the whole mediaeval period, and was crucial in the dissemination of the concept, he can be taken as a logical starting place for the discussion of the combination of the life apart from the world in spiritual terms, and one which is committed to it.

It can be seen, therefore, that S. Augustine conceived of action and contemplation as two complementary parts of the spiritual life, and thus followed the philosophy of Cassian derived from Philo. He can be seen as an eloquent and original writer, but one who preserved the major elements of tradition in the field of action and contemplation, and who was to be of paramount importance in the writings of his successor, S. Gregory the Great.

S. Gregory the Great

S. Gregory the Great was deeply influenced by S. Augustine of Hippo, and the magnitude of the impact of the latter on the thought of the mediaeval period was in no small way connected with Gregory's adaptation and dissemination of his ideas. As one of the great, if not the greatest of popes, Gregory is of importance in the transmission of ideas on action and contemplation. By inclination a contemplative - his reaction to his election as pope was of dismay and grief¹¹ - his pontificate was characterized by efficiency, practical administration, and an unerring eye for reform and improvement. His discussions of the nature of action and contemplation are of great interest, since they were addressed, by a man who was successively an abbot and a pope who desired seclusion and privacy, to monks, bishops and general congregations in the Lateran Basilica. As a result, they are steeped with a close knowledge of the problems involved, and are masterly as a series of surveys of both intellectual and practical matters. Where Cassian had been interested in only the monastic life, and Augustine in all Christendom, Gregory's interest in the health of the Church led him to retain Augustine's width of concern, but to strip away much that was not connected with church matters, and to concentrate on the problems of involvement and withdrawal at the expense of reference to the inner spiritual life. An examination of his ideas can reveal where his indebtedness to Augustine lies, and where he makes original contributions.

Gregory¹² reveals the neo-Platonic influence of the tradition transmitted by Augustine in a statement concerning the need of love for the act of contemplation:

"Unde necesse est, ut quisquis ad contemplationis studia properat, semetipsum prius subtiliter interroget, quantum amat. Machina quippe mentis est vis amoris: quae hanc dum a mundo extrahit, in alta sustollit." (Moralia in Job vi.58)

("It is necessary that whoever eagerly prosecutes the exercises of contemplation, first question himself with particularity, how much he loves. For the force of love is an engine of the soul, which, while it draws it out of the world, lifts it on high.")

This basic stance can be taken as a philosophical counterpart to Augustine's more explicitly Christian concept of heaven as the visionem ... facie ad faciem.¹³ The preparation for contemplation is conceived in more orthodox terms, however, and is directly dependent on Augustine and Cassian. An extract from the Mor. in Job formulates a belief in the need for a discipline in the nature of Cassian's vita actualis with its twin elements of the subduing of the flesh and the reforming of the mind by the exercise of virtue:

"Quisquis ergo jam in se contumelias carnis edomuit, superest ut mentem per studia sanctae operationis exerceat."
(ibid. vi.56)

("Whoever has already subdued the insolencies of the flesh, has this task left him, to discipline his mind by the exercises of holy working.")

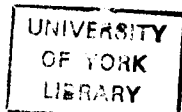
When this has been accomplished, "recollection" and "introversion" can follow. Gregory's concept of "recollection" can be seen to follow the tradition of Cassian and Augustine, and he refers to the contemplating mind:

"nisi prius didicerit terrenarum atque caelestium imaginum phantasmata ab oculo mentis compescere, quicquid de tactu et gustu corporeo cogitationi eius occurrerit, repuere atque calcare, quatenus talem se quaerat intus, qualis sine istis est."
(Homiliae in Hiezechielem II.v.9)

("it must first have learned to shut out from its eyes all the phantasmata of earthly and heavenly images, and to spurn and tread underfoot whatever presents itself to its thought from sight, hearing, smell, bodily touch or taste, so that it may seek itself interiorly as it is without these sensations.")

This process is seen again, followed by "introversion":

"Primus gradus est se ad se colligat; secundus ut videat qualis est collecta."
(ibid.)



("The first step is that the mind recollect itself; the second is that it should see itself as it is when recollected.")

This is then followed by contemplation:

"tertius ut semetipsam surgat, ac se contemplationi Auctoris invisibilis intendo subiciat." (ibid.)

("the third is that it rise above itself, and make the effort to yield itself up to the contemplation of the invisible Creator.")

This ascent is possible by the action of the soul, which exalts itself:

"sibi de seipsa gradus ascensionis facit." (ibid. II.v.8)
("makes a ladder of itself")

The soul is able to aspire above the material and mortal:

"et postquam per multa indecenter sparsa est in unum se colligere nititur." (Mor. in Job xxiii.42)

("after it has been in unseemly manner scattered over the many, it strives to gather itself together to the one.")

Gregory relates how he ascended above the mortal state:

"Retentus corpore ipsa iam carnis claustra contemplatione transibat." (Dialogus I.Pref.)

("though still in the body, went out in contemplation beyond the bars of the flesh.")

and he describes the nature of the experience. The mind reaches out to the light:

"ut de incircumscripto lumine ... attingat." (Hom. in Hiez. II.ii.12)

("attains to somewhat of the unencompassed light")

and achieves contemplation:

"in dulcedinem supernae contemplationis rapitur." (Mor. in Job)

("is rapt into the sweetness of heavenly contemplation")

Gregory identifies this vision of light with God:

"Lux aeterna, quae Deus est." (Mor. in Job xxv.11)

("The eternal Light, which is God.")

and again:

"Lumen verum, Creator videlicet noster." (ibid. xxv.9)

("The true Light, namely, our God.")

This is the vision of the eternal:

"ut unum atque incorporeum Esse contemplatur." (ibid. xxii.42)
("the one and incorporeal Being is contemplated.")

and is ecstatic in its nature:

"Quia ergo post laborem certamina, post tentationum fluctus saepe in excessu anima suspenditur ut cognitionem divinae presentiae contempletur." (ibid. xxiv. 12)

("After the struggles of labour, after the waves of temptations, the mind is often hung aloft in transport, in order that it may contemplate a knowledge of the divine presence.")

The vision is not complete, however, and God is only visible per caliginem ("through darkness" - Mor.in Job.xxxi.101) and this is seen again; the contemplating mind:

"de intimis aliquid quasi per caliginem conspicit."
(ibid. viii.50)

("beholds something of the inmost realities as through darkness")

Like Augustine, Gregory believed that this experience could only be of short duration because of the mortal state of man:

"sed quia adhuc corpus quod corrumpitur aggravat animam, inhaerere diu luci non valet, quam raptim videt." (ibid.)

("But forasmuch as the corruptible body still weighs down the soul, it is not able for long to cleave to the light which it sees in a momentary glimpse.")

It can thus be seen that Gregory was heavily indebted to Augustine in concepts relating to contemplation, and that the popularity of the former during the mediaeval period was important for the dissemination of the ideas of the latter.

If Gregory was little more than a vehicle for earlier tradition on matters of contemplation, he was important in the formation of ideas on the interaction of the individual with society. He accepted tradition as handed down by Augustine, but by his continued interest in, and discussions of the problems related to how the individual should resolve the apparent conflict inherent in the two greatest commandments,

Diliges Dominum Deum¹⁴ and Diliges proximum tuum,¹⁵ he gradually shifted the focus of discussion from Augustine's primary interest in the development of the inner spiritual life, to his own consuming interest in the resolution of any tension between the two commandments. He gradually became more interested in this apparent conflict, possibly because of the demands made by his official position on his own life, and his concern for the health of the Church.

The foregoing discussion of Gregory's concept of contemplation revealed his orthodoxy in regard to the growing spiritual life, and this is substantiated by statements relating to the progression of the individual from action to contemplation:

"activae vitae gradibus, ad quae contemplationis culmina ascendatur." (Mor. in Job. xxxi.102)

("We ascend to the heights of contemplation by the steps of active life.")

and this is seen again:

"Ita nimirum sunt sancti viri: qui dum superna appetunt, primum quidem activae vitae bonis operibus innituntur, et tunc demum se ad sublimi per contemplationis saltum volando suspendunt." (Mor. in Job xxxi.49)

("Thus doubtless are holy men, who, when they aim at heavenly things, rely in the first place in good works of the active life, and after raise themselves in flight to sublime truths by the spring of contemplation.")

The whole process of the developing spirit is seen in its ascent to contemplation and its return to a normal life of action:

"Cum vero ab activa vita ad contemplativam surgimus, quia diu mens stare in contemplatione non valet, sed omne quod de aeternitate per speculum et in aenigmate conspicit, quasi funtim hoc et per transitum videt; ipsa sua infirmitate ab immensitate tantae celsitudinis animus repulsus in semetipso relabitur. Et necesse est ut ad activam redeat seque ipsam continue in usu bonae operationis exerceat ut cum mens surgere contemplanda caelestia non valet, quaeque potest bona agere non recuset. Sicque fit ut ipsis suis bonis actibus adiuta ad superiora rursus in contemplationem surgat et amoris pastum de pabulo contemplatae veritatis accipiat." (Hom. in Hiez. I.v.12)

("When we mount from the active life to the contemplative, as the mind is not able to stand long in contemplation, but whatever it gazes on of eternity in a mirror and an enigma, it beholds so to say, by stealth and in passing, the mind, repelled by the immensity of so great a height, sinks back into itself. And it has to return to the active life and exercise itself for long in the practice of good works, so that when the mind is not able to rise to the contemplation of heavenly things, it may not refuse to do the good it can. And so it comes about that, helped by its good deeds, it again mounts aloft to contemplation, and receives nourishment of love from the pasture of contemplated truth.")

Gregory makes the traditional value judgement regarding the relative merits of action and contemplation:

"Contemplativa autem maior est merito quam activa."
(Hom.in Hiez. I.iii.9)

("The contemplative life is greater in merit than the active.")

and by analogy, the life of business discussed by Augustine is regarded in similar terms:

"Secularia itaque negotia aliquando ex compassione toleranda sunt, numquam vero ex amore requirenda." (Regulae Pastoralis Liber i.7)

("Secular business is sometimes to be borne with, out of compassion, but never to be sought for love.")

Two important points which emerge can be mentioned here. The first is that Gregory consistently adopts a more rigid terminology than Augustine, nearly always referring to activa vita and contemplativa vita. This tightening of terminology will be seen later to play a part in a proportional tightening of concepts. When Augustine used the term virtus to designate either the active or the contemplative part of the spiritual life, he departed from tradition. In deference to Platonic usage, writers had retained the term vita, despite the fact that post-Philonic thinkers were not referring to two separate lives. Augustine's innovation clarified this changed interpretation. Thus, though he and Cassian both referred to two stages of the inner spiritual life, the latter used the term vita, and the former, virtus. Gregory reverts to the inaccurate and misleading convention of using the term vita in these

circumstances. The second point is that the similarity implied between the subjects of the last two extracts above will later be seen to be made explicit by Gregory. It will become evident that he has the same dual awareness as Augustine (see page 18 above), seeing action and contemplation both as recurrent stages in the spiritual life, and as symbols for mortality and eternity. This is seen in the following extracts:

"quia ante activa agitur, ut ad contemplativam postmodum veniatur."
(Hom. in Hiez. II.ii.10)

("The active life is lived first, that afterwards the contemplative may be attained to.")

"Cum presenti ergo saeculo vita aufertur activa, contemplativa autem hic incipitur, ut in caelesti patria perficiatur."
(ibid. II.ii.9)

("Wherefore the active life ceases with the present world; but the contemplative life begins here, that it may be perfected in the heavenly country.")

"Electorum itaque ecclesia, quia cuncta quae operanda sunt, perficit, ... sola initia contemplationis inspicit."
(Mor. in Job xxx.53)

("The elect fully perform all the works that are to be done, ... but as yet look on only the beginnings of contemplation.")

"In hac vita positi contemplationis intimae sola initia degustamus. Activa enim vita quia perfecte teneri potest."
(Hom. in Hiez. II.ii.8)

("While placed in this life we taste only the beginnings of intimate contemplation; whereas the active life can be fully laid hold of.")

While one stage of the spiritual life is delightful, the other is necessary, and Gregory reveals their respective demands:

"Et cum utraeque vitae ex dono sint gratiae, quam diu tamen inter proximos vivimus, una nobis in necessitate est, altera in voluntate. Quis enim cognoscens Deum ad eius regnum ingreditur, nisi bene prius aperetur? Sine contemplativa ergo vita intrare possunt ad caelestem patriam, qui bona quae possunt operari, non negligunt; sine activa autem intrare non possunt, si negligunt bona operari quae possunt. Illa ergo in necessitate haec in voluntate est. Illa in servitute, ista in libertate."
(ibid. I.iii.10)

("Though each life is by the gift of grace, yet as long as we live among our neighbours one is by necessity, the other by choice. For who that knows God enters into his kingdom, unless he first

works well? Without the contemplative life, therefore, those can enter into the heavenly kingdom who neglect not to do the good that they can; but without the active life they cannot enter, if they neglect to do the good they can. Therefore the active life is by necessity, the contemplative by choice."

He shows why it is necessary for sancti viri to undertake both lives:

"Bene autem revertentia animalia coruscanti fulguri comparantur, quia sancti viri cum ad superna contemplanda evolut, cum primitias sui spiritus in caelestis patriae amore ligant, sed gravati humanae conversationis pondere ad semetipsos redeunt, bona caelestia quae saltem per speculum contemplari potuerunt, fratribus denuntiant eorumque animos in amorem intimae claritatis accendunt, quam nec videre sicut est, nec loqui prevalent sicut viderunt. Loquentes autem verbis suis corda audientium feriunt et incendunt." (Hom. in Hiez. I.v.13)

("Holy men when they soar aloft to the contemplation of things on high, when they bind the first-fruits of their spirit in the love of the heavenly country, but weighed down by the load of human life, return to themselves, they declare unto their brethren the heavenly goods they were able to contemplate, at any rate in a mirror, and inflame their minds with the love of inward brightness, which they are able neither to see as it is, nor to utter it as they saw it; but while they speak their words pierce and set on fire the hearts of those that hear.")

Gregory's concepts of action and contemplation are thus very complex, and since his modification of the range of these terms was to influence later discussion, it is necessary to examine the process by which he amplified their meaning.

The heart of the problem is the apparent conflict between the two great commandments, Diliges Dominum Deum and Diliges proximum tuum, but Gregory shows how it is possible, even necessary, to undertake both:

"Duo quippe sunt praecepta caritatis, Dei videlicet amor et proximi. Per activam igitur vitam prodesse proximis cupiens Isaias officium praedicationis appetit: per contemplativam vero Jeremias amori conditioris sedulo inhaerere desiderans, ne mitti ad praedicandum debeat contradicit. Quod ergo laudabiliter alter appetit, hoc laudabiliter alter expavit. Iste ne tacitae contemplationis lucra loquendo perderet, ille ne damna studiosi operis tacendo sentiret. Sed hoc in utrisque est subtiliter intuendum, quia et is qui recusavit, plene non restitit; et is qui mitti voluit, ante per alteris calculum se purgatum vidit." (Reg. Past. i.7)

("There are two commands of charity, the love of God and of our neighbour. Isaias, desiring by the life of action to do good to his neighbours, seeketh the office of preaching, Jeremias, wishing by

the life of contemplation to cleave diligently to the love of his Maker, speaketh against his being bound in duty to be sent to preach. What, therefore, the one laudably sought, the other laudably dreaded; the latter, lest he should squander the gain of silent contemplation by speaking; the former, lest by keeping silence he should have experienced the loss of diligent labour. But it is nicely to be observed in both; that he who had refused resisted not to the end, and he who would be sent had first seen himself purged by the coal from the altar.")

He lays a duty, therefore, on those who are privileged to witness the vision, to make the truth they receive available to others:

"Quisquis spiritalia videndo proficit, oportet ut haec loquendo etiam aliis propinet. Vider quippe ut annuntiet, qui in eo quod in se proficit etiam de profectu proximi praedicando curam genit." (Hom.in Hiez. II.ii.4)

("Whoever reaps benefit by seeing spiritual things, is bound by speaking to lay them before others. For he sees in order that he may announce, who, by the fact that he reaps benefit for himself, by preaching has a care also for the advance of his neighbour.")

This dual existence, of the personal spiritual growth (encompassing action and contemplation), and a concern for one's neighbour, is thus given Old Testament authority, and is also shown to be followed by Christ himself:

"[Christ] conjuncae utriusque vitae, activae videlicet et contemplativae in se exempla monstravit. Ab activa enim vita longe contemplativa distat, sed incarnatus Redemptor noster veniens, dum utramque exhibuit in se utramque sociavit. Nam cum in urbe miracula faceret, in monte vero orando continue pernoctaret; exemplum suis fidelibus praebuit, ut nec contemplationis studio proximorum curam negligant, nec rursum cura proximorum immoderatus obligati, contemplationis studia derelinquant: sed sic in utrisque mentem partiendo conjugant, quatenus nec amorem Dei praepediat amor proximi: nec amorem proximi, quia transcendit, abjiciat amor Dei."

(Mor. in Job xxviii.33)

("[Christ] who set forth in himself patterns of both lives, that is the active and the contemplative, united together. For the contemplative life differs very much from the active. But our Redeemer by becoming incarnate, while he gave a pattern of both, united both in himself. For when he wrought miracles in the city, and yet continued all night in prayer on the mountain, he gave his faithful ones an example not to neglect, through love of contemplation, the care of their neighbours; nor again to abandon contemplative pursuits through being too immoderately engaged in the care of their neighbours; but so to keep together their mind, in applying it to the two cases, that the love of their neighbour may not interfere with the love of God; nor

again the love of God cast out, because it transcends the love of their neighbours.")

Christ commanded perfect preachers to allow neither aspect of life to recede:

"ut perfectis videlicet praedicatoribus innuat, quatenus nec activam amore speculationis funditus deferant, nec contemplationis gaudia penitus operationis nimietate contemnant." (ibid. vi.56)

("all perfect preachers that they should neither entirely leave the active life from the love of the speculative, nor wholly slight the joys of contemplation from excess of working.")

and Gregory warned against what he considered selfishness:

"Sunt itaque nonnulli qui magnis, ut diximus, muneribus ditati, dum salius contemplationis studiis inardescunt parere utilitate proximorum in praedicatione refugiunt, secretum quietis diligunt, secessum speculationis appetunt. De quo si districte judicentur, ex tantis proculdubio rei sunt, quartis venientes ad publicum prodesse potuerunt. Qua enim mente is qui proximis profuturus enitesceret, utilitati ceterorum secretum praeponit suum, quando ipse summi Patris unigenitus, ut multis prodesset, de sinu Patris egressus est ad publicum nostrum."

(Reg.Past. i.5)

("There are some who, being enriched with great gifts, while they are eager for the pursuit only of contemplation, fly from complying with the advantage of their neighbour by preaching, loving the privacy of quiet and seeking the retirement of contemplation. And if they be judged strictly concerning this, they are doubtless answerable for all the good they might have done had they come into public. For with what conscience can he who would be distinguished for his usefulness to his neighbours put his own privacy before the benefit of others, when the only-begotten of the Father himself came forth from the bosom of his Father into public among us, that he might do good to many.")

The importance of combining both types of life is shown:

"Sed latitudo et altitudo aedificii uno calamo mensuratur, quia videlicet unaquaeque anima quantum lata fuerit in amore proximi, tantum et alta erit in cognitione Dei. Dum enim se per amorem iuxta dilatat, per cognitionem se superius exaltat, et tantum super semetipsam excelsa fit, quantum se iuxta se in proximi amorem tendit."

(Hom. in Hiez. II.ii.15)

("Each soul the broader it is in the love of its neighbour, the higher also will it be in the knowledge of God. For while by love it enlarges itself alongside itself, by knowledge it bears itself aloft; and it becomes the higher above itself in proportion as it stretches itself out alongside itself to the love of neighbour.")

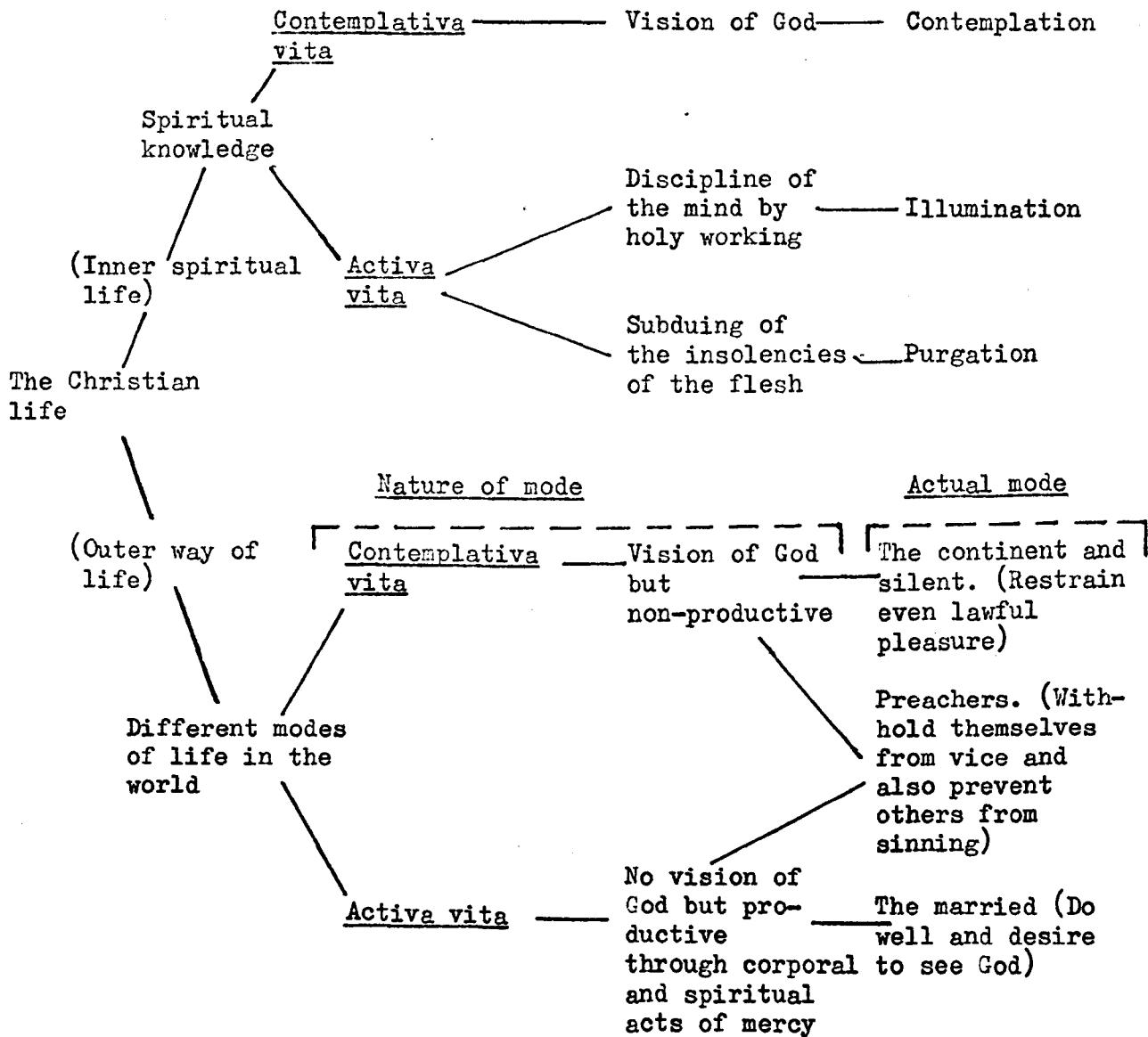
Gregory has arrived at the point where he is using activities characteristic of the two stages of the spiritual life to designate the two alternatives of withdrawal from, or involvement with the world. His primary interest at this point is the practical problem of how to balance commitment to society and seclusion in the development of the inner spiritual life, and he is in the reverse position to that in which Augustine was seen on pages 18 and 19 above. Augustine was discussing spiritual growth and allowing peripheral awareness of mortality and eternity, and involvement and withdrawal from the world, to give colour and depth to his concepts. Gregory is doing precisely the opposite, concentrating mainly on the questions of involvement and withdrawal. For Gregory, concerned as he was in the spread of the faith, the preacher symbolizes the alternation of personal concern, and what would now be termed social concern. It is to be noted, however, that the tone of the extract following is taken from discussions of the relative merits of the active and contemplative virtues:

"Cum enim longe sit a continentibus et tacentibus excellentia praedicatorum, et valde a coniugatis distet eminentia continentium, quid est quod una mensura dicitur trium? Coniugati quippe quamvis et bene agant et omnipotentem Deum videre desiderent, domesticis tamen curis occupantur, et necessitate cogente, in utroque mentem dividunt. Continentes autem ab huius mundi actione remoti sunt, et voluptatem carnis etiam a licito coniugio restringunt, nulla coniugis, nulla filiorum cura, nullis noxiis ac difficilibus rei familiaris cogitationibus implicantur. Praedicatores vero non solum se a vitiis coercent sed etiam alias peccare prohibent, ad fidem docunt, in studio bonae conversationis instruunt."

(ibid. II.iv.6)

("The excellence of preachers is far above that of the continent and silent, and the eminence of the continent outdistances greatly that of married people. The married, though they do well and desire to see God, yet are occupied by domestic cares and are divided in mind. The continent are remote from the affairs of this world and restrain carnal pleasures even from lawful wedlock; they are implicated in no care of wife and children, and no troublesome or difficult thoughts of providing for a family. But preachers not only withhold themselves from vices, but restrain others from sinning, lead them to the faith, and instruct them in the pursuit of good living.")

S. Gregory the Great



- N.B. 1. The terms contemplativa vita and activa vita are used in two very different contexts:
- a) as names of the two traditional parts of the inner spiritual life.
 - b) as names for the different natures of the two alternatives of involvement with, or withdrawal from, the world. In this context, they operate by utilizing the parallel which exists between contemplation and a withdrawn life, and action and an involved life.
2. Though Gregory accepted the traditional division of the spiritual life, his great interest in the problems of involvement, withdrawal and the balance between the two led to the use of the terms contemplativa vita and activa vita in the sense of note 1b) taking precedence over a).

He is discussing the need of what Augustine would have called a man of otiosus life to become involved in affairs from the negotiosus life, but he is using, when the last half-a-dozen extracts are taken overall, the tone and terminology of the active and contemplative virtues. This was what led Butler to assume firstly an identification of Gregory's discussions on action-contemplation with those on involvement-withdrawal, and secondly, a greater difference between Augustine and Gregory than actually exists. This whole process of confusion can be seen latent in Gregory's discussion of Martha and Mary:

"In hac vita positi contemplatione intimae sola initia degustamus. Activa enim vita quia perfecto teneri potest . . . Bene has utrusque vitas duae illae mulieres signaverunt, Martha videlicet et Maria." (ibid. II.ii.8-9)

("while placed in this life we taste only the beginnings of intimate contemplation; whereas the active life can be fully laid hold of. The two women, Martha and Mary, well symbolized these lives.")

The treatise continues:

"Rachel pulchra et infecunda, quia contemplativa vita speciosa est in animo, sed dum quiescere in silentio appetit, filios non generat ex praedicatione. . . Lia vero lippa et fecunda est, quia activa vita, dum occupatur in opere, minus videt, sed dum modo per verbum, modo per exemplum ad imitationem suum proximos accendit, multo in bono opere filios generat." (ibid. II.ii.10)

("Rachel was beautiful but sterile, because the contemplative life is lovely in the mind, but while it longs to rest in silence, it does not generate sons by preaching. . . Lia, on the other hand, was dim-eyed but fruitful; because the active life, while it is occupied in work, sees less, but while now by word, now by example, it incites others to imitate itself, it generates many children in its good work.")

and the final stage in the argument is reached:

"Et si [activa vita] in contemplatione mentem tendere non valet, ex eo tamen quod agit exterius, gignere sequaces valet." (ibid.)

("And if [the active life] is not able to stretch the mind in contemplation yet from the fact that it acts exteriorly, it is able to beget followers.")

He uses two lives to symbolise the two virtues (or stages) of the spiritual life, and gradually moves to a position where he is using an

activity characteristic of a virtue to designate a type of life, rather than a part of life. He then moves to the logical conclusion of using the terminology of the two virtues to designate respectively an involved life, and a withdrawn life; they are what Augustine would have referred to as negotiosus and otiosus.¹⁶ This is seen in its clearest form in what Butler referred to as the "classic" definition of action and contemplation:

"Activa enim vita est, panem esurienti tribuere, verbo sapientiae nescientem docere, ennarartem corrigere, ad humilitatis viam superbientem proximum revocare, infirmantis curam genere, quae singulis quibusque expediant dispensare, et commissis nobis qualiter subsistere valent providere. Contemplativa vero vita est caritatem quidem Dei proximi tota mente retinere, sed ab exteriori actione quiescere, soli desiderio Conditoris inhaerere, ut nil iam agere libeat, sed, calcatis curis omnibus, ad videndam faciem sui Creatoris animus inardescat, ita ut iam noverit carnis corruptibilis pondus cum maerore portare, totisque desideriis appetere illis hymnidicis angelorum choris interesse, admisceri caelestibus civibus, de aeterna in conspectu Dei incorruptione gaudere."

(ibid. II.ii.8)

("The active life is: to give bread to the hungry, to teach the ignorant the word of wisdom, to correct the erring, to recall to the path of humility our neighbour when he waxes proud, to tend the sick, to dispense to all what they need, and to provide those entrusted to us with the means of subsistence. But the contemplative life is: to retain indeed with all one's mind the love of God and neighbour, but to rest from exterior action, and cleave only to the desire of the Maker, that the mind may now take no pleasure in doing anything, but having spurned all cares, may be aglow to see the face of its creator, so that it already knows how to bear with sorrow the burden of the corruptible flesh, and with all its desires to seek to join the hymn-singing choirs of angels, to mingle with the heavenly citizens, and to rejoice at its everlasting incorruption in the sight of God.")

It can be seen that Gregory established the consistent use of the terms activa vita and contemplativa vita, and more important, tended to restrict their range to, respectively, the lower part of charity and the spiritual life as a whole. While he accepted the tradition of Cassian and Augustine on spiritual growth, his greater interest in the problems of involvement and withdrawal from the world led him to reduce to a secondary level, in many of his writings, the traditional concepts

of the activa virtus concerning its inner and personal significance, and to increase the range of contemplativa virtus to include, by implication, all the stages of spiritual growth.

Cassian, Augustine and Gregory all believed, therefore, that a life aligned with the two-fold spiritual growth was an essential part of the life of the individual, whether he remained only in the first stage, or progressed to contemplation. They also believed that he should alternate his personal life with involvement in the world. Gregory, as has been seen, agreed in fact with his predecessors, but in practice uses a different (though dangerously similar) terminology. The result of this is that the later middle ages received a philosophy on action and contemplation which was an amalgam of all three writers, but couched in the more complex terminology of the last.

2. The Monastic Centuries

From S. Benedict of Nursia to the rise of Cluny

Historians in the earlier part of this century believed that the Rule of S. Benedict of Nursia commanded universal monastic observance during what became known as the "Benedictine Centuries".¹⁷ More recent work has revealed a greater heterogeneity, however, and it is now generally accepted that a number of rules written between the beginning of the fourth and the end of the fifth centuries enjoyed varying observance depending on locality and time;¹⁸ all derived in some part from the writings of the desert fathers and other early figures, and all promoted a similar ascetic ideal.¹⁹ The Celtic rules, typified by that of Columba, were other rivals in the cenobitic field. The excellence of Benedict's Rule resulted in its increasing popularity, and when S. Benedict of Aniane came to write his Codex Regularum in the early ninth century, he chose it as the obvious pattern. The immediate failure of this Carolingian reform did not prevent writers in the following three centuries from associating it with early ninth-century monasticism, and its character and influence penetrated so completely, that the anachronism of projecting its late ninth and tenth century dominance back to the seventh and eighth centuries gained currency. If one is thus deprived of the evocative term, "the Benedictine Centuries", this period, from c.600-1100, can be usefully termed "the monastic centuries", since the unity of the monastery and society was less complete in the period which saw Cistercian customs competing with other forms of both regular and non-regular life. The monastic centuries saw religious life being organised from the monasteries rather than the premature and almost still-born parish church system. Learning and spiritual doctrine were virtually monastic monopolies,²⁰ and the cenobitic life was seen by many as a vital part of society. The monastery was not a purely religious phenomenon, but impinged on the daily consciousness of many

people, often in the tangible form of alms, medical help, or employment,²¹ and always in the form of a presence, which if not uniformly impeccable in its observance, was constant and recognizable.²²

The development of western monasticism after the death of S. Gregory the Great was, as might be expected, consistent in neither the geographical nor the spiritual dimension. Moral laxity and decay would be burnt out by a spiritual revival only for there to be a reversion to irregular observance after the initial fervour had subsided, and a region where a monastery had been established would lose its regular body through economic, social or political disturbance. Despite these fluctuations, monasteries gradually developed a distinctive character based more or less on S. Benedict's rule, and cenobitic life exerted an increasing appeal. Since this rule was considered by mediaeval writers to be the best, and since other rules which were followed before its almost universal adoption were very similar, it is valid to examine certain aspects of post-Gregorian monasticism through a brief study of its provisions.

The simple life laid down in the Rule²³ stipulated silence,²⁴ humility, obedience, poverty, chastity and manual labour. In addition, the monk had to spend a certain number of hours performing the Opus Dei, and another part of the day in sacred reading.²⁵ One historian has said:

"The life was simple and hard, probably differing little as far as material standards were concerned from the contemporary Italian peasant." ²⁶

though the extra dimensions of spiritual observance made an inevitable difference. The life, if followed faithfully, was an incarnation of early patristic exhortation. The monks spent much time in prayer and confession, rooting out vice and sin,²⁷ and cultivating the virtues²⁸

commended by Christ. They thus undertook what Augustine would have called the activa virtus. Abbot C. Butler interpreted the last words of the Rule as a reference to mystical experience:

"Quisquis ergo ad patriam coelestem festines, hanc minimam inchoationis regulam descriptam, adjuvante Christo, perfice; et tunc demum ad majora, quae supra commemoravimus, doctrinae virtutemque culmina, Deo protegente, pervenies."

(The Rule of S. Benedict c.73)

("Whoever you are, who desire to advance apace to the heavenly country, practice first, through Christ's help, this little rule for beginners. And in the end, under God's protection, you will climb the greater heights of knowledge and virtue to which the holy fathers beckon you." (Translation from CHADWICK, O. op.cit.))

This must refer, at the very least, to a concept of high spiritual experience, and Peter Damian (d. 1072) believed that this was intended to be understood as a reference to contemplation.²⁹ If Butler and Damian are followed in believing this to be so, there is possible corroboration to be found in the fact that Benedict was deeply influenced by John Cassian, who refers to mystical experience in his Collationes.³⁰ Further evidence for believing that this was how it was interpreted by monks after the time of S. Gregory lies in the wide dissemination of the mystical writings of SS. Augustine and Gregory. The end of the rule can thus be seen as an approximation to the traditional contemplative virtue as expounded by Augustine, and the spiritual life of the monks can be interpreted as following the traditional pattern of action followed by contemplation. This is not to claim, of course, that all monks were capable of practising and understanding it. In addition, the monks were exhorted by Benedict to help others:

"Pauperes recreare.

Nudum vestire.

Infirmum visitare.

Mortuum sepelire."

(The Rule of S. Benedict, c.4)³¹

("To relieve the poor, To clothe the naked. To visit the sick. To bury the dead." (translated from CHADWICK, O. op.cit.))

and to give hospitality to travellers.³² They therefore also helped their fellow-men in what Augustine would have called an active involvement (negotiosus) with the world, though it is important to remember that the prime function of a monastery at this time was to provide its members with a retreat from the world. During the time of the general observance of rules approximating to the provisions made by S. Benedict, therefore, the life of the monk was strongly coloured by Augustinian concepts of action and contemplation.

The period immediately after the death of S. Gregory witnessed the development of monasticism, as has been seen, into a well-defined and recognized form. The three centuries following, from the beginning of the seventh century to the Cluniac reforms of the early tenth century have, in the past, been regarded by historians as a time of intellectual inertia. A representative discussion of action and contemplation is seen in the writings of Bede, in his Quaestiones super Leviticum c.VII, where orthodox comments on the activa vita and the contemplativa vita are made in relation to boni operis and saepe.³³ Action is said to be productive, where contemplation is granted vision, but undertakes no work. Bede, according to Petry, merely echoed earlier writers:

"Bede the Venerable reflects Augustine and Gregory consistently"³⁴
and asserts that Rabanas Maurus and Paschasius Radbertus

"likewise recall Gregory."³⁵

Beryl Smalley mentions Bede's

"Christian Latin learning and his judicious handling of his sources"³⁶

but also echoes the general tenor of Petry's comments regarding the period:

"To study the commentaries of Alcuin, Claudius of Turin, Raban Maur, and Walafriid Strabo his pupil, to mention outstanding names, is simply to study their sources. The few scholars who have undertaken this complicated and ungrateful work have shown that the compilers of the Carolingian period were less scientific than Bede their 'master'." ³⁷

All authorities agree that this period, while having its own brilliance in compilation and codification, contributes little in the way of new ideas.³⁸ In the field of action and contemplation, at least one writer can be seen giving a tired repetition of Gregory's views:

"the good monk ... must be united to both lives. The contemplative is reading and prayer, the active is manual work." 39

Butler, who cites this text, asserts:

"the earliest commentator on the rule, Paul Warnefrid, towards the end of the eighth century in the Exposition of c. XLVII, definitely applies to Benedictine life S. Gregory's teaching." 40

This is not so, but it is of great interest in the transmission of Gregory's views. The ambiguity which Gregory's complex concepts invite has resulted in the constituent elements of the two virtues of action and contemplation being lost, and the elements relating to two different modes of life becoming the total meaning. A second change which was inevitable, in view of the greater simplification of Gregory's unorthodox use of activa vita and contemplativa vita (i.e. to designate two different types of life) was the reduction of the range of the terms; the active came to refer merely to manual work, and the contemplative to refer to reading and prayer, a pale shadow of contemplation. This text can be seen as a sign of the constant repetition of earlier views, demonstrating the tendency of imitation gradually to dull the lustre and reduce the range of the subject. It would be uncritical to portray the period as dark and stagnant, but there seems to be little in the way of development in the concepts of action and contemplation on an original level.

If intellectual life were conservative in its nature, the life originally laid down by the various rules of the early period underwent considerable modification.⁴¹ The small simple community of the rule

contained within itself the seeds of inevitable change. The monks increasingly tended to be literate, and the period of sacred reading prescribed by Benedict fostered the development of the monasteries as centres of learning. The simple agricultural community, by its virtual monopoly of learning, became intellectual in nature, and at the same time, the practice whereby monks also took orders, increased the scope and length of the Opus Dei. The features which were to distinguish later observance were already developing during the earlier period, and the simplicity of Monte Cassino gradually gave way to a complexity which pre-figured the customs of Cluny.

Monastic figures exerted an influence on the growth of western civilization during this period. If there was little originality, there was painstaking transmission of the ideas of the past. Alcuin (735-804) became head of the Palatine school at Aachen in 781, and for eight years headed the movement destined to be instrumental in bringing about the Carolingian revival.⁴² He also undertook such mechanical but crucial tasks as the standardization of spelling, and the development of the use of the Carolingian miniscule script; he also published a standard edition of the Vulgate Bible and other liturgical works. Eminent pupils went out and carried his reforms and techniques throughout western Europe. Charlemagne's aim was to provide an educated clergy to administer his empire, and the first generations of Alcuin's pupils included Hrabanus Maurus, Walafrid Strabo and Servatus Lupus. Knowles has said that the Carolingian revival established a firm framework for education and gathered up the threads of the intellectual life of former times for transmission to the future, but he said that

"no great works of literature and no original thought resulted from it." 43

Another monastic figure of this time was Benedict of Aniane, who was trusted by Charlemagne with the reform of monastic life. As already

indicated, he took S. Benedict's rule as his base, and his Codex Regularum incorporates most of its administrative provisions. His premature death and the unsuitability of the age for a massive organisational machine resulted in the early withering of this attempted reform, but it bore later fruit when the Cluniac reformers of the middle decades of the tenth century looked back to the Carolingian provisions for both inspiration and counsel.

From Cluny to the Twelfth Century

The disintegration of the Carolingian Empire had a profound effect on monasticism as well as on many other institutions and administrative machines. In addition to the monasteries being open to the possibilities of decline inherent in the general decay which follows the collapse of organisation at the political level, they suffered from their vulnerability to both official greed and the actual brigandage of Huns, Saracens and Scandinavians.⁴⁴ The reforms of S. Benedict of Aniane had established what was to be the nature of later monastic organisation, but had been born in an unsympathetic age. The establishment of the abbey of Cluny, a century later in 909, in a secluded valley near Mâcon was in no way unusual at the time, and must have seemed just another foundation. It had three advantages, however, which were to enable it to become the origin of a major change in European monasticism. It was safe in its seclusion from attack, its nominal donation to an impotent papacy ensured its freedom from both lay and episcopal interference, and its first abbot, Berno, was thoroughly versed in the reforms of S. Benedict of Aniane. It had the further good fortune of having virtually two centuries under the control of five gifted abbots, Berno (909-26), Odo (927-42), Maieul (948-94), Odilo (994-1049) and Hugh (1049-1109). By the end of this period, Cluny had passed its peak, but during this time it was to embody the conception of monachism which informed most of contemporary west European cenobitic life, and to be a vast organisation with dependent houses throughout Europe.

The Cluniac conception of monastic life can be expressed as the service of God through the liturgy.⁴⁵ There was no manual work at all, and no time for lectio divina. The third element prescribed by S. Benedict of Nursia, the Opus Dei, was the supreme function of Cluny. The offices

started within an hour or two of midnight, and continued almost unabated till late the following evening; while this unceasing corporate devotion appealed to many, it was one of the first targets of Cistercian reform in later years. The other occupation allowed to monks was manuscript illumination and the other arts. By the time of Odilo the Cluniac system was at its peak, and its pre-eminence began to wane during the middle and later years of the abbacy of Hugh. Its importance was as an early move towards centrally organised regular conformity in an age of uncertainty. By the mid-eleventh century, order was beginning to emerge, and the political, economic, social and religious trends which were to come to maturity in late mediaeval Europe were discernible;⁴⁶ when this happened, Cluny's main strength was no longer a sufficient raison d'être.

The Cluniac system was a reaction to monastic decay, and as the revived observance gained impetus, there were other reactions which can be seen as rejections of both the original mediocrity and of the cure epitomized by Cluny. S.Nilus (c.910-1065) was one of the earliest reformers to return to the simple and bare rule of S.Benedict of Nursia. He established a monastery at Grottaferrata⁴⁷ which rejected the accretions represented by Cluniac observance, but also incorporated some of the austerity, not to say severity, of the Syrian hermits. This was followed by the establishment of the monastery at Camaldoli⁴⁸ by Romuald of Ravenna (950-1027), and also by the foundation of S.John Gualbert (990-1073) at Vallambrosa,⁴⁹ where strict silence was accompanied by strict seclusion. The monastery at the Grand Chartreuse⁵⁰ which was founded by Bruno of Rheims in 1084 was similar in nature. A very influential figure was Peter Damian (1007-72), who left his mark on many institutions, though he finally settled in none. He preached a

return to the austerity of the desert and the hermit's life as the perfect way to Christ. The conception of a life of total seclusion is of interest to the theme of action and contemplation. These new orders believed that the encrusted Cluniac liturgy prevented the approach to God which they regarded as the sole aim of their calling. Where the Cluniacs saw the monastery as an organisation for the corporate praise of God, the hermit-like reformers saw it as a retreat in which the individual came to God in silent seclusion. It could be argued that these extreme views remained mainly south of the Alps, but around 1100 there were other moves of the same kind. At Savigny⁵¹ in 1088, Vitalis organised an austere, though not severe return to the rule of S. Benedict of Nursia, and in 1109 S. Bernard, who was to achieve such eminence at Cîteaux and Clairvaux, established a monastery at Tiron⁵², where work in the fields alternated with private devotion. A similar attempt to get back to the simplicity of S. Benedict is seen in S. Stephen's house at Muret,⁵³ and also in the foundation of Robert of Arbrissel at Fontevrault,⁵⁴ both late in the eleventh century. The foundation at Molesme was intended as a similar reform, though it was destined to be rejected itself within a few years of its inception. These movements form a pattern of disillusion with both decayed and revived Benedictine monasticism and are part of that wider intellectual stirring which is considered by many modern authorities to be a renaissance of equal importance to that of the sixteenth century.⁵⁵ In terms of the theme of action and contemplation, they foreshadow a rejection of the developments of five centuries of regular life, and a complex reaction taking many varied forms. The seclusion of the hermit was chosen by some, the new order of Cîteaux, shortly to be discussed, by others, and a variety of non- or semi-regular forms of life by yet others. Viewed from afar, the eleventh and twelfth

centuries can be seen as a period of turmoil and re-definition,
after centuries of reforms which attempted to return to an inaccurately
conceived idea of primitive observance.

3. The Twelfth Century Renaissance

S. Bernard of Clairvaux

The reaction of eleventh and twelfth century writers to contemporary monasticism has been briefly considered above, and S. Bernard of Clairvaux was a most important figure in that complex pattern of rejection of previous practice. He cast aside traditional black monachism as expressed in the customs of Cluny, and sought to re-create the fervour and purity of primitive observance. SS. Gregory and Augustine were regarded widely as authoritative vehicles of tradition, and S. Bernard adopted many of their ideas, but he also made some fundamental modifications. The two Fathers had sought to take the word of God out into the world, and their ideas on action and contemplation reflect this by widening the scope of Cassian's discussions to refer not solely to monks, but also to men of the world. Bernard reverts to discussing the role of action and contemplation in the context of monastic life, and thereby narrows its sphere of application, but at the same time he seeks to bring men of the world into the monastery. He proposes to take the word of God out into the world, but also wishes to bring a greater number of men into the institution where God can best be found. His fiery devotion, eloquence and intellectual gifts have been so widely discussed that they need no further repetition, but an awareness of these qualities makes possible an understanding of the daring and passionate nature of his ideas. He rejected the liturgical accretions to the monastic day which Cluny had taken to the extreme, and re-instated manual work and private devotion to the place assigned to them by S. Benedict of Nursia. A sidelight on the possible interpretations of the account of Martha and Mary is seen in a twelfth-century dialogue cited by C. Butler in his Western Mysticism where a Cluniac jests with a Cistercian, telling him that they are

respectively Martha and Mary, since one lives the contemplative life, and the other, in his work in the fields, lives the active life.⁵⁶

The following account of the writings of S. Bernard relating to action and contemplation illustrates his general acceptance of the traditional concepts of the subject, but also reveals his essentially affective approach, which contrasts with the more philosophical approaches of SS. Augustine and Gregory, and is partly responsible for the modifications he makes.

The basic imagery which Bernard adopts for discussing the spiritual life is taken from the Canticles,⁵⁷ and considers three stages, penance, acquisition of virtue and knowledge of God, under an allegory of kisses of the feet, hands and mouth.

"Triplecem quemdam animae profectum sub nomine trium osculorum sermo hesternus complexus est. ... In primo sane primordia dedicantur nostrae conversionis: secundum autem proficientibus indulgetur: porro tertium sola experitur, et rara perfectio."
(In Cantica Canticorum IV.i)

("The sermon of yesterday was occupied in describing the three-fold progress of the soul, under the name of three kisses. ... In the first are dedicated the first fruits of conversion, the second shall be accorded to those making progress in holiness, but the third is rarely experienced, and only by those who are perfect.")

This imagery is further explained in the same chapter,

"Sunt ergo hi tres animarum affectus sive profectus, expertis dumtaxit satis noti et manifesti, cum aut de actis malis indulgentiam, aut de bonis agendis gratiam, aut ipsius etiam indultoris et benefactoris sui presentiam eo quidem modo quo in corpore fragile possibile est, obtinent intueri." (ibid.)

("There are, then, three states or modes of souls sufficiently well-known at least to those who have experienced them, when, as far as is possible in these weak bodies of ours, they are enabled to take knowledge either of the pardon which they have received for their evil actions, or the grace which has enabled them to do good ones, or lastly, of the very presence of Him who is their patron and benefactor.")

and is seen again in slightly different form,

"Nempe auditam fecisti mihi mane misericordiam tuam, cum jacenti primum in pulvere, tuaque deosculanti reverenda

vestigia quod male vixeram remisisti. Porro in progressu diei laetificasti animam servi tui, cum deinde in osculo manus etiam bene vivendi gratiam indulxisti, et nunc quid restat, O bone Domini, nisi ut jam in plenitudine lucis, in servore spiritus ad oris quoque osculum dignanter admittens, ad impleas me laetitia cum vultu tuo?" (ibid. III.vi)

("Thou hast made me to hear Thy mercy in the morning when I lay prone in the dust, and kissing the prints of Thy sacred steps, Thou didst pardon the evil of my former life. Then, as the day of my life went on, Thou hast rejoiced the soul of Thy servant, since, by the kiss of Thy Hand, Thou hast accorded to me the grace to live well. And now what remains, O Good Lord, unless that in deigning to admit me, in the fulness of Thy light, in the fervour of my spirit, to the kiss of Thy Divine Lips, Thou shouldst fulfil me with the joy of Thy Countenance?"

Bernard warns against any misunderstanding of his words and emphasizes their purely spiritual meaning,

"Afferte pudicas aures ad sermonem qui in manibus est de amore: et cum ipsos cogitatis amantes, non virum et feminam, sed verbum et animam sentiatis oportet. Et si Christum et ecclesiam dixeris, idem est, nisi quod ecclesiae nomine non una anima, sed multarum unitas potius unanimitas designatur."

(ibid. LXI.ii)

("Take heed that you bring chaste ears to this discourse of love, and when you think of these two who are its subject, remember always that not a man and a woman are to be thought of, but the word of God and the devout soul. And if I shall speak of Christ and the church, the sense is the same, except that under the name of the church is specified not one soul only, but the unity, or rather the unanimity of many souls.")

and he explains clearly the meaning of the kiss of the mouth, which he intends to be understood as a receiving of the Holy Spirit,

"Quod non est aliud nisi infundi spiritu-sancto."

(ibid. VIII.ii)

("For this signifies nothing else than to receive the inpouring of the Holy Spirit.")

The three stages correspond to purgation (with slight modification), illumination and contemplation. Purgation was seen by Cassian, Augustine and Gregory as a man-centred activity whereby the grace of God enabled the individual to travail in order to understand his faults, and, subsequently, to learn how to control them. If Bernard agrees with

this he leaves it unsaid in relation to this allegory, as all his references to this first stage are concerned only with the mercy of God's pardoning of sin.^{57a} Two of the extracts quoted above refer to remission of sin and knowledge of pardon respectively, as the first step in the spiritual life. This emphasis reflects and probably arises from Bernard's affective spirituality. The three earlier writers were chronologically and culturally closer to the period when Classical concepts were embodied in Christian theology, but by the twelfth century the impact of these ideas had been distanced by time and the vast difference in cultural milieu. The same vigour which was part of the twelfth century renaissance changed the tone and structure of the concepts relating to the spiritual life, and the emotional approach to God which was to be so much a part of late mediaeval devotion was already making itself felt.

The same modification of emphasis is seen in Bernard's use of the allegory of Lia and Rachel. Cassian, Augustine and Gregory thought of the spiritual life in two parts, the activa vita (or virtus) which was the travail of the soul, and the contemplativa vita (or virtus) which was the communion of the soul with God; these were discussed under the figures of Lia and Rachel. In Bernard's writing they are used extensively to discuss the same two stages, but with the difference that the element of personal purgation, which was already being reduced in importance in the metaphor of the three kisses, disappears almost entirely. Augustine said that Lia was interpreted Laborans,⁵⁸ and this word traditionally includes the complete spectrum of spiritual labour, and implies purgation as well as the exercise of virtue. The following two extracts show that Bernard is thinking principally of the cultivation of virtue within the individual, the element of purgation having no place in the context of his discussion,

"En forte appetis et ipse contemplationis quietem, et bene facis: tantum ne obliviscaris flores, quibus lectulum sponsae legis adpersum. Ergo cura et tu tuum similiter circumdare bonorum floribus operum, virtutum exercitio, tamquam flore, fructum sanctum otium praevenire, alioquin delicatio satis otio dormire voles, si si exercitatus quiescere appetas, et Liae foecunditate neglecta, solis cupias Rachelis amplexibus oblectari."

(ibid. XLVI.v.)

("Perhaps you desire also the repose of contemplation; and in this you do well, provided that you do not forget the flowers with which, as you read, the couch of the bride is strewed. Therefore do thou take great care similarly to wreath around thine the blossoms of good works, and to make the exercise of virtues precede that sacred rest, as the flower goes before the fruit. Otherwise, it would be self-indulgent that you should so earnestly desire to rest before you have earned that rest by labour, and you would be neglecting the fruitfulness of Leah in desiring to enjoy only the society of Rachel.")

The second extract tends to confirm this impression,

"Deinde etiam circumdare tibi flores bonorum quorumcumque actuum et laudabilium studiorum atque odoramenta virtutum, id est quaecumque sunt vera, quaecumque pudica, quaecumque justa, quaecumque sancta, quaecumque amabilia, quaecumque bonae famae, si qua virtus, si qua laus disciplinae; haec cogitare, in his exerceri curato."

(ibid. XLVI. vii)

("In the next place, I should wish you to adorn yourself with the flowers of good works and laudable studies of every kind, and seek the sweet perfumes of all virtues: or in other words, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise of discipline, think on these things, and endeavour to employ yourself in them.")

A further modification made by Bernard is that he says that the two parts of the spiritual life belong specially to the monk, though he elsewhere states that it is present to some degree in almost every member of the church.⁵⁹ Augustine was much more emphatic in his opinion that every member of the church must undertake as much of the spiritual life as he can. Bernard's belief in the special right of the monk in this matter is seen in the following extract,

"(Et in ecclesia quidem) lectum in quo quiescitur, claustra existimo esse et monasteria, in quibus quiete a curis vivitur saeculi, et sollicitudinibus vitae."

(ibid. XLVI. ii.)

("And I consider the couch upon which rest is taken means the monasteries and cloisters in which a quiet and peaceable life is passed, exempt from the cares and inquietudes of the world.")

The dramatic increase in the numbers of those seeking entry to the monasteries, and the ease with which access was possible, makes this a less exclusive statement than it might otherwise seem, but the fact remains that Bernard was reducing the wide application of the life of action and contemplation that Augustine had suggested was desirable.

Bernard's conception of the way to contemplation is moulded by traditional ideas; he retains the three-fold process of recollection, introversion, and contemplation in his scheme, and the following extracts illustrate this path to the sight of God. The first statement reveals the traditional concept of the divesting of the soul of sense impressions, followed by the act of contemplation,

"Sed moriatur anima mea morte etiam (si dici potest) angelorum, ut praesentium memoria excedens, rerum se inferiorum corporearumque, sitque ei pura cum illis conversatio, cum quibus est puritatis similitudo."

(ibid. LIII. v.)

("May my soul die the death which, if I may so speak, belongs to angels; so that, departing from the memory of things present, and being divested not only of desire for, but also the haunting ideas and images of, things corporeal and inferior, it may enter into pure relations with those in which is the image and likeness of purity.")

The meaning of the pure relations mentioned here is amplified in the following manner,

"Talis (ut opinor) excessus aut tantum, aut maxime contemplatio dicitur."

(ibid.)

("Of this nature, as I consider, is the ecstasy in which contemplation wholly or principally exists.")

The midway stage of introversion is discussed in the following extract, which, although it comes from another source, relates to the three-fold process under discussion,

"Quaeramus igitur per ea saltem quae facta sunt, intellectum invisibilium Dei: quae si in ceteris creaturis intellecta conspicit anima, necesse est ut longe amplius imaginem creatoris, hoc est in seipsa."

(Sermo de Div. IX. ii)

("Let us seek the understanding of the invisible things of God by those things that are made; but if the soul sees them to be understood in other creatures, she must needs see them far more fully and understand them much more delicately in the creature made in the image of God, that is, in herself.")

This corresponds quite closely to the traditional ideas on the subject, but where earlier writing conceived of the final act as a unified experience in which intellect and emotion were fulfilled together, Bernard speaks of two separate approaches, through either one or the other.

"Cum enim duo sint beatae contemplationis excessus, in intellectu unus, et alter in affectu; ... unus in agnitione, alter in devotione."

(In Cantica Canticorum XLIX.iv)

("For there are two kinds of ecstasy in holy contemplation: one of the understanding, the other of the heart; ... the one in perception, the other in devotion." (My translation))

His belief in the intellectual act has just been examined, and he speaks of the result of this type of vision,

"Sequatur subita quaedam atque insolita latitudo mentis, et infusio luminis illuminantis intellectum vel ad scientiam Scripturarum, vel ad mysteriorum notitiam."

(ibid. LVII. vii, viii)

("Then ensues a certain sudden and unusual enlargement of the mind and inpouring of light illuminating the intellect, either for knowledge of Scriptures or comprehension of mysteries.")

The emotional approach is quite different in method and result, as can be seen from the following statement,

"Saepe corde tepido et arido accedimus ad altare, orationi incumbimus. Persistentibus autem repente infunditur gratia, pinguescit pectus, replet viscera inundatio pietatis: et si sit premat, lac conceptae dulcedinis ubertim fundere non tardabunt."

(ibid. IX.vii)

("Often we approach the altar and begin to pray with a heart lukewarm and dry; but if we steadily persist, grace comes suddenly in a flood upon us, our breast grows full of increase, a wave of piety fills our inward heart; and if we press on, the milk of sweetness conceived in us will spread over us in fruitful flood.")

This approach is seen again in a discussion which asserts that just as God appeared to the Patriarchs, he appears now, but in a different form,

"Sed est divina inspectio, eo differentior ab his, quo interior, cum per seipsum dignatur invisere Deus animam quarentem se, quae tamen ad quarendum toto se desiderio et amore devovit. ... nisi et speciali praerogativa intimis illum affectibus atque ipsis medullis cordis caelitus illapsum suscipiat."

(ibid. XXXI. iv and vi)

("But there was still another manner in which God was discerned differing from those, inasmuch as it was inward: when God deigned of His own accord to make Himself known to a soul that sought for Him, and lavished on that seeking the entire love and ardour of its affection. ... such a soul desires that by a special privilege He should descend from on high to her, and pervade her wholly in the deepest affections, and to the very ground of the heart.")

The final result of either approach is, however, the same, and this aspect is discussed by Bernard in an allegory which develops the figure of the three kisses.

"Quae cum venerit et perfecta fuerit, faciet spirituale conjugium; et erunt duo, non in carne una sed in uno spiritu."

(ibid. LXI.i)

("When she shall have come thither, when she shall have been perfected He will make with her a spiritual marriage; and they two shall be, not one flesh, but one spirit.")

The idea of spiritual marriage was not new, but in Bernard's writings it was given both fuller definition, and wider currency by virtue of his popularity.

The return to normal experience which was part of earlier belief appears in Bernard's ideas,

"Quis enim, non dico continue, sed vel aliquamdiu, dum in hoc corpore manet, lumine contemplationis fruatur? At quoties (ut dixi) corrumpit a contemplativa, toties in activam se recipit, inde nimirum tamquam e vicino familiaris reditura in idipsum: quoniam sunt invicem contubernales hac duae, et cohabitant pariter; est quippe soror Mariae Martha. Neque enim, etsi a contemplationis lumine cadit, patitur tamen ullatenus se incidere in tenebras peccati, seu ignaviam otii, sane in luce bonae operationis se retinens." (ibid. LI.ii)

("For who is able to enjoy the light of holy contemplation - I do not say continually, but even for any considerable time - while he remains in this body? But as I have said, as often as he falls from the state of contemplation, he resorts to that of action, as to a convenient refuge, from whence he may be able more easily to return to his former state. For these two things

are intimately related; they are chamber companions, and dwell together. Martha is sister to Mary, and although she comes forth from the light of contemplation, she never suffers herself to fall into the darkness of sin, or to subside into ignoble sloth, but remains in the light of good works still.")

This also demonstrates that Martha and Mary were thought of by Bernard as two aspects of one life, when used in the traditional metaphor, and not as two separate lives. He can thus be seen to use traditional forms and ideas, but constantly, as the foregoing discussion of the stages of the spiritual life shows, makes important modifications. In a similar manner, Bernard uses much material from earlier writers when discussing the problems of withdrawal from, and involvement with the world, but also adapts it to his own purpose.

The basic conflict of how best to relate the two apparently exclusive claims of involvement and withdrawal is presented in the following way,

"Etenim in bene affecta mente non dubiam (verbi causa) quin dilectioni hominis Dei dilectio praeponatur, et in hominibus ipsis perfectiores infirmioribus, caelum terrae, aeternitas tempori, anima carni. Attamen in bene ordinata actione saepe, aut etiam semper, ordo oppositus invenitur. Nam et circa proximi curam et plus urgemur, et pluries occapamur; et infirmioribus fratribus diligentiori sedulitate assistimus; et paci terrae magis, quam caeli gloriae jure humanitas et ipse necessitate intendimus." (ibid. L.v)

("There is no doubt that in a right-thinking soul the love of God is preferred to the love of man, heaven to earth, eternity to time, the soul to the body. And yet in well-regulated action the opposite order is frequently, or almost always found to prevail. For we are both more frequently occupied, and more busily, with cares for the temporal good of our neighbour, and among our brethren we assist with more diligent assiduity those who are more infirm; we apply ourselves, by the right of humanity and the necessity of the case, more to promote the peace of the earth than the glory of heaven.")

The two impulses of the love of man and the love of God are said to come from different types of charity, each with its own sphere of

activity.

"Nam actualis inferior praeferat, affectualis superiora."
(ibid)

("For charity in act chooses rather (for its sphere) the lower sphere of life, while that of thought and feeling chooses the higher.")

Higher charity is defined as the act of contemplation.

"At non ita affectualis: nam a primis ipsa ducit ordinem. Est enim sapientia, per quam utique quaeque res sapiunt prout sunt: ... tu ergo si diligas Dominum Deum tuum toto corde, tota anima, tota virtute tua; et amorem amoris illum, quo contenta est caritas actualis, affectu serventiori transsiliens, ipso comminus divino amore (ad quem is est gradus) accepto in plenitudine spiritu, totus ignescas; sapit tibi profecto Deus, etsi non digne omnino prout est (quod utique impossibile est omni creaturae) certe prout tuum sapere est."
(ibid. L. vi)

("Not so with charity in feeling; that commences always with the first things. For wisdom sets upon all things the value which is really theirs. ... If, then, you love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, rising in the earnestness of that affection above the love of love, with which actual charity is content, and receiving in all its fullness the Divine love (to which that other love serves only as a step), are wholly fired and pervaded by it, assuredly you have a knowledge of God although you cannot know Him adequately as He is (which is a thing impossible to any creature), but at least such a knowledge of Him as you are capable of receiving here below.")

This is a different concept of higher charity to that put forward by such writers as Augustine and Gregory, as they saw it as the love of God which was available to the humblest member of the church, where Bernard saw it as the preserve of an elect. This is the high privilege of contemplation, but despite its elevated nature, Bernard considers that the duties which the world imposes must have their place in the life of the monk,

"Sed agnoscite eas quas vobis supra, si meministis, commendavi et non semel, vicissitudines utique sanctae quietis, et necessariae actionis; et quia non sit in hac vita copia contemplandi, nec diuturnitas otii, ubi officii et operis cogentior urget instantiorque utilitas."
(ibid. LVIII.i)

("Recognise what I have said to you more than once about the two alternatives of sacred repose and necessary action, and that there is not in this life space for lengthened contemplation and prolonged repose, because of the duties of office and the usefulness of work press upon us more urgently, and are more immediately necessary.")

He arrives at the same solution as the earlier writers, however, and explains that there is an innate balance in these matters. In a vivid and wonderfully apt metaphor, he clarifies his ideas on the subject,

"Sed sane cavendum in his, aut dare quod nobis accepimus, aut quod erogandum accepimus, retinere. Rem profecto proximi retines tibi, si (verba causa) plenus virtutibus cum sis, forisque nihilo minus donis scientiae et eloquentiae adornatus, metu forte aut segnitie, aut minus discreta humilitate, verbum bonum, quod posset prodesse multis, inutili, immo et damnabili ligas silentio; certe maledictus, quod frumenta abscondis in populis. Rursum quod tuum est spargis et perdis, si priusquam infundaris tu totus, semiplenus festines effundere. ... quamobrem si sapis, concham te exhibebis, et non canalem. Hic siquidem paene simul et recipit et refundit: illa vero donec impleatur, expectat; et sic quod superabundat, sine suo damno communicat, sciens maledictum qui partem suam facit deteriore. ... verum canales hodie in ecclesia multos habemus, conchas vero perpaucas."

(ibid. XVIII. ii and iii)

("We must take heed of two dangers: that of giving to others what is meant for ourselves, and of keeping for ourselves what is given to us for others. You certainly are retaining for yourself that which belongs to your neighbour, if, for example, being not only full of virtues, but also outwardly adorned with the gifts of knowledge and of eloquence, fear perhaps, or sloth, or an ill-judged humility, restrains your good gift of speech, which might be of service to many people, in a useless, or, rather, blameable silence; and thus you are evil spoken of, because you withhold corn from the people. On the contrary, you dissipate and lose that which is your own if, before you have received a complete inpouring from God, and while you are, so to speak, but half filled, you hasten to pour yourself forth. ... If then, you are wiser, you will show yourself as a reservoir rather than as a canal. For a canal spreads abroad water as it receives it, but a reservoir waits until it is filled before overflowing, and thus communicates, without loss to itself, its superabundant water, knowing that there is blame to one who deteriorates that which he receives. ... But in the church at the present day we have many canals, few reservoirs.")

This is translated into the terms of the allegory of Lia and Rachel, and the apparent conflict between the two calls is resolved,

"sed ubera, quibus parvulos alis, quos et parvis, meliora, hoc est necessaria, sunt vino contemplationis. Liud siquidem est quod unius laetificat cor hominis, et aliud quod aedificat multos nam etsi Rachel formosior, sed Lia foecundior est. Noli ergo nimis insistere osculis contemplationis: quia meliora sunt ubera praedicationis."
(ibid. IX. viii)

("but the breasts from which you nourish the children you bring forth are bitter - that is, more necessary than the wine of contemplation. The one is that which maketh glad the heart of one man alone; but the other that which edifies many. For, although Rachel be the fairer, Leah is the more fruitful. Do not, therefore, linger too much over the sweetness of contemplation, for the breasts of preaching are better.")

The mutual relationship between the two is seen again,

"Hoc siquidem vera et casta contemplatio habet, ut mentem, divino igna vehementer succenderit, tanto interdum repleat zelo et desiderio acquirendi Deo qui eum similiter diligant, ut otium contemplationis pro studio praedicationis libentissime intermittat."
(ibid. LVII. ix)

("This is indeed a property of true and pure contemplation that it sometimes fills the mind, which is warmed with a divine fire, with a fervent zeal and desire to gain for God those who are of a like mind in loving Him, and to that end it very willingly lays aside the calm and rest of meditation for the labour of preaching.")

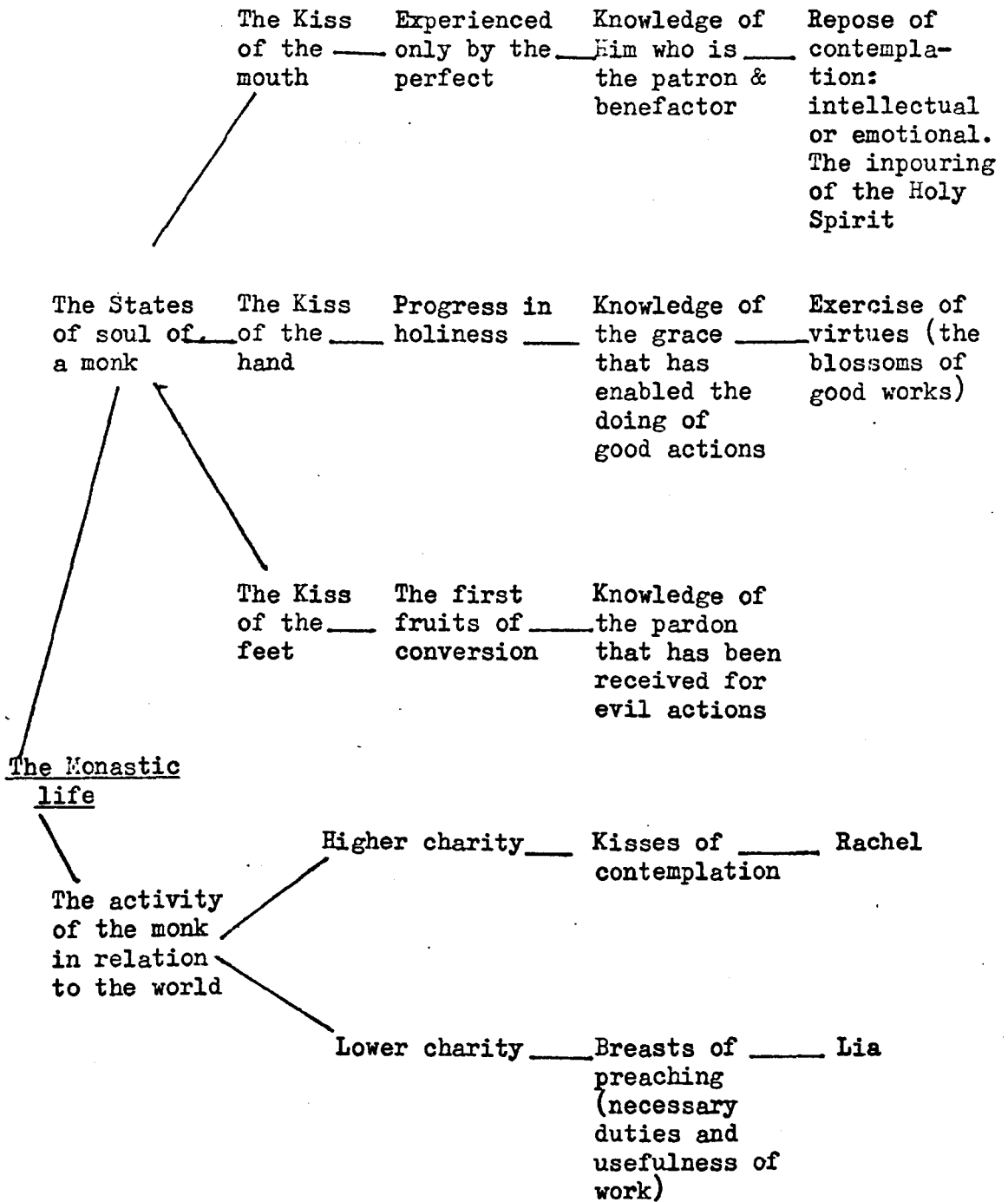
It can be seen that Bernard's words on the subject of action and contemplation relate almost exclusively to the monk. This is perhaps attributable partly to the easy access to the monasteries, and partly to his belief that any member of the church can have a little of the experiences he discusses,

"Ego autem et de quovis intra ecclesiam constituto si quis hoc quaerat, non omnino reprehendendum censuerim."
(ibid. LXVIII. iv)

("I should think that there is no-one at all among the faithful members of the church with respect of whom it may not be justly inquired whether the Bride's mystical saying is not realized in some degree in him.")

If Bernard's concepts of action and contemplation are reduced to graph form (see the following page), it can be seen that he conceived of the monastic life as having an inner development, and an outer relationship with the world. The inner life is ordered on similar

S. Bernard



- N.B. 1. Where Gregory saw the higher aspect of the outer mode as the complete inner life, Bernard does not, and where Gregory saw the lower aspect of outer mode as pertaining to the average Christian, Bernard sees it as the active aspect of a monk. Augustine is nearer to Gregory in concept (though not in terminology) than to Bernard.
2. Where Augustine and Gregory assert that a combination of the higher and lower modes is best, Bernard regards the combination as essential. The difference arises mainly because the first two writers saw their schemes as compassing all members of the church, but Bernard saw his principally in relation to the monk.

lines to the spiritual life discussed by Augustine and Gregory, but the affective approach of Bernard results in an emphasis upon fervent devotion which is not to be found in the more philosophic and intellectual approach of the earlier writers. The explicit asceticism of tradition has been cast in a new form which turns its fervency away from inner examination in the detailed manner of Cassian, to a total awareness and involvement with the burning love of a highly personalized Redeemer. This is not to deny Bernard's intellectual genius, but to point out the direction and zeal of his interests. A similar transformation occurs in his ideas on involvement with, and withdrawal from the world. Where lower charity is equivalent to Augustine's life of involvement (and Gregory's activa vita), Bernard's concept of higher charity is not the whole inner spiritual life, but contemplation itself. It is also of interest that the terms activa vita and contemplativa vita are not employed. Neither does Bernard refer to those busied in human affairs, as did Augustine, nor to those who are married and live well, as did Gregory. He refers to alternation of the life of preaching and the life of contemplation, but neither of those is wholly appropriate to the average Christian.

Where Augustine had propounded the principles for an intellectual and spiritual development within a Christian framework, and Gregory had adopted these ideas to discuss a scheme of life for all members of his church, Bernard completely changed the sphere of the concepts of action and contemplation by employing them for discussions of the life of the cloistered monk. At the same time, his deeply affective approach threw light from a direction which picked out different features of the familiar framework of ideas.

S. Bernard's concepts, derived in part from tradition, explain an apparent major paradox in his life. He was intensely concerned

with the inner life, and it is said that after one year in a novice's cell he did not know whether or not the ceiling was vaulted. The same person had fame and influence which made him immensely powerful, and eventually he found himself in the position of having a disciple on the throne of S.Peter, and of being a counsellor of kings. The man who set out to isolate himself from the world became one of the most powerful figures of his times, yet this was in accord with his philosophy. Just as his ideals of seclusion for his monks are apparently at variance with his earnest exhortations of them to fulfil their pastoral obligations to their fellow men, his own desire for isolation appears to conflict with his activities. As explained above, however, social obligations form a logical and necessary part of the complete spiritual life, and the seeming dissonance of ideas arising from the contemplative and ascetic ideal conflicting with the realistic awareness of both society's needs and Christ's explicit words on the subject, is resolved in accordance with long-standing tradition.

It has been seen above that S. Bernard of Clairvaux exemplified the twelfth century spirit of experiment and innovation, and made a number of fundamental and deliberate departures from traditional black monachism. At the same time, however, he remained firmly within the intellectual tradition, which had its roots in the writings of SS. Augustine and Gregory;⁶⁰ whilst epitomizing the twelfth century spirit of renaissance, he is part of a fully developed tradition. His affective spirituality was influential in later mediaeval religious devotion, whilst his ascetical and mystical theology was directly dependent on a corpus of ideas with an ancestry of at least seven centuries. Richard of S. Victor can be seen to occupy a similar position. While many great writers receive the tradition of the past and contribute ideas which come to fruition much later, the ideas of Richard and S. Bernard were of such moment that these two figures must be accorded a greater status than that of links in a chain. In each case central modifications were made to accepted doctrine, and major changes were incorporated into the traditions in which they wrote. It will be shown that Richard's ideas on contemplation were heavily dependent on Augustinian writings, but that the highly rational and systematic form in which he cast them gives him a claim to be considered as one of the forerunners of the scholastic method. In addition to this technical innovation, and perhaps as a result of it, Richard's treatment of traditional ideas brought out important new emphases. These will be seen in his two great works Benjamin Minor⁶¹ and Benjamin Major, which will be referred to briefly to illustrate his method. A short work entitled De Quatuor Gradibus Violentae Charitatis will then be examined because of its crucial importance for the theme of the life of toil and the life of withdrawal.

Before turning to these works, a brief reference to the life of Richard will help to place him in context.

Richard went to the Abbey of S.Victor about 1141⁶², and apart from the fact that he was a Scot, and came to the abbey because of its reputation, nothing is known of his life before that date. In 1162 he became prior, and remained in that office until his death in 1173. He was burdened by being under the authority of Ernisius, abbot from 1162-1172, who was apparently unsuited for office and who divided the community by wasting resources on ill-considered and lavish projects, by nominating favourites to office, and by spending much time at Court and in Rome. Richard refers several times to these difficulties, and it seems that he had an important part in a number of representations to the Pope, which finally resulted in the deposition of Ernisius in 1172. During this period Richard's activities were partially curtailed by Ernisius, but he had long correspondence with daughter-houses in England and elsewhere, and Kirchberger speaks of his letters, which

"show that he was in constant touch with English officers, and give evidence of the international character of the intellectual life of the time." 63

This brief sketch places Richard in a geographical and chronological context, and also hints at the nature of his writings. In intellectual terms, he lived at a time of rapid development. The growth of the use of rational dialectic, which was a major feature of the thought of Abelard and his supporters, was enabling the operation of a new licence in theological matters. Whilst this was seen by some writers as a new and incisive weapon in the intellectual armoury of the theologian, it was seen by others as a sharp and naked edge which was liable to be more dangerous than useful. S. Bernard of Clairvaux, amongst others, believed that reason should only be the handmaid of

faith, and should only be used to illuminate and confirm faith.

Where reason and faith conflicted, this was a sign that reason, which was enervated at the Fall, was unreliable. Kirchberger believes that this was the position held by a number of the Victorines.⁶⁴ Richard falls into neither of these categories, believing on the one hand that faith was the ultimate test, but being unwilling to admit, on the other, that properly applied reason could be faulty. The result of this dual attitude was an almost sensuous delight in visionary metaphor⁶⁵, which arose from a passionately held faith, and a meticulous and closely organized method, prompted by a belief in the power of reason.

Benjamin Minor and Benjamin Major will be briefly examined to illustrate the latter facet of his writings, and De Quattuor Gradibus will be given a more detailed analysis in view of important ideas which arise from the former facet.

The Benjamin Minor is sub-titled:

"de praeparationi animi ad contemplationem"

and this accurately describes its scope. There is little discussion of contemplation itself, as the preparation for contemplation is extremely detailed. The form of the treatise is of very great interest as an example of the rationalist approach, as it takes the common-place figure of Jacob and his two wives, Leah and Rachel, and expands it into a meticulously constructed, complex discourse. Beryl Smalley charted the changing approach to Bible study in the Middle Ages and pointed to the transition from the writing of glosses on the words of the Scripture, which was the method adopted by the Fathers, to the arrangement in subject order of collections of the opinions expressed in the glosses. Peter Lombard, the "Master of the Sentences", is an obvious example of this later method. The final developments were the summae of the thirteenth century, and the freer treatises which followed. The two

Benjamin treatises are ostensibly comments on the glosses but, especially in the later chapters of the second work, the pretext of commentary is increasingly abandoned for a more wide-ranging discussion of the subject in question. In addition to the framework of the commentary, another organizing principle is at work. The scholastic approach dictates strict control of material, each part being related to the whole before being closely analysed itself. This minute organization is seen most clearly in the Benjamin Minor, which, in Kirchberger's words,

"is an allegory on the story of Jacob, his two wives and their children ... (which) uses the meanings of the names and elements of the story to bring out the inter-relationship of the faculties of mind and of body, the senses and the reason, to establish a scheme of knowledge of our powers combined with the knowledge of right and wrong action." 66

A representative example can be taken from the Benjamin Minor to illustrate this. Towards the end of the treatise there is a section on the birth of Joseph. Rachel represents reason, Leah represents affection, and these two wives and their servants have presented Jacob with sons representing dread, sorrow for sin, abstinence, and so on. Joseph represents discretion and is the last to be born before Benjamin, or contemplation, because discretion can only arise from the operation of the other virtues, and is necessary before contemplation.

"Quomodo, vel quam sero oriatur discretio cum sit prima proles rationis. Hic est ille Joseph qui quidem sero nascitur, sed a patre plus caeteris amatur. Quis enim nesciat vera bona animi sine discretione, nec posse acquiri, nec posse conservari? ... Sic sic dum longo usu virtutum disciplina addiscitur quandoque mens diu exercitata ad plenam morum discretionem perducitur, et quasi de nato Joseph jure laetatur."

(Benjamin Minor Ca. LXVII)

("How discretion arises and how late it comes since it is the first born child of reason. We now come to the man Joseph who though he was born late was loved more than the rest by his father. Everyone knows that true goodness can neither be

acquired nor kept without discretion. ... Thus when the discipline of virtue is gained by long use the mind is brought to fully discreet behaviour and rightly rejoices as if Joseph were now born.")

Each Biblical character is given a carefully defined role in the allegory of the developing soul, and the literal relationship drawn between story and meaning can sometimes be startling in its result:

"Benjamin itaque nascente, Rachel moritur, quia mens ad contemplationem rapta, quantus sit humanae rationis defectus experitur." (ibid. Ca. LXXIV)

("Therefore when Benjamin is born, Rachel dies, for when the mind is carried away in contemplation, it experiences how inadequate is reason.")

The organization of Benjamin Major is less rigidly controlled towards the end, but an extract from the sixth chapter will reveal its essentially formal structure:

"Sex autem sunt contemplationem genera a se et inter se omnino divisa. Primum itaque est in imaginatione et secundum solam imaginationem. Secundum est in imaginatione secundum rationem. Tertium est in ratione secundum imaginationem. Quartum est in ratione et secundum rationem. Quintum est supra, sed non praeter rationem. Sextum supra rationem, et videtur esse praeter rationem. Duo itaque sunt in imaginatione, duo in ratione, duo in intelligentia." (Benjamin Major I. Ca. vi)

("There are six kinds of contemplation divided from each other and sub-divided. The first lies in the imagination and is according to the imagination only. The second is in the imagination but according to reason. The third is in the reason according to the imagination. The fourth is in the reason and according to the reason. The fifth is above reason but not contrary to it. The sixth is both above reason and contrary to it. So two are concerned with the imagination, two with the reason, two with the intelligence.")

This is an extreme example as it is a categorizing preamble at the beginning of a chapter, but it nevertheless reveals the degree of organization which characterizes the earlier parts of the treatise. The material of the two Benjamin treatises is taken from traditional sources, most notably from S. Augustine, and though the almost merciless schematism inevitably changes a number of aspects of the ideas, they

betray their derivation unmistakably. For this reason a thorough analysis of these two works is unnecessary, as it would be merely an examination of re-cast ideas. In addition, the theory of asceticism and mysticism is not directly relevant to the theme of action and contemplation (in their common fourteenth-century sense) unless it also refers to the life of toil and the life of withdrawal. It was necessary to establish the range of these terms in the writings of early figures such as Augustine and Gregory, and in any case these writers always turned their discussions to toil and withdrawal. Richard is not original in this particular field, and is also limited to discussion of asceticism and mysticism, and in these two works therefore has little of direct interest to contribute to the present theme of this Chapter. The interesting point about these two works is that they reveal his love of allegory and his rationalism. These two facets of his approach, and therefore of his style, are of importance to the short work which is crucial to the theme of action and contemplation, De Quattuor Gradibus Violentae Charitatis.

In considering De Quattuor Gradibus, it is important to bear in mind that Richard had already written at length on the subjects of ascetical and mystical theology, and also to be aware of the highly traditional nature of his ideas. De Quattuor Gradibus is not an account of the way to contemplation, or even primarily of the nature of contemplation, but of the effects of contemplation. Contemplation is an experience of an eternal nature, but it takes place in the context of the dimensions of space and time, and in a life which is necessarily more concerned with the diurnal round than of fleeting glimpses of God. Richard examines contemplative experience as four degrees of violent love, and in addition to describing their nature, he discusses their effects on the individual in relation to the world.

The four degrees of love are "wounded love" (charitas vulnerans), "binding love" (charitas ligans), "ravished love" (charitas larguens) and "insatiable love" (charitas insatiabilis).

These four degrees of violenta charitas represent stages in the journey of a soul to union with God, and each has its own special qualities. "Wounded love" is the first love with which God touches the soul of a man who is to be called to Him. The man who is called to this degree is stricken as if ill,

"Desiderio ardet, fervet affectu, aestuat, anhelat,
profunde ingemiscens et longe suspira trahero."

(De Quatuor Gradibus Violentae Charitatis,
P.L. 1209)

("He burns with desire, his affections are stirred, he is in fever and gasps, sighing deeply and drawing long breaths.")

This love is sweet and inebriates the soul:

"In primo itaque gradu spiritus ille super mel dulcis
intrat ad animam, et dulcedine sua inebriat eam."

(*ibid.* 1217)

("In the first degree a spiritual feeling sweeter than honey enters into her soul and inebriates her with its sweetness.")

Though sweet, this love is limited as God does not vouchsafe a vision of himself:

"Accendit namque affectum, sed nondum illuminat intellectum.
Desiderium inflammat, sed intellectum non illuminat. In
hoc itaque statu anima dilectum suum sentire potest,
sed, sicut dictum est, videre non potest."

(*ibid.* 1218)

("He kindles the affection but does not yet illuminate the intellect. He inflames the desire but does not yet enlighten the intelligence. In this stage the soul can feel the beloved, but, as it is said, she cannot see him.")

This description of a pre-contemplative or semi-contemplative state does not concentrate on ways and means, but only on the effect on the soul. It recalls S. Bernard's descriptions of affective experience in In Cantica Canticorum⁶⁸, but unlike those descriptions, it is not prefaced with a discussion of how to attain the state under discussion.

There is a focussing on the individual and his reaction in which Richard dwells at length on actual physical details, almost as if his mind was concentrating on one side only of the experience.

S. Bernard was more conscious of the Divine element, concentrating equally on the contemplator and the contemplated. The downward-looking element of Richard's description is seen in his interest in the result of the experience on the ability of the individual to concentrate on worldly matters:

"Hic tamen gradus interpolationem recipit, et incumbertium negatiorum curis et sollicitudinibus caedit."

("But this degree sometimes affords some respite and allows for the cares and anxieties of necessary business.")

While it is true that this concept of love derives from certain traditional ideas, being reminiscent, as indicated above, of S. Bernard's contemplation of the affection, it would not be accurate to draw close parallels between this stage of "wounded love" and traditional contemplative stages. It depicts a movement to an inspired state, and this is characteristic of nearly all mystical theology, but, as has been suggested, the emphasis is on the degree of effect on the individual, and en passant, his relation to the world. This contrasts with more traditional writings, including the Benjamin treatises, which concentrate on a minute analysis of the nature of love though, of course, an awareness of its nature is integral to the process of discussing its effect.

The second degree of love is "binding love" and this intensifies the action of love on the soul and leads to contemplative vision:

"Primum enim gradum diximus qui vulnerat, secundum qui ligat. Nonne vere et obsque ulla contradictione animus ligatus est, quando hoc unum oblivisci, aut aliud meditari non potest? Quidquid agat, quidquid dicat, hoc semper mente revolvitur perennique memoria retinetur hoc."

(ibid. 1209)

("For we said the first degree was wounding love and the second binding love. For the soul is surely and undoubtedly bound when it cannot forget this one thing or think about anything else. Whatever it does or says it is always turning this over in its mind and keeping it continually in memory.")

The contemplative vision granted by this degree is seen in the next extract:

"Quando ergo mens cum magno studio ardentique desiderio ad divinae contemplationis gratiam proficit, jam quasi ad secundum amoris gradum proficit, quando meretur per revelationem inspicere quod oculos, non vidit, nec auris audivit." (ibid. 1219)

("When the mind therefore goes forward to the grace of contemplation with great effort and ardent desire, it moves as it were into the second degree of love, where it deserves to look by divine showing, upon that which the eye cannot see nor the ear hear.")

This describes a completely traditional act of vision, and the allusions to that which the eye cannot see nor the ears hear reveal the orthodox context of the ideas. An unorthodox limit is, however, placed on this experience. S. Paul speaks in II Corinthians, xii, 2-4, of a man who was rapt in ecstasy to the third heaven, and this autobiographical convention became a synonym for contemplative vision in the Middle Ages:

"Scio hominem in Christos ante annos quattuordecim, sive in corpore nescio, sive extra corpus nescio, Deus scit, raptum hujusmodi usque ad tertium coelum. Et scio hujusmodi hominem, sive in corpore, sive extra corpus, nescio, Deus scit: Quoniam raptus est in Paradisum; et audivit arcana verba, quae non licet homine loqui."

("There is a man I know who was carried out of himself in Christ, fourteen years since; was his spirit in his body? I cannot tell; God knows. This man at least was carried up into the third heaven. I can only tell you that this man with his spirit in his body, God knows what, not I, was carried up into Paradise, and heard mysteries which man is not allowed to utter.")

Richard says that the experience of the second degree of violent love takes the soul to the second heaven, and, as will be corroborated by the concept of the third degree of love, this is a

conscious limitation on the vision of the second degree:

"In hoc gradu contemplationis suae alis animae sustoluntur supra altitudinem nubium, in hoc gradu ejusmodi alis evolant usque ad coelum, non solum usque ad primum, sed etiam ad secundum. ... In secundo itaque gradu, ut dictum est, coelum coelorum, lumenque illud inaccessible videri potest, sed adiri non potest ..." (ibid. 1219-20)

("In this degree of contemplation they are borne up above the clouds on the wings of their souls and they fly away to the heavens, not only to the first heaven, but also to the second heaven... In the second degree, as has been said, in the heaven of heavens, that inaccessible light may be seen but not reached...")

This is full traditional vision, but it lacks, deliberately, the sense of the unity of the soul and God. Traditional vision includes a definite though limited sense of the soul and God becoming one, before the return to the mundane level of the world, at which point the unity is lost. For Richard, vision is not the pinnacle of contemplative experience, where for Augustine, it was. Before looking at Richard's third degree of love, it is necessary to examine briefly the effects of the second. Where the first degree left a man completely free, at intervals, to attend to outward business, this degree is more restricting,

"In secundo adhuc gradu alienis negotiis per actionem utique occupari potest, sed per cogitationem non potest, quia ejus quod diligit omnino oblivisci non potest."
(ibid. 1211)

("In the second degree a man can attend to outward business in action but not in thought, for he cannot in any way forget what he loves.")

Its effect is like that of orthodox vision as discussed by earlier writers.

The third degree of love, "ravishing love", is for Richard the pinnacle of contemplative experience, and it completely engulfs the soul

"Ad tertium itaque jam violentiae gradum amor ascendit, quando omnem alium affectum excludit, quando nihil praeter

unum vel propter unum diligit. In hoc itaque tertio violentae charitatis gradu nil omnino satisfacere potest praeter unum, sicut et nihil sapere nisi propter unum. ... Nil ducescit, nihil sapit nisi hoc uno condiatur. ... Sed quis hujus affectus tyrannidem digne describat? quomodo omne desiderium expellit, quomodo omne studium excludit, quomodo omnem exercitum violenter opprimit quem suae concupiscentiae deservire non proscipit? ... In hoc autem gradu mens tabida et amoris nimietate languida, sicut non potest alia meditari, sic nec potest aliena operari." (ibid. 1211)

("Love rises up to the third degree of passion when it excludes every other love, when it loves nothing but the one, for the sake of the one. In this third degree of passionate love nothing can give any satisfaction but the one thing and nothing is known but the one... There is no sweetness nor taste except for him only... Who can worthily describe the tyranny of this state? how it extinguishes every desire and excludes every activity, how violently it represses every effort which does not appear to further its desires. ... In this degree the mind is wasting away and sick with excessive love, and as it cannot meditate on anything else, so it cannot work on outward things.")

All outward activity is completely stilled in this degree of love, and the individual is totally unable to think of anything but God. This concentrates in rather more detail than earlier writers on the actual effect on the individual, but otherwise the effect is orthodox. The innovation made by Richard is that the experience of unity with God, which accompanied vision in traditional writers, is elevated to a complete and separate act in itself:

"Tertius itaque amoris gradus est quando mens homines in illam rapitur divini luminis abyssum, ita ut humanus animus in hoc statu exteriori omnium oblitus penitus nesciat seipsum totusque transeat in Deum suum"... (ibid. 1220-21)

("Therefore the third degree of love is when the mind of man is ravished into the abyss of divine light so that the soul, having forgotten all outward things, is altogether unaware of itself and passes out completely into its God.")

Richard says that this is the third heaven, and thus he draws out further the implicit matter of the Pauline statement. Vision becomes a subsidiary experience leading to the final consummation in which the soul enters God's being.

It can thus be seen that the first three degrees of love are a progression which is conceived as a movement from being smitten with love to being totally engulfed in the eternal love. The individual moves from being preoccupied, but able to attend to affairs, to being able to attend to things in action only, and finally he becomes unable to do anything active at all. This corresponds to the views of writers in the Augustinian tradition. These writers had then spoken of a descent from the height of contemplation being followed by a desire to help others, the love of God kindling the love of fellow man. The individual returns from the heights of experience fulfilled in charity, and eager to convert others to the truth he has found. Richard's fourth degree of love is a considerable advancement of this, as can be seen from its nature in the following extracts.

The fourth degree of love is first introduced as an abstract state:

"Quartus itaque violentae charitatis gradus est quando aestuantis animi desiderio jam omnino nihil satisfacere potest. Hic gradus quia humanae possibilitatis metas semel excessit, crescendi ut caeteri, terminum nescit quia semper invenit quod adhuc concupiscere possit."
(ibid. 1212)

("The fourth degree of passionate love is that in which nothing at all can satisfy the desire of the passionate soul. This degree, in that it has passed beyond the bounds of human power, is, unlike others, unlimited in its expansion, for it always finds something which it can still desire.")

The treatise now apparently diverges to discuss the Incarnation, saying that Christ came down in the form of a man, and died for mankind on the Cross. This act of ultimate humility arose from God's love of man. He died and was resurrected to life for man's salvation. Contemplation is described by Richard as a form of death, the 'old man'⁶⁹ of S. Paul dying and the new being born. Richard holds that the new man is not

reborn, but is resurrected in the fourth degree of love.

"in quarto resuscitatur" (ibid. 1224)

("in the fourth it is resurrected")

Death in contemplative union with God is followed by resurrection in love: the spirit does not rise through Christ, or because of Christ, or from Christ, but as Christ.

"Qui igitur in quarto gradu est, veraciter dicere potest:
A vivo autem jam non ego, vivit vero in Me Christus".

(ibid. 1222-3)

("He that is in the fourth degree may truly say 'I live yet not I, Christ liveth in me.'")

The total union with God in the third degree of love leads to an identity in love of God and man, and when he returns to the body he has become one with God, and is part of the risen Christ. The treatise tells of Christ's humility, and believes that this is the form in which man can rise from the death in love, in the fourth degree.

"Haec est forma humilitatis Christi, ad quam conformare se debet quisquis supernum consummatae charitatis gradum attingere valet. Majorem siquidem charitatem nemo habet, quam ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis. Ad summum itaque charitatis culmen profecerunt, et jam in quarto charitatis gradu positi sunt, qui pro amicis animam suam ponere."

(ibid. 1222)

("This is the form of humility of Christ to which every man must conform himself who desires to attain to the highest degree of perfect charity. For greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Those who are able to lay down their lives for their friends have reached the highest peak of charity and are already placed in the fourth degree of charity." (my emphasis))

The pinnacle of love is followed by the raising in Christ:

"In tertis itaque gradu quodammodo mortificatur in Deum, in quarto resuscitatur in Christum." (ibid.)

("In the third degree she is as it were put to death in God, in the fourth she is raised in Christ.")

In a totally evangelical commitment, a man goes forth in complete service with S.Paul

"Qui ad hunc charitatis gradum ascendit, obsqui dubio in hoc gradu amoris est qui veraciter dicere potest,

Omnibus omnia factus sum, ut omnes facerem salvos." (ibid. 1223-4)

("He who ascends to this degree of love is truly in the state of love that can say, 'I am made all things to all men, so that I may save all'.")

In subsequent comparative analyses of the four degrees, the actual identification of the soul and Christ becomes blurred, and finally lost. The first comparison still reveals the unity to an extent:

"In primo gradu anima sitit, in secundo sitit ad Deum, in tertio sitit in Deum, in quarto sitit secundum Deum."
(ibid. 1217)

("In the first degree the soul thirsts for God, in the second she thirsts to go to God, in the third she thirsts to be in God, in the fourth she thirsts in God's way.")

A later comparison loses yet more of the sense of union,

"In primo itaque gradu Deus intrat ad animum, et animus redit ad seipsum. In secundo gradu ascendit supra seipsum et elevatur ad Deum. In tertio gradu animus elevatus ad Deum totus transit in ipsum. In quarto animus exit propter Deum, et descendit sub semetipsum."
(ibid.)

("In the first degree God enters into the soul and she turns inward upon herself. In the second she ascends above herself and is lifted up to God. In the third the soul, lifted up to God passes over altogether into Him. In the fourth, the soul goes forth on God's behalf and descends below herself."
(My emphasis))

In the next extract the sense is lost, as the abstract states are translated into actual realistic terms:

"In primo animus ingreditur ad seipsum, in secundo transgreditur semetipsum. In primo pergit in seipsum, in tertio pergit in Deum suum. In primo ingreditur propter seipsum, in quarto egreditur propter proximum. In primo intrat meditatione, in secundo ascendit contemplatione, in tertio retroducitur in jubilatione, in quarto egreditur ex compassione."
(ibid.)

("In the first she enters into herself, in the second she goes forth from herself. In the first she reaches her own life, in the third she reaches God. In the first she goes forth on her own behalf, in the fourth she goes forth because of her neighbour. In the first she enters in by meditation, in the second she ascends by contemplation, in the third she is led into jubilation, in the fourth she goes out by compassion."
(My emphasis))

This also reveals the action which follows contemplation, whereby the soul goes forth in compassion.

The importance of the third and fourth degrees of violent love, when taken together, is that they complete a chain of conceptual development first examined in John Cassian's writings. Cassian held that contemplation was vision of God and the preparation for contemplation had to be undertaken in the community of brethren. A man had to purify himself, but he also had certain responsibilities such as the care of the sick, almsgiving, and so on. He saw pastoral work as a necessary obligation. Augustine took this further, speaking of the life which was leisured for contemplation (otiosus) and the life which was busied in human affairs (negotiosus). He said that the best type of life was one which combined both of these aspects. Gregory systematized this idea and made it more specific, saying that some people worked in society but lacked vision of God, that some had vision through withdrawal from society, but that some were able to combine both in the vocation of the preacher. This last was the superior mode of life. S. Bernard's affective approach gave a causal link; he believed that contemplative vision generated a love which spontaneously overflowed and led a man to preach the Word of love to his neighbours. Augustine and Gregory seemed to assume this, but did not make it explicit. Richard undertakes the final development when he sees contemplative love leading to actual union with Christ, and then going forth to preach love, not in Christ's name, but as Christ. He makes the final integration between the life of toil and the life of contemplation.

It can thus be seen that De Quattuor Gradibus represents yet another statement of the traditional belief that the life of toil and the life of withdrawal should be combined. The love which unites man

to God also unites man to man, and a man should experience both manifestations. This belief was implicit in the earlier writings on this subject, and there is a continuing tradition which begins with Augustine, and which states that the combined life is the best. This belief modified the purely contemplative urge of many, though not of all early writers, and it was to become an important motif in the twelfth-century monastic institutions, which are examined in subsequent pages, and in the thirteenth-century institutions which will be analysed later. In addition, Richard's writings are important as they incorporate the affective devotion of S. Bernard with a rationalism which rose to a peak in the thirteenth century, and which was still important in the fourteenth century, despite a certain amount of slackening.

It has been suggested above that Richard's belief in the identification of the soul and the Divine Being in the contemplative act is a development of the mystical tradition starting with S. Augustine and developing through, among others, S. Gregory the Great and S. Bernard. In a number of respects this is a satisfactory account, and by a similar process it is possible to see Richard's idea of the risen soul going forth as Christ as an outcome of the Augustinian mainstream of Western mystical theology. There is, however, a related matter which may exert an influence on Richard's writings in this field. It is not possible to follow up this matter in detail as it is extremely complex, and is of only peripheral interest to the theme of action and contemplation. Apart from its intrinsic interest, however, it deserves brief examination because it is important to attempt to determine the extent to which Richard's ideas concerning identification arise from the developing Augustinian tradition. If there is another factor which has influence on the course of ideas on involvement and withdrawal, it is important to take it into account to prevent an over-simplified

view of the provenance of concepts of action and contemplation, and also to avoid the error of assuming that the impetus for a given change of direction arises solely from an interest in the problems of involvement and withdrawal, and thus to mistake the relative weight of this matter in the theological debate of the relevant period.

The related matter alluded to above is the nature of the contemplative union. Contemplative union was traditionally referred to in terms of vision, the Pauline exemplar being the final sight of God facie ad faciem.⁷⁰ It has been seen that Augustine spoke of vision of "that which is" - id quod est⁷¹ - an allusion to the Old Testament account of Moses. Gregory had spoken of seeing God "as it were through darkness" - per caliginem conspicit.⁷² Bernard spoke of knowledge of God in perception - in cognitione - and when this is considered in the context of his discussion of divine light, it can be seen to be a visual process. These three writers spoke of the contemplative act as a vision in which the contemplator sees something of God's mysteries, and it is clear from the contexts involved that they conceived of a distinction always remaining between the soul and God. Thus, two important elements of this concept of contemplative union can be summarized as the visual perception of God by the contemplator, and the separateness of the soul and God. These two factors are characteristic of the ideas of nearly all pre-twelfth-century Western mystics who belong to the Augustinian school. There is, however, a different tradition in which these fundamental Augustinian characteristics are not to be found. Two of its most important writers are Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. Gregory of Nyssa believed that after death the contemplating soul moved closer and closer to God, and although the two could never indissolubly unite, the distance between decreases, and the soul becomes increasingly like God. The soul passes from a lesser

to a greater degree of divinization in an infinite process. The following extract⁷³ from Gregory's works reveals this belief in the transformation of the soul:

"Now the voice of the Word is ever a voice of power. At the creation, light shone forth at His command ... So too now, when the word calls a soul that has advanced to Him, it is immediately empowered at His command and becomes what the Bridegroom wishes. It is transformed into something divine, and it is transformed from the glory in which it exists to a higher glory by a kind of perfect alteration." 74

Danielou comments on this aspect of Gregory's beliefs,

"there is a certain contact with God, a real participation, a divinization... The soul is, in a true sense, transformed into the divine ..." 75

The soul can never become completely identified with God, but it is implicit in the concept that ultimately the likeness to man is lost.

This is suggested in the following extract,

"the stretching forth to the things that are before involves the forgetting of what has already been attained." 76

The difference between this belief and the more traditional Augustinian concept can be seen more clearly if reference is made to a discussion by S. Bernard of Clairvaux on a similar subject. Bernard is speaking of the bliss of the saints in heaven:

"humanum affectionem quodam ineffabili modo necesse erit a semetipsa liquescere, atque in Dei penitus transfundi voluntatem. Alioquin quomodo omnia in omnibus erit Deus, si in homine de homine quidquam superit? Morebit quidem substantia, sed in alia forma ...". 77

("(their) human love will, then ineffably be melted out of them and all pour over, so to speak, into the will of God. It must be so. How otherwise could God be all in all, if anything of man remained in man? Our human substance will remain, indeed, but in another form ..." My emphasis)

Bernard was aware of the paradoxical element of this, and was content to ascribe it to the mysteries of divine working, but Gregory believed that the gradual transformation into God and away from man was a logical, if wonderful, process. Bernard's language was allegorical, and his ideas

were expressed in figurative terms. As a result, his concepts of the spiritual nature of man were anthropomorphic and his discussions of the relationships of the soul and God are constantly shadowed by a realism which would make a thorough-going Platonic belief incongruous. The constant use of metaphor prevents him from speaking in abstract terms. By contrast, Gregory of Nyssa believed that human language is rooted in limited concepts, and cannot therefore be used to describe God or spiritual truth. The result is that, in Gregory's writings, basically neo-Platonic concepts are stripped of their visual and allegorical associations, and a belief in the theory of the Many and the One is expressed without the figurative language which would have maintained a human and metaphorical frame of reference, and this throws the emphasis away from a belief in ultimate union. Thus two facets of Gregory's writings, his belief in the doctrine of the eternal divine progression, and his use of the via negativa, set up a current of beliefs which are more oriental in nature than the parallel concepts of Augustine. A context is therefore created for a theory of ultimate union which is untypical of the mainstream of early Western mystical theology.

Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite followed Gregory in believing that human language and metaphorical description were inherently inadequate in discussing the nature of God, and his adherence to the via negativa is a central characteristic of his thought. As was the case with Gregory, Dionysius wrote in a philosophical and abstract style which was reinforced in its abjuration of metaphor by his belief in the inadequacy of human language. The result was that Dionysius wrote in a predominantly Platonic and neo-Platonic style, as compared with S. Augustine, who preferred to postulate his schemes in personal terms. This contrast is seen if Augustine's concept of contemplative

union, which was examined in detail above, is compared to Dionysius' description of the contemplative vision: he invokes God,

"dirige nos ad mysticorum Eloquiorum superignotum et supersplendentem et summum verticem, ubi simplicia et absoluta et inconversibilia Theologiae mysteria cooperta sunt secundum supersplendentem occulte docti silentii caliginem, in obscurissimo superclarissimum supersplendere facientem, et in omnino impalpabili et invisibili superpulchris claritatibus superimplentem non habentes oculos mentes." (De Mystica Theologia, Ca.I)

("Guide us to that topmost height of mystic love which exceedeth light and more than exceedeth knowledge, where the simple, absolute, and unchangeable mysteries of heavenly Truth lie hidden in the dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence, outshining all brilliance with the intensity of their darkness, and surcharging our blinded intellects with the utterly impalpable and invisible fairness of glories which exceed all beauty.")

Dionysius does not speak in Augustinian terms of visions, but of mysteries which lie hidden. It is true that Dionysius' beliefs are partially moulded by visual concepts - he speaks of mysteries which are hidden (occulte), and of beauty (superpulchris) and even of eyes of the mind (oculos mentes) - but despite this, the emphasis on the unknowability of God creates a primarily conceptual image of the Divine Being which contrasts strikingly with Augustine's Old and New Testament "Father" Divinity. The abstraction which is a result of this mode of thought results in a philosophic language which is non-figurative in nature. While Dionysius himself does not subscribe to a concept of total ultimate union between God and the contemplating soul, it is highly possible that he created or transmitted a context in which Richard of S.Victor was able to make that final identification. Richard was thoroughly familiar with Dionysian writings, and he might well have found that this mode of thought reinforced his own tendency to abstraction, and thus made possible his belief in total union. A further example of Dionysius' abstract quality of thought is seen in his attempt to define and understand God. He attempts to move towards

an understanding of His being, but is defeated:

"Oportet enim in ipsa, et omnes existentium ponere et affirmare positiones, sicut omnium causa, et omnes ipsas magis proprie negare, sicut super omnia superexistente; et non negationes oppositas opinari esse affirmationibus, sed multo prius ipsam super privationes esse, quae est super omnem et ablationem et positionem."
(ibid.)

("That while it possesses all the positive aspects of the universe (being the universal Cause), yet in a stricter sense It does not possess them, since It transcends them all, wherefore there is no contradiction between affirming and denying that It has them inasmuch as It precedes and surpasses all deprivations, being beyond all positive and negative distinctions.")

This again demonstrates the non-visual nature of Dionysius' concept of God and extends the context of non-figurative language which may have provided Richard with a sympathetic background to his abstract writings.

It is thus possible that the tradition of neo-Platonic philosophical writing, with its emphasis on the via negativa which can be seen in the works of Gregory of Nyssa and the Pseudo-Dionysius was formative in the thinking of Richard of S. Victor. This type of mystical theology may have acted in concert with Richard's scholastic method and pushed him into an orbit which was eccentric in relation to central Augustinian thinking. It is possible to suggest that Richard's belief in the total union of contemplator and contemplated was, in some measure, due to the pressure from a tradition which was in some ways tangential to the Augustinian system of ideas in which he wrote, as well as being a development of the Augustinian tradition itself.

Semi-monastic Institutions of the Twelfth Century

The twelfth century was a time of great complexity in the sphere of spiritual observance. It has been seen how there were a number of reactions to the earlier revival of Benedictine observance which had found its most articulated expression in the customs of Cluny, of which the Cistercian ideal is the most well-known. In addition to this primitive cenobitic ideal, there were a great number of harshly austere hermits and semi-eremitic communities. These are discussed in earlier pages⁷⁹, but a complete account of this period requires an examination of a number of semi-monastic communities which were the expression of different reactions to the earlier types of spiritual life. The twelfth century witnessed an upsurge of creativity and experimentalism in many spheres of life, and the spirituality of the period shared in this renaissance, moving between the poles of extreme seclusion and social involvement. There were a number of attempts to resolve the conflict between the disparate elements at each extreme of this spectrum, and there are four institutions which typify this spirit of reconciliation. They attempt to include in one life the apparently conflicting calls of solitude and society, and are a translation into twelfth century terms of the traditional discussion of action and contemplation. The four institutions are the Austin Canons, the military orders, the Premonstratensians, and the foundation of Fontevrault.

The founder of the first military order was Hugues de Payens, who was the leader of a small band of pious soldiers who had been on a crusade.⁸⁰ When they presented themselves to S. Bernard of Clairvaux for his blessing for a new crusade, he conceived the idea of placing them under a rule, and he sent them to a council at Troyes in 1128 with a constitution which was debated and endorsed. The new order was, in effect, a military version of Cistercianism. Wherever possible,

the rules were the same, save for the main difference that manual work was replaced by military service. All the possessions of the Templars, as they were called, including weapons and saddlery, were as simple as possible. Meals were taken in silence save for a sacred reading, and very simplified prayers (often merely a number of repetitions of Pater noster) were used at the hours. Whenever the monks were not on active service, they lived as nearly as possible the life of a Cistercian. The ideal of self-sanctification - the raison d'être of twelfth-century monachism - was carried on in the field, and death in battle was believed to give immediate entry into the kingdom of God. Under the awesome banner of "Who fights us fights Jesus Christ", these monks developed a fierce and terrible reputation as merciless and totally dedicated warriors. They are of particular interest as they had the two-fold aim of a contemplative search for God, as far as was possible in their Order, and a life of service in holy war. Their special functions were the guarding of pilgrimage routes from attack by pagans and a winning back for Christianity from heathen control of the holy city of Jerusalem. If some contemporaries had reservations regarding this form of service of God⁸¹, it was a spectacular success and attracted financial support and recruits from a wide spectrum of society. It is interesting that Bernard felt it appropriate to translate the monastic ideal of higher and lower charity (which in his terms correspond with involvement with, or withdrawal from the world) into such a different form. He wished both to bring men into the monastery (or to take the monastic life to them when a cloistered existence was unsuitable), and to convert the world. The military orders were a way of achieving both these aims to a considerable degree.

The Austin Canons have been defined by Dickinson as groups of men who were in holy orders, lived a common life, and claimed the Regula Sancti Augustini as the guide and rule of their calling.⁸² The

members of this body in the twelfth century believed that their Order had existed from earliest times in this form, but had fallen into decay some time before the tenth century. Though modern research refutes this view, there are references in early writings to regular bodies serving churches, and it was these whom the Austin Canons took to be their predecessors. Augustine held that the clergy should live the common life, but his rule was not considered pre-eminent until the eleventh century, to which it was the chief source of canonical statutes. The main early source of authority was the apostolic life of the first Christians, as described in the Acts; Bede wrote that S. Gregory's mission to Canterbury adopted the

"apostolic life of the primitive church"⁸³

and Cassian had previously made assumptions in similar tone, concerning bodies of priests who served churches. Early writings were concerned to synthesize the duties of the clergy with the personal demands of the inner spiritual life, and the expositions in the earlier part of this Chapter testify to the time and energy expended on this type of problem.

The ordo canonicus presents a confused picture until the eleventh century when the Gregorian Reform brought a degree of organisation. It was not until the twelfth century that a special adherence was felt to Augustine, the early loyalty to the apostolic example probably slackening because of the legalistic atmosphere of the age, the consequent need to establish rights and precedents, and the great reverence accorded to Augustine generally. Dickinson adds the reminder that the excellence of Augustine's Rule must also have been a factor in its success.

The Gregorian Reforms encouraged the canons as a means of maintaining or restoring worship in the areas of central Italy which were linked to the Papacy. They were not regarded as monks with a clerical

bias, but as clerks with some monastic characteristics. By the time the order had crossed the Alps in the twelfth century, the new wave of asceticism had weakened and changed their original purpose to the extent that a number of French and German houses were established in remote areas where the purely eremitic life was the obvious purpose. The life was often so austere as to be indistinguishable from extreme monastic orders. Simultaneously, some houses were established in towns as regular bodies, and some were not noticeably regular or even clerical.

The interest which attaches to the Austin Canons in relation to the theme of action and contemplation arises from the form into which their Order settled. At the beginning of the eleventh century there was considerable opposition to any member of a regular body undertaking clerical work, but it was argued in return that those who lived the full common life were uniquely qualified to practice the cure of souls. Eventually this defence was accepted, and by the mid-twelfth century it would seem that their function was regarded as beneficial. The significance of this combined life of contemplation and ministry lies in its rejection of purely monastic life (which, according to Bernard, was actually selfish)⁸⁴ and in its great success as a middle way between the eremitic and the secular. One of the marks of the Austin Canons was their moderation, and on this account they were often accused of half-heartedness. This feature arose partly from another characteristic of this Order - its interest in theological argument, both for its own sake and as a method of converting people to Christianity. This is seen in the foundation at S.Victor, where Richard was the first mystic to apply the scholastic method to mystical theology. The intellectualism of this school contrasts with S.Bernard's affective spirituality.

A close relation of the Austin Canons was the order of Premontre⁸⁵, over which Bernard exercised considerable influence. This new order aimed at a quasi-Cistercian strictness, and while manual labour was included in its horarium, preaching was also brought in. It enjoyed considerable success in France and the Rhineland, attracting a very high calibre of recruit, as reflected in the regular elevation of its members to the episcopacy. The Order only arrived in England in about 1170⁸⁶, and only a handful of houses were founded. It is of interest that there was much conflict between the two elements of the life of the Premonstratensians, the contemplative and the clerical elements being difficult to reconcile, and even more significant that, as its numbers increased in an Indian summer towards the end of the century, the monastic fervour overcame the apostolic function. The success of the Order, in its original form, demonstrates the desire for as great a commitment to seclusion as is compatible with service. S. Bernard's continued interest in such variants of Cistercian practice would seem to indicate, in addition to a concern for the salvation of the common man, a desire to bring as many people as possible within the monastic orbit.

The house of Fontevrault is yet another colour in the spectrum of twelfth century spirituality. Robert of Arbrissel founded it around 1100 as a community of priests, lay workers and women, on the model of the apostolic church.⁸⁷ It finally resolved into an Order having three constituent parts; the contemplative nuns, who were its centre, lay sisters and priests who served as chaplains and spiritual directors. Almost inevitably it became a centre for high-born women of religious conviction, often of royal blood, and the humble origins of the majority of the priests may explain its continued success in its original form.

The houses under the rule of Gilbert of Sempringham were inspired by Fontevrault⁸⁸, and the purely continental framework was adapted to English needs. Gilbert was a parish priest who found himself the director of a growing number of dedicated women. He brought lay sisters into his convent and, finding the administration too much of a burden, attached conversi to his foundation. The phenomenal success of his house necessitated the addition of an Order of canons to be chaplains to the nuns. The nuns took the Rule of S. Benedict, the canons the Rule of S. Augustine, and the lay brothers a modified version of the Cistercian rule for conversi. Effectively it was a double monastery, and it enjoyed, with its daughter houses, a great reputation until the end of the twelfth century. Both Fontevrault and the Gilbertine houses add a new dimension to the concept of self-sanctification and service by bringing, as it were, the converted into the Order. The chaplains undertook an intensive form of pastoral work.

This very varied reaction in the twelfth century added to the number of directions in which religious fervour could be realized, and the thirteenth-century decline of the monastic ideal has to be seen partly against degenerate monachism, but also against the multiplicity of semi-monastic institutions. The twelfth-century reaction also represents, in the religious institutions of which the four discussed are typical, the nature of the spirituality of the period and of its interpretation of the tradition of the theme of action and contemplation.

4. The Thirteenth Century

S. Thomas Aquinas

The twelfth century witnessed the birth of the Cistercian Order and may be considered, for a number of reasons, to be the period in which the monastic life reached one of its highest peaks of achievement. During the following century there was a detailed working out of the changes arising from the Cistercian innovations, but no figure of the stature of S. Bernard appeared, and there was little further experimentation. The impetus seems to have slackened, and the spirit, which inspired fervour in twelfth-century monastic reformers, passed in the thirteenth century into the vocation of the friars.⁸⁹

The most obvious theoretical difference between the life of a monk and the life of a friar is the rejection by the latter of all forms of wealth. One of the recurring problems of monastic conventual life had been the tendency to accumulate wealth, both from the legacies of benefactors and from the gains of the monks' own labours. This led to the need for administration and resulted in a growth of organisation which, with its attendant distractions, sapped the fervour and simplicity of monastic life by a gradual but inevitable redirection of energies. The friars reacted against wealth and its usual corollary of spiritual decay, and strove to follow literally Christ's words to the adulescentus of the Gospel,

"Si vis perfectus esse, vade vende quae habes, et da pauperibus, et habebis thesaurum in coelo; et veni, sequere me." 90

(Matthew 19 21)

They were also inspired by the injunctions of Christ to care for the poor and the sick with whom He identified Himself, and to preach the Kingdom of Heaven. The itinerant life was specially suited to such an aim, and was also appropriate because the friars wished to imitate the life of Christ. This life of poverty and service did not, however,

distract the friars from an interest in contemplation. Their desire for exalted spiritual experience, epitomized in S. Francis receiving the Stigmata, provided a counterbalance to the life of toil; it is possible, as a result, to see the friars' vocation as a combined life of action and contemplation.

The friars' orders spread rapidly across Europe and their members had a wide variety of spiritual interest. At one extreme was the supreme scholastic writer, S. Thomas Aquinas, who was primarily a theologian. He wrote for those trained in the universities, and his audience was familiar with the history of the church as it was then understood, and with the ecclesiastical controversies and traditions which had developed over the centuries. He was interested in determining the truths of his faith, and was less directly concerned with the lives of those outside academic circles. His writings are therefore scientific and highly complex, and would have been of little use to anyone but a theologian. S. Bonaventura was of the same intellectual background, and also wrote primarily for an élite. At the other end of the spectrum were those friars who preached to popular audiences, often in parish churches or at some suitable place in a village, and their words were for the uneducated or simple. They popularized and disseminated orthodox views and were not original thinkers in their own right. A work with a very complex authorship, the Meditationes Vitae Christi⁹¹, was, in its final form, a popularized version of orthodox theology, and it can reveal the type of beliefs which were available to less sophisticated audiences. This wide diversity of interests within the movement is surprising at first sight, but reflects the variety of religious forms during the period as a whole, and arises from the broad framework within which the friars' aims were formalized. The relevant sections of the Summa Theologiae will be

examined to demonstrate the intellectual aspect of the friars' orders and the Meditationes Vitae Christi will be used to reveal the nature of the material which was available for the humbler elements of society. In addition, two small works will be briefly examined; the first is a treatise by S. Bonaventura on the origins of the friars' orders, and the second is the Stimulus Amoris by James of Milan.⁹² The Meditationes will be discussed last as, in many ways, its informal approach makes it a more appropriate prelude to the fourteenth century, and also because its adherence to the Augustinian tradition makes it an appropriate vehicle for the discussion of concepts of action and contemplation. The Summa of S. Thomas will be looked at first because its Aristotelian method, which is basically unsympathetic to the theme of action and contemplation, tends to over-schematize the concepts involved, and this restricts its usefulness.

It has been stated above that S. Thomas wrote for an intellectual élite, and any account of his writings must allow for his highly specialized audience. In the detailed examination of the part of his writings which follows, it must be borne in mind that his terms would have been intended to have specific ranges of connotations as they were usually used in contexts with traditional areas of meaning and implication. Thus, at one point, he uses the term activa vita and explains it in terms of monastic good works.⁹³ He is automatically thinking in terms of the life of a member of a religious order; this does not, however, affect the wider interpretation which he wishes to be placed on these terms at other times when he is using them for a more general purpose. With this warning in mind, the Summa Theologiae can reveal much of S. Thomas' thought which is relevant to the theme of action and contemplation.

In the historical development of traditions of thought, it is

sometimes the case that a great figure who represents the culmination of the tradition is at once the final developer of a system, unifying and expressing the elements he receives in a perfected form, and also the most revolutionary, realizing the range and scope of received ideas in a way which eclipses his position as codifier, and makes him appear an innovator. In early Christian philosophy, this is seen in S. Augustine of Hippo, and in the early codification of monastic rules, in S. Benedict of Nursia. S. Thomas occupied this position in regard to scholastic philosophy. The Summae are vast edifices of precision, and their systems of analysis, comparison and judgement operate on all levels from overall structure to the smallest detail. This, on occasions, can seem sterile and arid, and this tendency is accentuated by the refusal of the author to highlight important areas, or differentiate in terms of emphasis between discussion of minute detail and of the weightiest matters. These general comments will be given substantiation in the following examination of Summa Theologiae⁹⁴ from Quaestio 179 to Quaestio 189, which are concerned with the active and contemplative lives, and with the pastoral and religious lives. S. Thomas analyses these concepts in great detail and reveals his genius for lucidity and rational argument, and also betrays his tendency to accumulate a mass of material, with the inherent danger of obscuring large matters in a conglomeration of minutiae. In architectural terms, it is necessary to maintain a due distinction between the arches and buttresses of his arguments, and the crockets and finials which are an integral part of the overall design, but of little structural importance. If these distinctions are observed, S. Thomas can be seen as a codifier not only of the technical method of scholastic philosophy, but also of many of the important elements of the traditions of action and contemplation. There are two major

casualties of the sharp knife of his dialectic, the first of which is the term 'the mixed life', because the Aristotelian theory of means and extremes forbids the inclusion of composite states, as will be discussed later. The term 'mixed life' is thus lost, but the mixed life itself is discussed under different names in a thoroughly traditional manner. The second casualty is the full range of meaning of the term activa vita, which again will be examined later. Because of the place of honour accorded to S.Thomas by contemporaries and also by people of later centuries, his ideas on action and contemplation must be regarded as significant.

The most important single difference between the group of Augustinian writers between Cassian and S.Bernard of Clairvaux, and the scholastic writers, was the dependence of the latter on Aristotle. To speak of an Augustinian school in the field of action and contemplation is meaningful, because Augustine synthesized Plotinian and other early Christian ideas into a recognisable corpus of beliefs which were treated by major writers over a period of several centuries. S.Thomas accepted this tradition in a very great part, but he re-expressed it in Aristotelian terms. Augustine had used Platonic systems of thought which were inclusive in method; an idea was clarified by the accretion of concepts with allusive connotations, and the result was a complex idea which depended for its meaning on a subtle web of references and allusions. These ideas were then given form through a mode of expression which was visual, and allegorical in nature. This was related to Augustine's exegetic use of Old and New Testament incidents, of which the use of the figures of Rachel and Leah, and Martha and Mary are good examples. S.Thomas relied on an Aristotelian intellectualism which concentrated on abstract states and exclusive distinctions, which, with their verbal and intellectual nature, contrasted sharply

with the visual and metaphorical writings of earlier figures. It is of great interest that S.Thomas' abruptly divergent path leads to the same conceptual destination as earlier tradition, as will be shown below. This can partly be accounted for by the fact that he was using a similar group of Biblical texts and was inevitably influenced by the weight of authorities who preceded him, but the degree of similarity goes beyond the resemblance that might have been expected considering the very different approach he employs.

S.Thomas' definition of the terms activa vita and contemplativa vita reveals his Aristotelian method,

"Dicendum quod illa proprie dicuntur viventia quae ex seipsis moventur seu operantur. Illud autem maxime convenit alicui secundum seipsum quod est proprium ei et ad quod maxime inclinatur. Et ideo unumquodque vivens ostenditur vivere ex operatione sibi maxime propria, ad quam maxime inclinatur, sicut plantarum vita dicitur in hoc consistere quod nutriuntur et generant, animalium vero in hoc quod sentiunt et moventur, hominum vero in hoc quod intelligunt et secundum rationem agunt. ... Quia ergo quidam homines praecipue intendunt contemplationi veritatis, quidam vero intendunt principaliter exterioribus actionibus, inde est quod vita hominis convenienter dividitur per activam et contemplativam. ... Ad primum ergo dicendum quod propria forma uniuscujusque faciens ipsum esse in actu est principium operationis propriae ipsius." (Summa Theologiae 2a 2ae. 179-1 Vol.46,p.5)

("Those are properly said to be living things which move or operate from within themselves. Now that which is proper to anything and to which it especially inclines is eminently suited to that thing in its own right. Hence every living thing is recognized as such by that operation which is most proper to it and upon which it is most bent. Thus the life of plants is said to consist in nutrition and reproduction, the life of animals in sensation and movement, and the life of man in intellectual knowledge and action in accord with reason. ... Since some men especially dedicate themselves to the contemplation of truth while others are primarily occupied with external activities, it follows that human living is correctly divided into the active and the contemplative. ... The proper form through which a thing actually exists is also the principle of its characteristic activity.")

This scientific and philosophical distinction is based on a rationalized and systematic approach to phenomena. Where Augustine derived his

definitions from the allegorized conceptual models of ascetical theology, S.Thomas derives his from a scientific consideration of men in terms of function and type. The propria forma defines the operationis propriae so that some men are especially concerned with contemplationi veritatis and others with exteriores actiones. It is interesting to note in passing that all simplifications of the terms activa vita and contemplativa vita, during the entire mediaeval period, result from a description of an inner spiritual state by reference to its most characteristic activity; this is the self-same method which is being used by S.Thomas to derive a basic definition of terms. Action, a complex spiritual state with certain external activities, is commonly defined during the mediaeval period only by reference to its outward activities, and contemplation, an entirely inward state, is defined merely by its outward manifestation of solitude. For S.Thomas, however, the relationship between inner state and outward activities is causal and crucial, rather than merely apparent and potentially misleading. To return to S.Thomas' concept of the activa vita, it is significant to realize that at this point he has made no reference to religious lives. He has spoken of intellectual states concerned only with the predisposition of different men to different lives either of activity or of the contemplation of truth, but there is no reference to state of soul or spiritual growth. This is a part of his method of deriving definitions from intellectually conceived, rational and scientific arguments, and illustrates clearly the contrast between the scholastic and pre-scholastic modes, whereby Augustine derived his definitions, as indicated above, by reference to Biblical prototypes. Uthred of Boldon, who is examined in a later chapter⁹⁵, combines these methods, using elaborate spiritual schemes to describe the different functions of the Christian life, but when he sought a first cause, he referred to Adam and Paradise

in an Augustinian manner. The fundamentally different approach of S. Thomas can be seen above to determine the way in which he derives his definitions of the active and contemplative lives, but it will be shown that his concepts of their scope are heavily influenced by the Augustinian tradition.

Before S. Thomas' concepts of action and contemplation are examined, the phenomenon of orthodox traditional views arising from a scientific examination can be demonstrated in relation to the question of whether the division of life into the active and contemplative modes is sufficient, or if there is a third type of life.

S. Thomas has stated, in accordance with Aristotelian philosophy, that there are two types of life, the active and the contemplative. He now points out that Aristotle referred also to a third life:

"Philosophus enim in I Ethic dicit quod tres sunt vitae maxime excellentes, scilicet voluptuosa, civilis (quae videtur esse eadem activae) et contemplativam."
(ibid. 179-2 Vol. 46 p.7)

("The philosopher states in I Ethics that the outstanding types of life are three in number, namely the life of pleasure, civil life (which would be the same as the active life) and contemplative life.")

In addition, Augustine refers to three types of life:

"Praeterea, Augustinus XIX De civ. Dei ponit tria vitae genera, scilicet otiosum, quod pertinet ad contemplationem; actuosum, quod pertinet ad vitam activam; et addit tertium ex utroque compositum."
(ibid.)

("Further, Augustine, in XIX De civ. Dei, names three types of life, the life of leisure, which is associated with contemplation, the life of action, associated with the active life, and a third type which is a blending of the two.")

S. Thomas adds:

"Praeterea, vita hominis diversificatur secundum quod homines diversis actionibus student. Sed plura quam duo sunt humanarum actionum studia." (ibid.)

("Further, human life is diversified according to the various occupations in which men are engaged. Now men are engaged in more than two types of occupation.")

There is a conflict of evidence at this point, since various authorities state that there are three types of life, but Aristotle's method states that there are only two. S. Thomas might have answered this problem in accordance with Augustinian belief but for his earlier insistence on carrying his original argument through to its logical end. He first stated, in accordance with tradition, that the active and contemplative lives are activities or states, and had he stopped at that point, he could have said that the three lives are modes rather than states, and found himself in accord with Augustine. The unremitting pressure of Aristotelian methods drove him to say, however, that the active and contemplative states inevitably manifest themselves in different types of life, and that the states are, therefore, also lives. Because he has taken this further step, he is now committed to assimilating, somehow, the three lives into the two. He finds himself in the historically recurrent situation of identifying states and lives. His answers to this problem are characteristic of his method, and comprise an elaborately-reasoned threefold approach.⁹⁶

The simplest part, and in many ways the most satisfying, is the assertion that the division into active and contemplative refers to vita humana, which itself is defined by its most characteristic function which is intellectum. The intellect is divided into the active and contemplative because the goal of intellect is either knowledge of the truth which engages intellect in a contemplative manner, or external action which engages intellect in a practical or active manner. Thus, in terms of operationis propriae, vita humana can be said to be active or contemplative. This moves towards an Augustinian stance, though it fails to state the implied corollary that the three lives are external modes in which the two states can be embodied. The second part of the threefold answer is pure Aristotelianism, which rationalizes out the contradictory elements. Augustine had said that there was a life of

leisure, associated with contemplation, a life of action, associated with the active life, and a third life which was a blending of the two. S. Thomas believes that any mean position is a combination of two extremes, and cites tepid as the mean between hot and cold, and grey as the mean between white and black. There are, however, only two elements in the spectrum black - grey - white, the mean being composed of a balance of the two extremes, in which at any moment one or other predominates. So it is, he says, with action and contemplation, the middle life being at one time predominantly active, at another, predominantly contemplative. In effect, he agrees with Augustine, but he is quibbling over terminology. The third part of S. Thomas' answer is to say that the life of pleasure - Aristotle's voluptuosa - is common to both man and to animals, and is characteristically the life of a beast (vita bestialis) and cannot therefore be included in a consideration of vita humana. This leaves only the civil life (quae videtur esse eadem activae) and the contemplative life. Thus S. Thomas resolves the problem by an intellectual process in which everything is reduced to first principles, and the traditional connotations and allusive elements, which are the life and breath of the tradition, are lost. He states that there are only two lives, but there is a third life which comprises a combination of the other two, and achieves an entirely orthodox position because he has said that the lives are also states. This purely philosophical approach has, however, led to there being no discussion of the purgative or illuminative aspects of action, and only a philosophically oriented discussion of contemplation. The essentially Augustinian connotations of action as an ascetic approach to contemplation have been lost, and contemplation has become an intellectual quest. S. Thomas' concepts of action and contemplation require closer analysis to discover the exact range he

allows them, and there are a number of statements which are relevant.

S.Thomas begins his discussion of the active life with a quotation from S.Gregory the Great:

"activa vita est panem esurienti tribuere".
(ibid. 181-1 Vol. 46. p.53)

("The active life is to give bread to the hungry.")

It was shown in an earlier chapter⁹⁷ that Gregory used the term activa vita in a general sense to denote what Augustine would have called the life of involvement (negotiosus) and in a special sense to denote a concept of purgation and illumination. Thomas only takes up the former element in his initial definition, and says:

"Vita enim activa videtur consistere solum in his
quae sunt ad alterum ..." (ibid.)

("For the active life seems to consist only in affairs
having to do with others ...")

This impression of the scope of his concept of action is confirmed later -

"vita activa habet finem in exterioribus actibus."
(ibid. 181-4 Vol.46, p.62)

("the active life has its end in external actions.")

and these external actions are defined in a later discussion. Thomas states that the works of the active life are two-fold, and concern the actions of almsgiving and so on, but more interestingly that works of the active life also concern what he describes as work arising from the fullness of contemplation:

"Sic ergo dicendum est quod opus vitae activae est duplex. Unum quidem quod ex plenitudine contemplationis derivatur: sicut doctrina et praedicatio. ... Aliud autem est opus activae vitae quod totaliter consistit in occupatione exteriori: sicut eleemosynas dare, hospites recipere, et alia hujusmodi." (ibid.183-6 Vol.47 p.205)

("Moreover the work of the active life is twofold. One proceeds from the fullness of contemplation, such as preaching and teaching ... The other work of the active life consists completely in external activities, such as almsgiving, reception of guests, and the like.")

Preaching and teaching are actions which arise from contemplation, and this is a traditional concept of involvement with society, as has been seen in a number of earlier writers; the second type of work of the active life, according to the last quotation, is cast in the form of good works of the monastic life. This is because the relevant extract is from the later part of the Summa, which concerns the pastoral and religious lives. It is valid to adduce this extract at this point to corroborate the evidence of the earlier part of the Summa, as long as its different provenance is remembered. Thomas has thus said that there is an activity, preaching, which arises from contemplation, but he has not given any judgement on which of the lives of pure contemplation or of contemplation and action is better. He now commits himself:

"Sicut enim majus est illuminare quam lucere solum,
ita majus est contemplata aliis tradere quam solum
contemplari." (ibid.)

("For just as it is better to illumine than merely to shine, so it is better to give to others the things contemplated than simply to contemplate.")

Since Thomas has already said that these activities rise out of contemplative experience, and also that it is necessary for those suited to contemplation to undertake it, the fact that he now says that it is better to give to others the things contemplated rather than to merely contemplate, means that he is saying that one should both contemplate and preach - in other words, undertake a "mixed life". This suggestion is given an historical context when it is remembered that the motto of St. Thomas' order was

"Contemplata aliis tradere".

("To give to others the fruits of contemplation".)

It is thus important that Thomas takes a completely traditional attitude to a life combining action and contemplation.

The purgative element of action is only introduced as a means to the end of asserting that moral virtues pertain to the active life. He quotes Isidore's statement that vices must be eradicated by good works and this contention is linked primarily to a discussion of moral virtue, and the active life and its part in this concept is subservient to virtue and its effects. Thomas' concept of the active life is thus more restricted than traditional views. It is true that he has chosen the highest as well as the lowest parts of the active life, but because they all refer to external activity, the omission of purgation is significant.

The contemplativa vita is defined in a more traditional way, though not wholly so, as it extends beyond the boundary of Augustinian writings. The vision of God is the prime element of contemplation; it

"consistit in contemplatione Dei."

(ibid. 181-4 Vol. 46, p.65)

("it consists in the contemplation of God.")

Thomas includes in the contemplativa vita, however, activities which Augustine would not have regarded as contemplative, and he follows Richard of S. Victor in postulating six steps to vision which include the consideration of sensible and intelligible things. Thomas concludes

"quod ordine quodam quatuor ad vitam contemplativam pertinent: primo quidem, virtutes morales; secundo autem, alii actus praeter contemplationem; tertio vero, contemplatione divinorum effectuum; quartum vero et completivum est ipsa contemplatio divinae veritatis."

(ibid. 180-4 Vol. 46, p.29)

("that four things in a certain order pertain to the contemplative life; first, the moral virtues; secondly, certain acts other than contemplation; thirdly, contemplation of divine effects; and fourthly, the complement of all, namely the contemplation of divine truth.")

Thomas thus includes, amongst other things, an intellectual activity which is not usually considered a purely spiritual experience. Pseudo-Bonaventura had similarly included such activities in the contemplativa vita, but he had gone on to qualify his statement by saying that, strictly speaking, such activities fall into the category of meditatio.⁹⁸ Thomas' concept of contemplation is thus basically Augustinian and Aristotelian, but the method of ordering and categorizing the material is more heavily influenced by Aristotelian processes. He takes the ideas of Augustine, but draws them out in fine distinctions which are inimical to their inclusive nature, and forces them into a rigid mould which changes the terminology, and sometimes the actual meaning. A second influence on S. Thomas, which works in the same direction as the scholastic version of Aristotelianism, is the negative approach of Dionysius the Areopagite. These two influences, together, cast the emphasis, as indicated above, on the intellectual and verbal rather than the visual and metaphorical. Since most Christian active and contemplative theology had been formulated in the latter mode, there was created an irresolvable tension. There was a constant forcing of metaphorically derived concepts into a dialectic mould, and since the complexity of those concepts derived from their inclusive and allusive nature, there was an inevitable simplification. The parallel process of partially deriving the concepts afresh from Aristotle changed their nature as well as restricting their range of reference. Augustinian concepts were pulled off balance by a tendency to definition by exclusion which is inherent in the scholastic method, and a tendency to refer to logically related but spiritually unrelated matter through fidelity to Aristotelian processes of logic.

The section of the Summa concerning the relative merits of the active and contemplative lives is in accord with the spirit of

what has been seen elsewhere in that work. Thomas adduces a number of texts from the Bible and the Fathers to show that the active life is necessary, but that the contemplative life is of a higher nature. He also says that the active life, though lesser in nature, is of equal merit before God, and that it is necessary to leave contemplation occasionally to undertake good works.⁹⁹ He then goes further still:

"Potest tamen contingere quod aliquis in operibus vitae activae plus meretur quam alius in operibus vitae contemplativae, puta si propter abundantiam divini amoris, ut ejus voluntas impleatur propter ipsius gloriam, interdum sustinet a dulcedine divinae contemplationis ad tempus separari."

(ibid. 182-2 Vol.46, p.75)

("Nevertheless it may happen that a person will merit more in the works of the active life than does another in the activities of the contemplative life; for example, if, out of an abundance of divine love, a person consents to be separated from the sweetness of divine contemplation for a time to fulfil God's will and for his glory.")

A life combining action and contemplation is thus more worthy than a life of pure and uninterrupted contemplation. Thomas clearly enunciates the idea that the active life is perfected by contemplation¹⁰⁰, and then develops this concept in a realistic way. He recognized that some people are more suited to action, and some to contemplation, but he does not allow this to become an excuse for them to neglect one part of their lives. He believes that those who are more suited to contemplation can make themselves more able to benefit from it by action, and that those more suited to action should use good works to prepare themselves for contemplation.¹⁰¹ He thus envisages a combined or mixed life for people of both dispositions.

S. Thomas' view of the action which follows contemplation is therefore traditional, as are his beliefs on the relative merits of the active and contemplative lives. A significant divergence from the mainstream of authoritative writers is his contention that the active

and contemplative lives are primarily lives rather than states. The fact that he bases his definition of the lives upon the innate tendencies of different types of men does not disguise this important break with tradition.¹⁰² Before the thirteenth century there had been many simplifications of these concepts, but authoritative writers had always reasserted the traditional attitude. S. Thomas is the first major writer to adopt such a restricted view, and it may well be that many fourteenth-century simplifications received impetus from this factor. Hilton also simplified in this way, but he was writing explicitly for a less educated audience and was almost certainly modifying his views with this end in mind.¹⁰³ S. Thomas was writing a philosophico-religious tract, so this reason cannot have been relevant. The reason for his simplification must be sought in his Aristotelian premisses and his unrelenting intellectual and rational method.

Sections 179 and 182 of Summa Theologiae deal explicitly with the active and contemplative lives, and the foregoing analysis of these sections has attempted to show where the importance for the theme of action and contemplation is to be found. The following sections of the Summa, numbers 183-9, concern the pastoral and religious lives, and here there is much of interest to the theme of action and contemplation, for the pastoral life is, broadly speaking, active, and the religious life, broadly speaking, contemplative, in Thomas' view.

Thomas begins with a discussion of the offices and states in the church, and his definitions of office, grade and state are important:

"officium dicitur per comparationem ad actum, gradus autem dicitur secundum ordinem superioritatis et inferioritatis; sed ad statum requiritur immobilitas in eo quod pertinet ad conditionem personae." (ibid. 183-2 Vol.47,p.7)

(" An office is defined in relation to function, whereas a grade denotes an order of superior and inferior; a state, however, requires stability in that which regards the condition of the person himself.")

The important point which emerges from this is that S.Thomas has freed himself from the restrictions implicit in identifying life and state, by saying that state is concerned with condition - pertinet ad conditionem personae - and this relates to the spiritual state of the individual, whereas office is defined in relation to function - per comparationem ad actum - and can be used to discuss degrees of involvement and withdrawal. In this section, he is thus able to analyse the Christian life in a much more subtle manner, and a complexity which recalls the relevant writings of S.Augustine is possible. Thomas then continues to discuss perfectio Christianae vitae in terms of state and office, and reveals a depth of concern which was excluded by the rigorously technical nature of the earlier discussion. It is not that he abjures technicality, but that he is writing on an area of ideas where there is not such a weight of Biblical or philosophical precedents to contend with, and he is able to write without constantly accumulating authorities and the train of contradictions which would follow in their wake. Thomas starts by defining the perfect life.

The basis of the perfect life is charity:

"perfectio vitae Christianae, ... attenditur secundum caritatem: quae sub se comprehendit dilectionem Dei et proximi."
(ibid. 184-2 Vol.47, p.23)

("Perfection of Christian life ... consists in charity, which comprises love of God and of neighbour.")

There are three types of perfect charity; the first is where God is loved as much as he is able to be loved, which is impossible except to God; the second is where He is loved to the full extent of man's capacity to love, but this is only possible in Heaven; the third type of perfect love is where the total love of the second type, although not fulfilled, is not actually hindered by avoidable obstacles. Thus a man can reject mortal sin as an evil force, and he can go further and

reject things which are not sinful in themselves, but which distract attention from God. It is this last type of perfect love which is discussed in the Summa.¹⁰⁴ This instantly raises a possible problem, since Thomas has defined charity as love of both God and fellow-men, but it is exactly such actions as good works which are likely to distract from contemplative love of God. Thomas addressed himself to the problem of how to accommodate these two duties by first considering the love of God in isolation, and then considering how to arrange life so that ministry to others can be fitted in without detriment to the love of God.

Thomas' examination of the love of God does not require close analysis as it is concerned with such questions as freedom of soul and other technical discussion. It is significant, however, that he believes that a man should love God perfectly, and that such love is of greater merit than good works alone. The state of perfection is also defined as a state concerning a perpetual obligation - ad statum perfectionis requiritur obligatio perpetua¹⁰⁵ ("the state of perfection requires a perpetual obligation") - to perfect freedom which will manifest itself in charity. The twofold nature of charity results in there being two possible obligations -

"Religiosi enim voto se adstringunt ad hoc quod a rebus saecularibus abstineant quibus licite uti poterant, ad hoc quod liberius Deo vacent: in quo consistit perfectio praesentis vitae. ... Similiter etiam et episcopi obligant se ad ea quae sunt perfectionis, pastorale assumentes officium ..." (ibid. 184-5 Vol.47, p.39)

("Religious bind themselves by vow to abstain from worldly things which they could lawfully use, in order to dedicate themselves more freely to God, and this constitutes perfection in the present life... Similarly, bishops oblige themselves to those things pertaining to perfection by accepting the pastoral charge.")

The solitude which leads to contemplation and the service of the

episcopal vocation are thus both methods of fulfilling the obligation of man to perfect charity. Thomas now inquires which is the more worthy of these two, and concludes that

"illi qui a statu religionis assumuntur ad curam animarum, cum prius essent in sacris ordinibus constituti, assequuntur aliquid quod prius non habebant, scilicet officium curae: non autem deponunt quod prius habebant, scilicet religionis statum." (ibid. 184-8 Vol.47, p.55-7)

("Those who are selected from the religious state for the cure of souls, and already constituted in sacred orders, acquire something they did not have before - the office of pastoral charge; but they do not relinquish what they formerly had - the religious state.")

Thus, the religious who undertakes pastoral care has not sacrificed contemplation, and the implication here is that he is in a superior type of life. Thomas later, in another context, amplifies this in order to recommend that a suitable person should accept episcopal duties if they are offered to him:

"quamvis, simpliciter et absolute loquendo, vita contemplativa potior sit quam activa, et amor Dei quam dilectione proximi, tamen ex alia parte bonum multitudinis praeferendum est bono unius." (ibid. 185-2 Vol.47, p.67)

("Although the contemplative life is simply and absolutely more excellent than the active life, and the love of God more excellent than love of neighbour, the good of the majority is preferred to the good of an individual.")

Indeed, the religious state is not an obstacle to action, but a recommendation

"non est illicitum religiosis praedicare, docere, et alia hujusmodi facere. Tum quia ex voto vel praecepto regulae non obligantur ad hoc quod ab his abstineant. Tum etiam quia non redduntur ad haec minus idonei ex aliquo peccato commisso; sed magis idonei, ex exercitio sanctitatis quod assumpserunt." (ibid. 187-1 Vol.47, p.147)

("it is not unlawful for religious to preach, to teach, and perform similar functions, for they are not obliged by vow or any precept of their rule to refrain from such things, nor are they less suited for doing them because of any sin committed; rather, they are more suited because of the practice of holiness they have embraced.")

Thomas also holds that out of charity monks should engage in the direction of secular affairs in general.¹⁰⁶ He even goes as far as to say that the activities of the military orders are compatible with charity when they are directed at the defence of the helpless.¹⁰⁷

If this type of activity is compatible with the love of God, preaching is clearly permissible. The combination of the two types of charity in preaching orders makes them superior to contemplative orders

"Sic ergo summum gradum in religionibus tenent quae ordinantur ad docendum et praedicandum. ... Secundum autem gradum tenent illae quae ordinantur ad contemplationem."

("Therefore religious institutes dedicated to preaching and teaching have the highest place. ... The second place belongs to those institutes dedicated to contemplation.")

Thus S.Thomas shows that perfectio Christianae vitae is to be achieved, both at the individual and corporate level, by a combination of action and contemplation. He adds yet another authoritative voice to the argument that the life of combined action and contemplation is of the highest merit.

S. Bonaventura and James of Milan

S. Bonaventura was another writer with an intellectual audience in mind. From the vast range of his works, one of the simplest has much of interest for the theme of action and contemplation, and concerns the founding of the friars' orders.

S. Bonaventura examines the founding of the order of friars in an answer to an imaginary questioner concerning the reason for S. Francis' initiating of a new rule when there were already a number in existence. The answer ¹⁰⁸ is important for the theme of action and contemplation:

"Ad illud tibi respondeo, quod Pater S. Franciscus Spiritu Dei plenus, et zelo charitatis Dei, et proximi totus ignitus, triplici desiderio flagrabat, videlicet ut totus posset esse imitator Christi in omni perfectione virtutum. Item ut totus posset adhaerere Deo per assiduae contemplationis eius gustum Item ut multus posset bicrari Deo, et salvare animas, pro quibus Christus voluit crucifigi et mori. Et quia non suffecit ei, ut ista in propria persona tantum ageret, voluit instituere ordinem, ut multas co-operatores haberet, non solem in praesenti, sed etiam in futuro, qui et sanctitatis eius imitatores existerent, et alias Deo plurimos lucraretur."

(Determinationes Quaestionum circa Regulam
FF. Minorum)

("I answer you thus: The holy Father Francis, filled with the Spirit of God and all aflame with the zeal of love both towards God and his neighbour, was consumed with a threefold desire. He wished, without let or hindrance, in all perfection of virtue to be an imitator of Christ. Then he wished also to cling to God in the sweetness of assiduous contemplation; and lastly he longed for souls, that he might win them to God, and thus save those for whom Christ willed to be crucified and die. But since it did not suffice him to labour in his own person alone, he wished to found an Order wherein many might co-operate with him, and that, not merely in his own day but also in days to come, men who should stand out as imitators of his own sanctity, and gain many another to God.")

S. Bonaventura attributes a threefold motive to S. Francis for founding his order. The first, the imitation of Christ in the perfecting of virtue, implies a purified inner life whereby vices are purged and virtues developed in order to be able to emulate that example. This life would be akin to, and even synonymous with, the Augustinian concept of the developed inner life, and it can therefore be considered as wholly traditional in nature even though it is conceived as a means of imitating Christ rather than an end in itself. The two elements of contemplative experience and evangelical work are also wholly traditional, contemplation being a basic characteristic of all writings on the monastic life, and involvement with society being a frequently recurring motif. The interest arises from the statement that contemplation and action are twin pillars in the rationale of the regular life. Bonaventura's discussion of these two types of activity in relation to the traditional orders is worth examination. He says that S. Francis saw that each of the existing orders aimed at only one of his three desired ends:

"Ordines autem quas ipse sanctus Franciscus invenit in Ecclesia, aliqua praedictorum trium ex parte habebant, ut religiosi coenobitae, qui in studio virtutum Christi imitantur vestigia. Eremitae, qui contemplatione divinae frequentius vacant, et clerici rectores plebium, qui animarum curam habentes ex officio, lucris animarum omni vigilantia intendere debent. Et quia haec tria simul invenit in nullo ordine...."

(ibid.)

("Now the orders S. Francis saw in the Church aimed at one or other of these three ends. There were the monks living in community, following the footsteps of Christ and imitating His virtues. There were the hermit monks giving themselves up continuously to divine contemplation, and then there were the secular clergy, the parish priests, who, having care of souls, are bound in virtue of their office, to work with all vigilance for the salvation of souls. Nowhere, however, did he find an order embracing these three ends...")

Bonaventura suggests that S. Francis was breaking new ground, but in reality he was only re-ordering existing material. The analysis he offers of the lives of monks, hermit and clerks is over-simplified, and is only made possible by giving a simplified account of the purposes of

each of the classes of religious. Monks followed the footsteps of Christ, but also regarded contemplation as an important part of their lives, as well as considering pastoral work as part of their function. Hermits spent much time in contemplation, but they also attempted to imitate Christ's virtues, which are defined later in the tract as

"....in possessione Evangelicorum consiliorum, obedientiae, videlicet, et castitatis, et abdicatione proprietatis Christi vestigia sequeretur...."

(ibid.)

("....professing the evangelical counsels, obedience that is, and chastity and poverty, were to walk in the footsteps of Christ....")

Secular clergy and parish priests were enjoined to seek God in the quiet of contemplation as well as to fulfil their pastoral duties.

It may have been that Bonaventura was thinking in terms of the highly ritualized Cluniac type of observance, and of the poor education of the average parish priest of his time, or that he was simply illustrating the three parts of the friar's vocation by a formal reference to those lives where they could be readily identified.

Whatever the reason for this over-simplified analysis, it does not reduce the importance of the statement because the most significant aspect is how he conceived of the life of the friar. His concept is important because it formalizes the accepted belief in the need for both action and contemplation, by institutionalizing it: many writers had accepted the need for a combination of the two, but Bonaventura says that S. Francis founded an institution of which the specified intention was to enable and reinforce a balanced life.

The treatise continues to show why such a balanced life is desirable, and in doing so casts a specifically Franciscan light on the reason why action is not impossible in a life of contemplation:

"Nam et si actionis exterioris occupatio aliquotiens interrumpat atium contemplandi, ipsa tamen libertas cordis nullis sollicitudinibus tempo talium distracta, spiritualis vacationis magnam praestat studiosis opportunitatem, ut orando, legendo, meditando, et contemplando. Plus enim obest ad devotionis puritatem assequendam strepitus temporalium curarum quam exercitatio virtuosarum actionum. qui curarum importunitas in otio corporis generat mentis inquietudinem. Boni autem aperis fidelis exercitatio conscientiam quietat, et impinguando elevat in superna...."
(ibid.)

("For although exterior work may from time to time interrupt the quiet of contemplation, still liberty of soul, that complete freedom from the distractions borne of solicitude about temporal concerns, offers a great opportunity, to such as profit by it, of devoting themselves to spiritual things in prayer and spiritual reading, meditation and contemplation. The tumult of temporal cares hinders the purity of devotion far more than a laudable exterior activity, for importunate worries, especially in one leading a sedentary life, beget an unquiet mind, whereas the faithful fulfillment of good work tranquillizes the mind, enriches it and raises it heavenwards....")

Not only need good works not militate against subsequent contemplative experience, but they are far less distracting than the temporal concerns which arise from possessions and other worldly matters. Total poverty enables a special contemplative freedom and also, by implication, allows a type of concern for laudable work which also enhances contemplation. Thus action and contemplation complement and even enrich each other.

It can be seen that S. Bonaventura works within the accepted tradition of ideas concerning action, contemplation, and the combination of the two. It can also be seen that such a combination has been elevated from the position it held in earlier writings, where it was considered an ideal aim of the cenobitic life, to the position of being the definitive factor in organizing the regular life.

James of Milan, a thirteenth century Franciscan friar, wrote the central section of the spiritual treatise, Stimulus Amoris¹⁰⁹, which was long attributed to S. Bonaventura. The entire treatise, which comprised James' writings on contemplation and the spiritual life, and a series of anonymous meditations at the beginning and end, was translated

by Walter Hilton in the fourteenth century and was known as the Pricke of Love or the Goad of Love ¹¹⁰. The most important section for the theme of action and contemplation is the central part by James, especially Chapter VII which is entitled,

"Qualiter homo debet in omni actione frui contemplatione."

("How a man ought to engage in contemplation in every action.")

The very title of the chapter is significant as it assumes that action and contemplation can be experienced together. The treatise had previously been stressing the importance of serving God in contemplation and also of serving one's fellow men. Chapter VII witnesses a fusion of these two elements in a dynamic synthesis. James wonders at the blessed state of being able both to contemplate God and serve other men, and then continues to show how it can be achieved:

"O felix talis, qui cum activa contemplativam haberet: quia sic Domino ministraret ut Martha: ut tamen a pedibus Domini non discederet cum Maria, sic se Angelicis spiritibus niteretur conformare, qui nobis ministrando a divina contemplatione non vacant.."
(ibid.)

("Blessed is such a man who can have active with contemplative life, because thus he ministers to the Lord like Martha, and yet he does not leave the feet of the Lord like Mary. Thus he strives to conform with angelic spirits who, ministering to us, do not leave divine contemplation.")

This state can be achieved by caring for those in distress, because Christ took man's flesh and is to be found in all who suffer; to serve those in need is to behold Christ.

"Quid enim est hoc, scilicet Domino ministrare, aliud, nisi cum ministrat sano, cum visitat infirmum, vel servit infirmo, semper in eis Dominum intueri et frui Deo in proximo? Assistendo servit manum porrigit proximo, et cor ad Deum. Proximo servit, non ut homini, sed ut in homine Deo. Totus semper refert ad Iesum, qui dicit: Quod uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis."
(ibid.)

("For what else is this, namely ministering to the Lord, unless when he ministers to a healthy person, visits an infirm one, or serves an infirm one, (because) always in these people he gazes on the Lord in them. By assisting, he serves; he stretches out his hand to his neighbour and his heart to God. He serves his neighbour, not as man, but as God in man. Everything is always concerned with Jesus, who said As oft as ye do it to the least of mine, ye do it unto me. ")

This is interesting as it turns the approach of Richard of S. Victor round upon itself. Richard believed that the contemplator became Christ at the moment of ultimate experience, and should return and serve his fellow men in this divinized form. James is here approaching it from the opposite direction, saying that Christ took man's flesh as his own, and that to minister to the sick is to attend to Him: as he said,

"Quod uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis."

By James' account it is possible to achieve both action and contemplation by this means. It is possible to see here the fascinating double-shift which took place between the early and later mediaeval writers on this subject. On the one hand there tends to be a movement away from the technical and clearly defined contemplative concept of the early Augustinian school, towards what might be considered a lay or less-refined idea, as witnessed in James' use of the word contemplatione in a context which Augustine would not have allowed. On the other hand, despite the scholastic distinctions which characterised much thirteenth-century thinking, there is a move towards an almost social interpretation of the Gospels which runs counter to the tendency to abjure the anthropomorphic conceptions of Augustine. This second characteristic is seen in the preamble to the chapter underdiscussion which speaks of all men being scattered from their own beings when scattered from the One, and being united in the One when in Unity with the One. This Platonic concept is combined with the New Testament injunctions of Christ to produce a characteristically Western Christian idea from a neo-Platonic source. The social interpretation (i.e. the belief that some are enjoined to care for their fellows) is reached through a purely philosophical approach and at the same time that it arises from the neo-Platonic idea it gravitates that neo-Platonic idea toward the anthropomorphic conceptions and social assumptions which are counter to its nature.

It is of subsidiary interest that the innately philosophical nature of the Platonic idea should be realized anew through the theological and metaphorical philosophy of Christianity, though it should come as no great surprise, since both systems hinge ultimately on the unity of Creation.

Thus, the theme of action and contemplation, and the problems of combining them, arise from neo-Platonic ideas concerning the Many and the One, and at the same time, a combination of action and contemplation is the basis of Christ's message to mankind. James of Milan provides a counterpart to Richard of S. Victor in that Richard has been seen to provide the ultimate causal link between action and contemplation, and James now provides the mirror-image causal link between the two. Just as Richard's synthesis was shown to be found in a combination of a development of the Augustinian tradition and special contemporary factors, the source of James' synthesis may perhaps be sought in the scholastic spirit which pervaded much thirteenth-century writing and the social awareness of the period as well as in the developing tradition. It is also of interest that Richard's synthesis was possible because of his refusal to use metaphorical and visual language, where James' synthesis is only possible because of the presence of a highly metaphorical and allegorical use of Biblical narrative. This is related to the double-shift of ideas referred to above. Richard achieved a purely philosophical concept of ultimate union of action and contemplation by abjuring the figurative approach, where James is only able to achieve his inverted version of Richard's belief by approaching the whole problem in terms of narrative and allegory. The simple outcome of this rather complex analysis is that James can be seen to adhere

in his own terms, to the traditional belief that action and contemplation should be combined. It may be felt that the breadth of tone and simplicity of approach make Stimulus Amoris available to both lay and religious, and the widening of the terms of reference of the problems of the spiritual life is thus taken another step in the direction of the wide concern of Walter Hilton, who translated the Stimulus Amoris for wide use.

Meditationes Vitae Christi

Another writer whose work was long attributed to S. Bonaventura and who deals at length with the problems of action and contemplation from a Franciscan viewpoint, is the anonymous author (or authors) of the Meditationes Vitae Christi.¹¹¹

The question of authorship is a subject of much debate.¹¹² The most important recent theory to be advanced¹¹³ suggests that the central section concerning the Passion was written by S. Bonaventura and that a later group of Franciscans wrote a complete Life of Christ and inserted the Passion Meditations by Bonaventura into the enlarged work. The Life was first written in Italian and then translated into Latin, though the Passion section was always in Latin. The Meditationes Vitae Christi in its final form was addressed to a woman religious, the dilecta filia, though as Professor Salter observes,¹¹⁴ a general audience of similar vocation seems to have been in the writer's mind. The great number of references to the contemplative life, and the lengthy digression on this life confirm the impression that a specialized audience was envisaged. It is implicit in this theory that the original section by Bonaventura was for one educated audience, and the more digressive and derivative parts were written with a less sophisticated readership in mind. The implication of this will be discussed at the appropriate point below.

This immensely popular work was translated into many languages and there are well over two hundred surviving manuscripts, Caimneasch O Maonaigh who is quoted as an authority by Ragusa and Green, referato it as

"one of the masterpieces of Franciscan literature, a summary of mediaeval spirituality, a religious handbook of contemplation, a

manual of Christian iconography, one of the chief sources of the mystery plays." 115

Ragusa and Green point to

"the simple style, and tender sentiments of the narrative part of the text and the inspiration of the sermonizing sections (which) led to the rapid wide diffusion of the work through Europe." 116

The potential audience of a work embracing these diverse qualities and dealing at considerable length with the life of Christ must have been very wide. It would not have excluded those with a scanty background in either theology or rational dialectic, because it has directness of style and is of simple construction. On the other hand, its depth and fervour would have recommended it to those who might normally have preferred more complex matter. It bears a resemblance to the Scale of Perfection by Walter Hilton in that it relates high spiritual experience to a variety of spiritual needs, which include the simplest, and any work which appeals to a cross-section of society must be regarded as significant in terms of the ideas which it is likely to disseminate. The longest of the three versions in which the Meditationes Vitae Christi 117 was known contains a detailed discussion of ideas related to action, contemplation, and a kind of mixed life. This is of great interest, as it presents a clearly articulated statement of a Franciscan view of the theory of action and contemplation, a view, moreover, which was widely available during the later mediaeval period.

The section which deals with action and contemplation is very derivative, being heavily dependent on S. Bernard of Clairvaux for much of its material. Whilst, however, the material is thoroughly traditional, often being quoted extensively from S. Bernard's writings, there is a process of simplification which changes the emphasis of the

original ideas. The simplification involves a highly mechanical concept of the processes of purgation, illumination, contemplation, and the ensuing charitable action, whereby those stages are subsumed under the three headings of vita activa....prima pars, vita contemplativa, and vita activa... secunda pars (M.V.C. 569). The concepts of action and contemplation in the M.V.C. will be examined firstly in an analysis of ideas concerning the structure of the good life, and subsequently in discussions of the different lives which are considered by the author in this context. This will attempt to demonstrate the continuing influence of Augustinian ideas, in this particular case transmitted by Bernard, and also the modifications made by Psuedo-Bonaventura,

The general scheme of the good life, as has been indicated, is derived from S. Bernard despite the simplifications which it makes. As was shown in an earlier chapter, Bernard followed most of the writers in the Augustinian tradition, and discussed the stages of purification of sin, illumination of the mind in virtue, and vision in contemplation. These were followed by an outpouring of charity in which the individual preaches love to his neighbours. Thus the inner states relating to action and contemplation, the first three stages mentioned above, were usually undertaken in a life of withdrawal, and the last state was a life of involvement. The authors of M.V.C. propound these stages in complete accordance with their predecessors, but then reduce them all to the three lives of the vita activa....prima pars, the vita contemplativa, and the vita activa...secunda pars:

..vitam continue vivimus... Est igitur vita activa, quae designatur per Martham. Sed activae vitae, sicut ex dictis Bernardi colligere possum, duae sunt partes. Prima pars qua quis se exercet ad suam principaliter utilitatem corrigendo se, emendando a vitiis, et informando virtutibus. Et idem secundario fit ad

utilitatem etiam proximi per opera justitiae, et obsequia pietatis et charitatis. Secunda pars ejus est, quomodo quis principaliter suum exercitium confert in utilitatem proximi, quamvis ad suum etiam majus meritum, ut alias regendo, et adjuvando in animarum salutem, ut faciunt praelati, et praedicatores, et hujusmodi. Et inter has duas partes vitae activae, est vita contemplativa, ut iste sit ordo, quod primo quis se exerceat, et laboret in oratione, et sacrarum studio litterarum, et aliis operibus bonis, et obsequiis in conversatione, quasi corrigendo se a vitiis et acquirendo virtutes. Secundo quiescat in contemplatione, solitudinem mentis quaerens, et soli Deo vacans toto posse. Tertio per predicta duo exercitia, virtutibus et vera sapientia imbutus et illuminatus, et fervidus affectus, ad alicum salutem intendat. Primo igitur, ut tetigi, oportet, quod in prima activae parte, mens expurgetur, depuretur et raboretur per exercitia virtutem; deinde in contemplativa informetur illuminetur et instructor; potest confidenter pateat ad aliorum profectus exire, ut eos posset adjuvare." (M.V.C.p.570)

("...we continually live two lives...Thus the active life is designated by Martha, but from what I can gather from the sayings of Bernard, the active life is in two parts. The first is the one by which everyone acts to his advantage, principally correcting himself and cleansing himself of vices and infusing himself with virtues, and this is also secondarily done to the advantage of one's neighbour by deeds of justice and by the services of piety and charity. The second part is when someone principally converts his exercise to the use of his neighbour, even when this is to his greater merit, that is, when ruling and teaching and helping others with the salvation of souls, as is the case with prelates and preachers. And between these two parts of the active life is the contemplative life, so that this be the order maintained: first everyone exercises himself and wearies himself in prayer and in the study of the holy writings and in the other good deeds and services in common conversation, rectifying vices and acquiring virtue; in the second step, he reposes in contemplation, searching for solitude of mind and attending only to God with all his might; in the third, by means of the above two exercises of virtue, he becomes fervent, full of, and illuminated by true wisdom - he is concerned with the salvation of others. First, as I have mentioned it is necessary that in the active, that is, the first part, the mind should be purged, purified, and fortified in the exercise of virtue. Then it should be formed in the contemplative and be illuminated and instructed. Then it can securely turn to the profit and utility of others and help them.")

This three-fold life enunciates entirely traditional ideas in a framework which is equally traditional in its result, but which in actual expression, is much compressed. It can be seen that if the structure and terminology are not wholly familiar, the activities involved are the same. Cleansing of vice, and the operation of virtue are followed

by contemplation, and then the resulting charity creates the desire to work for the salvation of others. It is surprising to find a full and often technical detailed description being compressed into a scheme which resembles the more simplified popular catechisms of the fourteenth century. It may arise from the dual function of the terms concerning action and contemplation whereby vita activa and vita contemplativa were used to designate technical states in writers from S. Augustine to Uthred of Boldon, but at the same time were circulated as a debased currency which referred only to lives which Augustine would have called a life of involvement (negotiosus) and a life of withdrawal (otiosus). The authors of the M.V.C. may have felt that because the states they were discussing involved complex matter, they ought to relate them to the more commonplace terms to try to gain clarity, for it must be remembered that the relevant sections were part of the later additions for the dilecta filia, and not as part of the original Bonaventuran treatise. It may have been alternatively that a desire for an encyclopaedic completeness prompted them to use all the traditional terms in one treatment. Whatever the motives for this inclusive treatment, the result is a discussion which draws together in one place the many strands which were usually treated separately. Some writers dealt in detail with the technical aspect of the subject, and others dealt only summarily with the ideas, expressing them in market-place terminology. The authors of M.V.C. include both of the disparate, almost mutually exclusive, elements in one treatise. Thus the tradition of contemplation leading to charitable action is clearly seen in this work though the reduction of the many processes to three stages is a simplification not evident before the twelfth-century.

It will be useful, before continuing further, to indicate the concepts of action and contemplation which inform the relevant sections of the Meditationes Vitae Christi, though the fact that they consist of direct quotations from S. Bernard makes detailed illustration unnecessary.

The vita activa.. prima pars is concerned, according to Chapter XLVI of the M.V.C. with the purgative aspects of action as discussed in relation to the previous extract, but the weight of emphasis in this chapter falls on the reason why the vita activa precedes contemplation. Bernard's figure of decking the bridal couch with the flowers of virtuous actions is quoted verbatim from In Cantica Canticorum Ca. XLVI,¹¹⁸ and reference is made to Bernard's use of the figure of toiling with Leah before winning the embraces of Rachel. The extensive quotation of supporting texts recalls the suggestion that the treatise was written for someone undertaking a life of religious solitude, as the close concentration on the matters under discussion reflects the type of detailed advice with authoritative support which would be necessary for the repeated scrutiny it would receive. The vita activa receives further detailed attention in a later chapter entitled De exercitio activae vitae¹¹⁹ where there is again a faithful account of the relevant writings of S. Bernard, copiously illustrated from his sermons. The main point of this chapter is to show that good deeds must precede contemplation, and that tears must purge sins. This is a traditional concept of virtuous actions.

A later chapter discusses the manner of living the active life - it is entitled De modo vivendi in activa vita.¹²⁰ - and recasts orthodox material in a more focussed form. Pseudo-Bonaventura devotes

much of the chapter to the manner in which the activa vita should be lived, and says that it should be undertaken in social intercourse:

"Scire ergo debes, quod prima pars activae requirit socialem inter alias conversationem... Ideo autem in activa conversandum est inter alias, quia melius et citius quis propositum suum consequetur. Erubescit enim inter alias de vitiis quae habet, et de virtutibus quas non habet..."
(Ca. LIV)

("You must know, therefore, that the first part of the active requires sociable conversation with others.....Therefore in the active one converses with others, that one may better and sooner follow his purpose. When among others, one feels ashamed of the vices one has and the virtues one does not have.....")

This is more concentrated than traditional injunctions to emulate the virtues of others, as these injunctions are usually interpolated more or less casually amongst other diverse matters. Here, the writers do not regard emulation as a fortuitous by-product of good works in society, but as an integral part of social intercourse which is an intrinsically beneficial process because of its ability to offer examples of right and wrong. It is almost as if many writers, especially the more eremitic, regarded society as a diseased body in which mankind was doomed to spend its life, and religious orders went into society with the dual and complementary purposes of saving others and thereby enhancing their own virtue. The authors of the M.V.C. regard society as frail and fraught with moral danger, but here at least they see it, even if only in this limited context, as a curative and wholesome organism.

To summarize, the first part of the active life corresponds to the processes of purification of sin and illumination by virtue. In this part, the soul is cleansed and illuminated. This part of

the activa vita is followed by the contemplativa vita, which is the next stage in the writers' scheme.

The contemplativa vita is introduced in Ch.XLIX in the words of S. Bernard. It is discussed as a mystical marriage in which the Bridegroom (Christ) takes the Bride (the contemplating soul) to his heart, and allows her to rest and sleep. She is said to be like the sparrow of Psalm CXXIII which is liberated from the snare of the hunter. Bernard developed his ideas around the highly figurative imagery of the Sapiential books of the Bible, and Pseudo-Bonaventura quotes these ideas at length. Chapters L to LIII of the M.V.C. are also taken directly from S. Bernard, and quote him extensively and virtually without comment on the three kinds of contemplation, of the humanity of Christ, of the celestial court, and of the majesty of God. Since they lack even contexting comments, even a cursory examination is unnecessary. The relevant section in S. Bernard is In Cantica Canticorum LXII. Similarly, the section on the manner of living the contemplative life is completely derivative and refers to the need for absolute commitment to the spiritual life, and absence of distraction.¹²¹ The M.V.C. then discusses the reason why the contemplativa vita must precede the activa vita.....secundo pars by quoting Bernard's words on the image of the reservoir and the canal from Ca.XVIII of In Cantica Canticorum. This metaphor conveys the idea that a person should not hasten to preach the instant he first experiences contemplation, because he will be insufficiently developed and the gifts he has been given will be lost just as a canal bears away water which it receives. He should be like a reservoir which first fills, and then only passes on what is superfluous. These ideas are absolutely traditional.

The activa vita....secunda pars is a spontaneous outpouring of the developed soul in which the love experienced in contemplative experience finally pours forth in love for fellow-men. This is clearly stated in the discussion of the precedence of the contemplativa vita before the activa vita....secunda pars. This second part of the active life is not discussed explicitly in the M.V.C. because, as the authors say, it is not appropriate for the man who is the principal addressee of the treatise;

"Sed de tertio membro, id est, de secundo parte activae, qualiter ad lucrum animarum, et ad utilitatem proximi sit exeundum, non intendo tractere, quia tuus status hoc non requirit. Sufficit tibi in hoc totum studium tuum porere, ut ut vitius emendata ac virtutibus imbuta per primam portem activae, Deo tuo vacare possis per contemplationem." (XLVII)

("But of the third member, that is the winning of souls and the benefit of the neighbour, I do not propose to treat, since your condition does not require this. It is enough for you to place your whole effort in this, that, corrected in your vices and filled by virtues for the first part of the active, you may attend to your God in the contemplative.")

This is not a restrictive attitude, but a recognition of the different gifts of different people; he says that each person should persevere in the state to which he is called.

"....et qui aptus est contemplatione, moretur in ea; qui vero ministerio proximorum, exercent se in ipso." (LVII).

("....and let him who is suited to contemplation live in it, and him who is adapted to the service of his neighbours exercise himself in it.")

The reader is not told to attend to contemplation in a selfish spirit, but because of discretion and the recognition that, people are suited to different callings. The writers' words and intentions recall the New Testament image of the Church as a body with different organs with varying functions.¹²² They are not decrying or diminishing the importance of service, but recognizing that all people are not suited to it. In any case, charity towards one's neighbour is always secondary to

charity for God, though, as already suggested, its secondary nature does not diminish its importance. Those who are suited to the second part of action, however, after long contemplative experience, become overtaken by a desire to save others;

"Cum vero jam perfectus et sublimatus est per longum contemplationis exercitium, tunc pro Deo fortiter zelat, et pro anime salute, et habuisti supra, ex sermone Bernardi XVIII super Cantica in hoc tractatu, scilicet quomodo contemplativa praecedat secundum partem activae." (LVI).

("But when he is already perfect and exalted, that is, excellent, through long exercise of contemplation, then he fights vigorously for God and also for the salvation of souls, as you heard above in the 18th sermon on the Canticles in this treatise, that is, when the contemplative precedes the second part of the active.")

This idea is related to the Bernardine concept of zeal for the salvation of souls, the only modification being that the process is threefold, comprising the first and second parts of the active life with the contemplative life between them. It is necessary not to leave contemplation until one is fully developed through the long exercise of contemplation. In addition, it is necessary to remember that although it is worthy to leave contemplation for good works, the love of God must always be above love of the neighbour. The next extract summarizes the relationship of the two types of charity in the words of Bernard, which M.V.C. quotes:

"Denique inquit Paratum cor meum, non semel tantum, sed et secundo, et vacare tibi, et proximis ministrare. Haec plane pars optima quae non auferetur: haec mens optima, quae non mutabitur, quocumque vocaveris eam. Bonum enim acquirit gradum, qui bene ministravit; forte meliorum, qui bene vacavit Deo; optimum autem, qui perfectus est in utroque." (LVII)

("Lastly he said, 'My heart is prepared', and not only once, but twice, to be devoted to you and serve the neighbours. This is truly the best part, which is not taken away. This is the best mind, which is not changed, whoever may have called her. 'Who shall have served well acquires a good degree,' and perhaps a better one he who devotes himself to God, but the best one, he who is perfect in both.")

The best possible part is the service of God and the service of the neighbour, though the service of God is superior to good works. The importance of a life which includes service of one's neighbour is traditional, but it is perhaps possible to relate the particular emphasis placed upon it by the M.V.C. to the Franciscan ideal of humility before both God and one's fellow-men. The evangelical aspect of traditional black monachism and Cistercianism has not been fully understood in modern times, as the degree to which major early writers believed in this function of the religious life has not been adequately realized. In contrast to this common misconception is the reverse simplification which tends to equate the friars' orders solely with preaching. Whilst it is thus necessary to realize that the friars' ideals were just as concerned with the service of God in a contemplative manner, it is nevertheless true that the nature of their vocation tended to throw the emphasis upon preaching and charitable works rather than retirement and solitude. The importance of the return from contemplation to social involvement is reflected in the movement from a three stage concept of purgation-illumination-contemplation followed by an extra stage of good works, to the integration of the good works in a three stage concept of, preparation for contemplation-contemplation-preaching. The importance of the final stage is reflected in a discussion of the reasons for leaving contemplative experience, which will now be examined.

Traditional views held that the contemplator left the contemplative state because God's spirit departs, and the soul sinks down to the world again, but the M.V.C. places this reason last of three. The first reason why the contemplator leaves his vision is to bring souls to God:

"Nam tribus ex causis a jucunda contemplatione se ad tempus separat, et se recipit in activam. Una causa est, propter lucrum animarum....." (LVIII)

("For three reasons one may depart at the right time from joyful contemplation, and go to the active life. The first reason is to gain souls....")

The second reason is because of office:

"Alia causa intermittendae contemplationes est rationae officii imminentis." (Ibid.) 1

("The other cause for leaving contemplation is by reason of the office that prevails.")

The service of God is of greatest importance, but the service of one's fellow-men cannot be ignored. Although the causal link between love of God and love of one's fellow-men is not as integral as in the writings of Richard of S. Victor, in the M.V.C. it receives an urgency which contributes much to the tradition.

The importance of the M.V.C. is twofold: it disseminated Bernard's views of action and contemplation, in addition to adding a peculiarly Franciscan bias to the discussion of the life of involvement and society; it is also important in that it goes into these matters in considerable detail, in a form which became available to a wider public. The M.V.C. is a movement towards the wide dissemination of concepts of the mixed life, though not under that name, and in this respect forms a recognizable development in the movement of ideas between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries.

P A R T I I

Concepts of the Three Lives in England

1. The Concepts between 800 and 1300 A.D.

The Concepts between 800 and 1300 A.D.

The majority of the writers who have been considered in the foregoing account of the history of the concepts of action and contemplation have been Continental rather than English, and they contributed to a tradition which was supra-national in scope and nature. The cohesiveness of the European tradition may have been due partly to the general tendency to similarity of observance within each of the various institutions of the Church, and partly to the related use of Latin as the international language of learning. Despite these unifying influences, writers in Pre-Norman England, with a few exceptions, developed a highly individual tradition in the sphere of action and contemplation. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt to account in detail for the insularity of the English writers, but it is necessary to notice this phenomenon.

It is interesting that while concepts of the combined life in writings in England are so weak and divergent, as will be demonstrated later, there should have been an unusually close relationship between the Church and the crown in England. Alfred the Great influenced church development to a considerable degree, and in turn, ecclesiastical leaders played a part in the formation of his policies. On the one hand he took a close interest in monastic reform, and also saw the Church as an instrument of social good, using it both to spread learning and to alleviate social ills.¹²³ On the other hand, his co-operation with such figures as Bishop Asser led to a degree of reliance on the ecclesiastical hierarchy in formulating general policy. This interdependence was reflected in methods of economic administration, and Alfred divided his own revenue into two equal

parts, of which one was for secular, the other for religious purposes. 124
A similar degree of co-operation characterized tenth-century
relationships. S. Dunstan received encouragement and aid from Edmund
during his years as Abbot of Glastonbury, and when he returned from the
exile imposed by Edmund's successor, Eadwig, the next monarch, Edgar,
again extended royal protection to his activities. The power of
monastic bishops considerably increased during his lifetime, and Dunstan
with his two ex-pupils, Aethelwold and Oswald, exerted considerable
influence over royal policy. The "royal prayers" chanted during the
liturgy emphasized the close connection between church and state, and
episcopal power was revealed by the controversy over Edgar's successor
in 975 when the problem was resolved by one of the candidates receiving
Dunstan's favour. There was much opposition to this monastic influence
in affairs of state, but at the time of the Conquest, the great
majority of the diocesan bishops were still monks, and they continued
to act as counsellors to the Crown. Unlike all Continental rulers
save Charlemagne ¹²⁵, the English monarchs, in the period up to the
mid-eleventh century, gradually increased their co-operation with the
leaders of the church to the point where a clash between the insular and
foreign systems became inevitable after the Conquest. The Norman
monarchs saw the bishops as feudal vassals where English practice had
treated them as trusted and intimate counsellors.

It was normal ecclesiastical practice, throughout Christendom
for the so-called secular clergy to be involved in politics in various
ways. The peculiarities of the English situation were twofold: the
figures involved in diplomacy and policy-making were not the feudal
subordinates of the king, but, as stated above, were close and respected
counsellors with a remarkable degree of de facto independence; secondly,

it was not the secular clergy or the prelaty to which the monarchs turned for advice, but the monasteries. Thus the men involved were not people who would in any case have been concerned with lay affairs, but were people who otherwise would have been expected to remain within the orbit of the monastic life. After the eleventh century it became common for monastic figures to become involved in temporal matters, and the clearest example of this is S. Bernard of Clairvaux, but before 1066, it was not usual outside England. In a real sense, the English monastic bishops can thus be considered to engage in a life combining both active political concern and contemplative religious experience.

A further example of the activities of monastic bishops is the career of Wulfstan. He is usually considered less important than his near-contemporary Aelfric,¹²⁶ but in terms of concepts concerning action and contemplation, he is closer to the special position of English bishops, as it was outlined above. Where Aelfric regarded himself as an interpreter and conveyer of religious belief, and held that church figures should not become involved in secular affairs, Wulfstan took an active part in contemporary politics.¹²⁷ Besides his concern with internal church matters such as monastic reform, he was behind much civil legislation, attempted to impose church law on the Danes, and was a major influence in Cnut.¹²⁸ He wrote the Institutes of Polity which deal with the duties of the various social classes, and in his Sermo Lupi ad Anglos he fulminated at length on what he considered to be the causes of the havoc being wrought by the Danes. He was thus an example of the theory that religious figures should involve themselves in worldly affairs as well as devoting themselves to God. Although bishops, who were secular figures, had frequently been involved in this way before, it is of interest that a monk should become a bishop, and similarly take an interest in worldly affairs. The theory had its origin at least as early as the writings of S. Augustine of Hippo, but between S. Gregory the Great and S. Bernard of Clairvaux, its most dramatic fulfillment is seen in the lives of the English monk-bishops. Although Wulfstan was

an exemplar of the combined life, he had little to say about deep religious experience for the laity; the only interest he shows in this matter is in his abridgement in Old English of a monastic office,¹²⁹ and this seems to be an attempt to make something of the Hours available to lay people.

Despite the activity of Anglo-Saxon bishops and religious leaders such as Dunstan, Aethelwold, and Wulfstan the writings of the period suggest a considerable distance from Continental orthodoxy on the subject of action and contemplation. It will be seen later in this discussion that the Continental tradition is almost fully realized in the writings of Aelred of Rievaulx, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the post-twelfth-century English tradition of action and contemplation, which is epitomized in the works of Hilton, arises from an insular adaptation of the originally continental tradition, rather than from any native current of ideas stemming from the pre-Conquest period. This supposition is borne out by the very close similarity of thirteenth and fourteenth-century English ideas to the earlier international corpus of beliefs founded on Augustine's writings.¹³⁰ It is also borne out by the idiosyncracies of the Anglo-Saxon works on the theme under scrutiny, as will be shortly demonstrated, and the lack of correlation between the beliefs found in the Anglo-Saxon writings, and the products of the later centuries, in England. Further evidence for this view is the enormous influence of S. Bernard of Clairvaux on Aelred; the Cistercian form of the Augustine tradition was brought into England by this respected disciple as well as by the general enthusiasm for the practices and ideals of the white monks. By the fourteenth century the insular character of the English ideas

is marked, but it seems to be a graft on a Continental rather than a native root-stock. In this field at least, the Anglo-Saxon influence is shadowy and vague, and the Latin European concepts of action and contemplation seem to have accomplished an intellectual parallel to the Norman Conquest, the political movement having a number of cultural repercussions.

The distance of Anglo-Saxon ideas from the European mainstream of theology may be illustrated by reference to the writings of Aelfric, and the Blickling Homilies.

Aelfric, a pupil of Aethelwold, became one of the greatest Old English prose writers, and his works reveal the insularity of the tradition within which he wrote. In his Lives of the Saints¹³¹ he divides society into laboratores, oratores, bellatores¹³² and recommends that each person should remain within his station. He holds, for instance that the oratores should not engage in the wordly battle - þam woruld-licum gefehte¹³³ - and that it is harmful for them to leave the service of God. It must be borne in mind that Aelfric was not writing for a highly educated audience¹³⁴ and was therefore unlikely to engage in complex discussions of spirituality and also that he was writing against the backcloth of the fierce Danish invasions of the tenth century. These considerations would lead to the expectation that the author would simplify and channel his comments, but nevertheless, they reveal an essentially restrictive attitude in relation to the possibility of a combined life. This restrictiveness is further seen in the preface to the Lives, where it is made explicit that the laity is not a suitable audience for the higher reaches of religious knowledge,

"Nec tamen plura promitto ne scripturum hac lingua,
quia nec convenit huic sermocinationi plura-inseri ne
forte despectui habeantur margarite Christi." 5

(Lives of the Saints E.E.T.S. 1881,
1885, p.2).

("I do not promise, however, to write very many in this tongue,
because it is not fitting that many should be translated into
our language, lest peradventure, the pearls of Christ be had
in disrespect.")

This is quite different from the attitudes found in later English
writings, and also from the earlier Latin works examined above.

Aelfric does, however, feel that something should be made available
to the humble, though again, a dismissive attitude to the laity may
be detected in a reference to the provenance of his writings:

"Ne seoge we nan þincg ni wes on þissere geset nysse
for þan ðe hit stod gefyrn awriten on ledenbocum þea hþe
þu laewedan men þaet nyston."

(ibid. p.4)

("We say nothing new in this book because
it has stood written long since in
Latin books, though lay-men knew it not.")

These works were written to provide a source of orthodox material for
the use of parish priests for purposes of teaching and preaching, but
there is no indication of a desire to transmit anything beyond the
essentials of the faith. C.J. Godfrey speaks of Aelfric as being
concerned with "the importance of right belief",¹³⁵ and this seems
wholly appropriate, as there is no evidence of interest in making
deeper spiritual experience accessible to those outside the regular
life. This is in accord with Aelfric's own life, as he took little
part in political or even ecclesiastical matters and he represents
a movement away from the characteristic English tendency, first
seen in Bede, to combine religious and civil functions.

The author of the Blickling Homilies¹³⁶ similarly reveals
the distance between English and Continental ideas. He discusses the

story of Martha and Mary and states that they betoken two types of this fleeting life.¹³⁷ His analysis shows, however, that for him they signify not two types of life in the sense of the active and the contemplative lives, or even merely busy and quiet lives, but that they represent the church militant and the church triumphant - halgan cyricean and halgan cyricean on þære toewardan worlde.¹³⁸

The concepts are thus simplified, and the elements of action and contemplation are made subordinate. There is then a most interesting transition to the story of Mary anointing Christ's feet. In the Bible the incident of Christ's mild rebuke of Martha occurs quite separately from the anointing of his feet by Mary¹³⁹, and the anointing had an independent exegetical tradition. The homilist, however, runs the significance of the two stories together and though he discusses their meanings separately, it is quite clear that the connotations of the two types of life have become the principle elements of the interpretation of the second incident; he asserts that Mary's anointing of Christ betokens a life of good works.¹⁴⁰ In the discussion of the first story, he simplified the significance of Martha and Mary, and in the second, he completely reversed the meaning of Mary's part. The two stories are intended by the homilist to be understood as a unit, as is shown by their juxtaposition, the use of types of life as the central issue of interpretation in both cases, and the polarization of the meanings of the stories in terms of activity and rest. It is true that the homilies are intended for a general audience as can be deduced from the way in which the material is handled. Anderson¹⁴¹ speaks of the Homilies as "casual in structure and inclined to ramble", and thus is clearly not intended for an

academic and theological audience. It is therefore to be expected that there should be simplifications, but such rough handling of the original meanings suggests more than this. It is not unfair to conclude that the traditional meaning is subservient in the author's mind.

It can be seen that these two writers, who were aiming at a more or less popular audience, are writing in a tradition which is quite different to its Continental counterpart. It was demonstrated in an earlier part of this thesis¹⁴² that those Old English authors who were writing in a more learned context also failed to give even a sketchy account of the European tradition. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon writers diverged fundamentally from the European Latin tradition, and seem to have had only a slight influence on post-Conquest English writers who adhered fairly closely to a Bernardine version of Augustinian ideas on action and contemplation.

The first major introduction of Augustinian ideas of action and contemplation seems to have been the writings of Aelred of Rievaulx, who was heavily influenced by S. Bernard, as stated above. Aelred wrote a century and a half after the Blickling homilist, and in different conditions. The Norman Conquest had taken place and a new administrative and governmental system had been established by the early twelfth century, and in the monastic world, Cluny had passed its peak and faded, to be replaced by the Cistercian order and other twelfth-century institutions. The earlier homilist wrote in the oppressed atmosphere of the Danish invasions when many people believed that the turmoil was part of the approaching end of the world.¹⁴³ It would be naive to conjure up a picture of dark foreboding giving way to vigorous experimentation, but by the early twelfth century there was a degree of confidence and intellectual

vitality which seems to have been suppressed during the earlier period. This confidence and vitality received exemplary expression in the figure of S. Bernard who wielded a far-reaching influence both in and outside the religious world. When the popularity of his order and the personal fame he enjoyed are considered, it would seem reasonable to suggest that Aelred's intellectual discipleship would probably have been typical of a number of English ecclesiastical figures, and that the process of assimilation of Augustinian ideas of action and contemplation into England may have started at this time. Aelred's concepts in this field are almost completely within this tradition, and despite a number of simplifications, contrast with the idiosyncratic development of insular ideas as seen in Aelfric and the Blickling homilist.

Aelred's concepts of action and contemplation can be examined in a guide for a woman recluse entitled De Vita Eremitica.¹⁴⁴ It will be shown that these concepts are derived from Bernard, though occasionally they are much simplified. The description of the lives of Mary and Martha reveals the limited horizons of the work.

"Duae sorores erant Martha et Maria; laborat illa, vacabat ista; illa erogabat, ista petebat; illa praestabat obsequium, ista nutriebat affectum. Denique non ambulans vel discurrens huc atque illuc, non de suscipiendis hospitibus sollicita,....sedeat ad pedes Jesu. " (ibid.p1464)

("There were two sisters, Martha and Mary: the one laboured, the other was free from duties; the one directed financial affairs, the other entreated; the one assumed responsibility in obedience, the other nourished her inward feelings. In short, neither walking nor running to and fro from this place to that, nor continually concerning herself with hospitality, (Mary) sat at the feet of Jesus.")

Mary's part is traditional in its rest from care, in order to listen to Christ, and Martha's part is partly derived from civil administration of S. Augustine of Hippo, and partly from the lowly pastoral care of the secular clergy. The former influence is seen in the reference to

financial administration and the assumption of responsibility, though there are connotations of monastic good works in both these activities, and the latter influence is seen in the care of the needy, which is given fuller definition in the following extract:

"Ad illos spectat eleemosynarum largitio, quorum est terrena possessio, vel quibus credita est rerum ecclesiasticarum dispersatio. Quae enim sacrosanctis ecclesiis a fidelibus collata sunt, episcopi, sacerdotes et clerici dispensanda suscipiunt, et non recondenda; non possidenda, sed eroganda. Quidquid habent, pauperium est, viduarum et orphanorum."
(*ibid.*)

("To those he looks for the bestowing of alms, to whom worldly possessions belong, or to whom are entrusted the goods of the church. Which are given to holy church by the faithful, (and) bishops, priests and clerks undertake the dispensing, not retaining, nor taking possession of, but administering. Whatever they have belongs to the poor, to widows and to orphans.")

In this extract Aelred is describing the responsibilities of Martha to emphasize that they should be undertaken by the clergy and not by the recluse. It is right that the recluse should have compassion for the sufferings of the poor, but her part is not to offer temporal help. Aelred holds that she should give them alms of compassion and bitter tears for their pain, and that such alms are appropriate to her station, and of more benefit to those to whom she gives them.

"Haec eleemosyna Deo gratiosior, Christo acceptior, tuae professioni aptior, his quibus impenditur, fructuosior."
(*ibid.* 1465)

("This offering is more pleasing to God, more acceptable to Christ, more appropriate to your profession, and more fruitful for those for whom it is given.")

The authoress is dead to the world and should keep away from it,

"Haec pars tua, carissima, quae seculo mortua atque sepulta, sunda debes esse ad omnia saeculi blandimenta audienda, ad loquendum muta, nec debes distendi, sed extendi; impleni, non exhauriri."
(*ibid.* 1464)

("This part is yours, dearest one, who is dead to the world and buried; you should be deaf to all the flattery of the world, dumb to speaking of it; neither ought you to be stretched out but increased, filled up, not exhausted.")

Aelred is recommending a purely contemplative life, and is thus of limited interest for the theme of action and contemplation. His importance is that he is the first major writer to show an adherence to the Augustinian tradition of action and contemplation, in a work composed in England. The simplifications of the tradition, and the absence of any reference to a combined life is almost certainly due to considerations of audience. Aelred is writing for a recluse, and although she must have been educated because the tract is in Latin, she was unlikely to have had any formal theological training. Not only was Aelred writing for someone who would have been unlikely to be familiar with the complex traditions concerning Martha and Mary, and the work had to be kept moderately simple, therefore, but he was also writing for a recluse to whom a recommendation to follow a combined life would have been contradictory. Despite these simplifications it can be seen that Aelred's concepts of action and contemplation are derived, through Bernard,¹⁴⁵ from Augustine, and this tradition became the overwhelmingly dominant influence on later ideas concerning the combined life.

The continuing influence of Augustinian concepts of action and contemplation on English writers, is seen in the Ancrene Wisse of the late twelfth century. There had been a dramatic growth during this century of people who responded to the call of the solitary life,¹⁴⁶ and England had been no exception to the rest of Europe in this matter. The spiritual fervour, and the interest in new forms of religious experience which had informed the new orders of the Cistercians, Premonstratensians, Savignacs, and Carthusians, had also ignited a fervent piety in men and women who either could not, or would not, enter a communal religious institution, and the writing of the Ancrene Wisse in English suggests a broadening audience for such works.¹⁴⁷

A number of those who became recluses in response to this call¹⁴⁸ were high-born women,¹⁴⁹ and amongst them were the three sisters for whom the Ancrene Wisse was written:

"vor mid more eise ne mid more menke not ich nore ancre
þet habbe al þet hire need is , þene ze þreo habbeþ
Muche word is of ou hu gentile wummen ze beoð .
vorgodleic & for ureoleic izirned of monie. & sustren of
one veder and of one moder. " (Ancrene Riwe ¹⁵⁰ p.85)

In another manuscript the author of the Ancrene Wisse refers to the group of anchoresses as being greater in number.

"twenti nu ðe o ðer ma." (Ancrene Wisse ¹⁵¹ p. 130)

This growth of those interested in reading the work, as witnessed both in internal references to changing audience, and by the multiplication of manuscripts, reveals a developing interest in the contemplative life. Professor Dobson in his recent book reveals the author and original audience of the treatise ¹⁵² and confirms the impression given by the work that the three sisters were of high birth. He also accounts for the growth of the audience, and shows that later versions of the work reveal the author's awareness of this changing readership.¹⁵³

The avowed aim of the treatise is to teach the recluse how to purify her heart in solitary discipline, and this involves abjuring the world. If the explicit purpose of the guide is to direct its readers firmly away from any form of mixed life, it nevertheless reveals an awareness on the part of its author, of the problems associated with the combined life, and this will be demonstrated later. It is first necessary, however, to understand the basic concern of the work, and its emphasis on the seclusion of the recluse.

The explicit purpose of the Ancrene Wisse, as stated above, is to warn the anchoress to abjure all temporal things. The chapter

on the regulation of the inward feelings has a list of eight reasons why the anchoress should flee from the world,¹⁵⁴ and the section on contemplation warns that even ordinary, and apparently harmless things, can lead to distraction, weakness, and sin.¹⁵⁵ The special circumstances of the recluse lead the writer to discuss relationships with society in a consciously one-sided manner. Apart from the influence of Pauline strictures regarding the place of women in evangelism¹⁵⁶ - and these attitudes must have had a momentum which carried their tone into discussions of other areas of women's place in society - the anchoress had chosen solitude, and any recommendation to become involved with society would have been misplaced. The writer concentrates on the purgation of sin and the attaining of purity of heart. The material in this part of the work is, like the equivalent part of Aelred's treatise, heavily influenced by Bernard.¹⁵⁷ It would be digressive to illustrate this dependency. The route to contemplation is Augustinian, and similarly requires no examination as it is common to most ascetic manuals. The cumulative impression of the work is that the author of Ancrene Wisse thought of the anchoresses' life as a contemplative vocation with no concessions to the world.¹⁵⁸ While it is true that she was aware of the problems of combining action and contemplation, even in some ways recommending that the anchoresses should have a little contact with people outside their cells (and this will be examined later) he had a rigorous approach to the life of the recluse. Since it will be demonstrated later that he makes some concessions, it is necessary to emphasise his rigour in order to understand the significance of these concessions.

The first level at which the Ancrene Wisse reveals a belief in a rigorous approach is in the matter of outward rules. The author

tells the anchoresses that they may wear what they wish, within certain limits, and organize their day according to their own discretion, though again, within specified limits. He says that when need or reason dictate, these rules may be changed, ¹⁵⁹ and this attitude that observance in detail does not matter in outer concerns, runs through the work. This could be interpreted as an indication of a degree of laxity. In fact, it is not laxity but a brushing aside of relatively trivial matters. The writer gives detailed and rigorous advice about the regulation of inner feelings, and is so concerned to establish exactly what should be observed in these matters, that such concerns as dress are relatively unimportant to him. He is not being lax in these outer rules, but relegating them to their true status in relation to the crucial task of achieving the right inner life. It is fair to say that the author does not take this attitude because of a lack of rigour, but because of his ardent concern for correct inner observance.

This concern for essentials can be illustrated from other parts of the Ancrene Wisse. One passage discussed Measure & wisdom:

"I þe weie is bitacnet measure & wisdom þ each mon wi þ
 wisdom weie hwet he make don. ne beo nawt se ouer
 swi þe a igast; þ he forzeme þe bodi ne eft se tendre of
 his flesch; þ hit iwur þe untoken & makie þe gast þeowe."
 (ibid. pp. 189-90)

The writer is saying that it is a mistake to pay too much attention to bodily penance but that it is equally wrong to be too tendre with the body. He is abjuring extremes and can appear to be recommending a less extreme course. This appearance of laxity only arises, however, from a mistaken estimate of the placing of the emphasis in this passage. It would have been possible for the author to prescribe a course which was extreme neither in kind of activity (i.e. neither too much penance, nor too little) nor in manner of observance (i.e. a fanatic or extreme manner which is usually associated with extreme kinds of activity). He does not do this, however. He recommends a moderate kind of activity.

but his concentration on the need for a rigorous observation of the right activity, introduces an extreme manner of observance because of the crucial importance he places on this right activity, and the rigour with which he says it should be carried out. This rigour is seen in an adjacent instruction that, although it is wrong to mortify the flesh beyond endurance, it is necessary to do physical penance to the absolute limit of one's ability to suffer. This is seen in the extract which follows, which is discussing the allegorical meaning of the number, a hundred.

"Hundert is ful tale. & noteð perfection. þ is ful dede.
forte schowinþ me schal do flesches pine. ase forð as
ever even mei þolien." (ibid. p.189)

It is wrong to overstep this mark as it then becomes counter-productive, and this is the only reason he counsels against such excess. On a later page ¹⁶⁰ he openly admires the bitter pains of penance which people do, and reveals his belief in its need; in the right circumstances, for extreme penance. It is an over-simplification of criticism to divide kind of activity, and manner of observance in the way in which it is done above, but it is necessary in order to point to an element which is present in the writer's words, but which is difficult to define.

The examination of one more passage in the matters of apparent lack of rigour can help to define the extent to which this approach is appropriate to the Ancrene Wisse. The passage concerns the author's assurances that turning the other cheek to abuse is the right course. If the recluse smilingly accepts evil words, the author says that she will be rewarded in Heaven. In addition, however, she will have the further pleasure of seeing her injurer suffering in Hell.

"ze schule seon bunkin him wið þes deofles betles þ
wa bið him þes līwes. ze schulen beðwel ipaiet þrof."
(ibid. p. 97).

His extreme attitude is not consistent with a lax or unrigorous approach and reveals a type of rigidity and extremism which must be explained within the context of the work as a whole. Whatever explanation is adopted, any connotations of easy liberality are clearly inappropriate.

It is clear from the foregoing account that the author of the Ancrene Wisse does not favour taking easy compromises, and that he believed that the anchoresses should live a purely contemplative life. Despite this he reveals an awareness of the problems of combining action and contemplation, and interprets a Biblical quotation in accordance with the traditional ideas of this area of thought. Even if he does not recommend a combined life for the sisters, it is of great interest that he employs the theory of the active and contemplative lives to demonstrate a point.

This occurs in the author's introduction to his rule where he is instructing the anchoresses how to answer people who enquire to what order they belong. He says that they must answer that they belong to the order of S. James, because ordre is defined as a description of a religious life,¹⁶¹ and S. James gives a clear description of such a life. Riht ordre is defined in the following lives which the Ancrene Wisse quotes from S. James epistle:

"Religio munda, et immaculata apud Deum Patrem, hec est
Visitare pupillos & orphanos in tribulatione eorum.
immaculatum se custodire ab. oc. seculo." 162
(James 1. 27)

(The translation is my own:)

("Pure and unblemished religion before God and the Father is this:
to visit the fatherless and the destitute in their affliction, and
to keep oneself untainted from the world.")

This quotation is being used to define religion, and the author's concept of religion will thus emerge from his exegesis of it. The importance which he places on the quotation is also suggested by the fact that he bases the sisters' life on the part of it which is relevant to them. If it can be shown that the exegesis is heavily influenced by concepts of action and contemplation, then this is of considerable interest as it reveals both the influence and the importance of those concepts.

The basic contrast in the Biblical passage is between charitable work and asceticism, though the implicit contrast does not polarize the element to complete involvement with, or complete withdrawal from the world. The writer of the Ancrene Wisse immediately begins to polarize these elements in his explanation of the meaning of the extract. He says that the passage is in two parts and corresponds to two types of religious life:

"for þer beoþ twa dalen to twa manere þe beoð of religiuse. to eiðer limpeð his dale as ze mahen iheren "

(ibid. p.9)

He has taken S. James' definition of religion, which in its Biblical context refers to a single life of two parts, and has separated its elements into two types of religious life. Further than this, he then suggests that the way to keep untainted by the world is to withdraw from it completely;

" þe leature dale of his sahe limpeð to reclusen.
(ibid.)

This short extract suggests that the latter part of S. James' words applies specially to recluses, and implies that he conceives of this part as being principally for contemplatives. This is not implicit in the original passage. By contrast, the visitation of the fatherless and destitute becomes specifically the prerogative of the

secular clergy.

" Gode religiouse beoð i þe world summe. Nomeliche prelaz. & treowe preachurs þe habbeð þe earre dale of þæt sein iame seide. Þ beoð as he seið þe gað to helpen wydewes & faderlese children. (ibid. p. 9-10.)

Christian charity is thus made the function of the clergy, and then even this major change of emphasis is subsumed into a further specialist interpretation:

" þ e sowle is widewe þe haveð forloren hire spus. þ is Iesu Crist wið eni heaved sunne þe is alswa federles þe haveð þ urgh his sunne forloren þ e fader of heovene". (ibid. p.10)

Not only has the simple charity of the epistle become the preserve of the clergy, but it has also been transformed into the spiritual care of sinners. It has become indistinguishable from the active life which S. Gregory the Great recommended. In contrast, the simple purity of S. James' words concerning the resistance of ~~training~~ by the world has become the enclosed contemplative life. The author of Ancrene Wisse has interpreted the passage entirely in accordance with concepts of action and contemplation, though he has not revealed a tendency to combine the two types of life.

The quotation from S. James is given a full exposition because the author is defining the different types of religious life, and he discusses both action and contemplation. When he discusses the text concerning Martha and Mary, the active part is suppressed because it is irrelevant to the anchoresses' life. Mary's role is traditional and the recluse is exhorted to sit at Christ's feet with her:

"ze sitten wið Marie stan stille ed godes fet & hercnið him ane." (ibid. p. 212)

This is a traditional Augustinian concept and is developed along orthodox lines. Martha's part is initially said to be

" To feden poure & schruden " (Ibid.)

and this contrast between the peaceful rest of Mary and the ~~601~~ of Martha is developed briefly. Later, however, Martha's part is gradually omitted, except that when the author warns of actions which are unsuitable for those people who follow Mary's part, he casts them in the form of the duties associated with Martha. Mary must reject inappropriate responsibilities or she will be distracted:

"þenne mot ha þenchen of þe kues fodder
of heordemonne hure Olhnin þe heiward. wearien
hwen he punt hire & zelden þah (þe hearmas)".
(Ibid. p. 213).

This is implicitly Martha's part, and she is depicted as busying round the village, placating the hayward when he impounds the cow but still having to pay the damages and thinking of the cow's fodder and paying the herdsman's wages. This lively entrepreneur, with her business acumen and farmhouse duties, is a far remove from the traditional Martha who has been previously encountered. Despite the colourful nature of this section, the part given to Martha's duties is very small, and all the subsequent discussion concerns Mary's part. This, of course, is due to considerations of audience.

The author of the Ancrene Wisse is thus concerned to ensure that the anchoresses are not distracted from their devotions and recommends a rigorous observance to this end. There are, however, one or two parts of the treatise where he is aware of the possibility of the recluses becoming involved, directly or indirectly, with society. He says that, with their director's permission they may give guidance to

people in learning. He holds that as long as they are not distracted from their purpose, they may help others in this way, and if this involvement with society is limited to advising those who come to them, it is a very real form of involvement, and one which would be an important part of the needs of an illiterate society. A less tangible form of involvement, but one which would have been considered at least as important, is the idea that the anchoress in her seclusion acts as a spiritual force which holds Christendom and the Church in balance. The writer erroneously derives the word ancre from the Middle English word for a ship's anchor, and says that the anchoress holds the community of the church safe against the storms of the Devil:

"for þi is ancre ancre icleopet. under chirche iancret
 as ancre under schipes bord forte holden þ schip. þ uþen
 ant stormes hit ne ouerworpen. Alswa al hali chirche þ is
 schip icleopet. schal ancrin o þe ancre. þ heo hit swa
 hold þ te deofles puffes. þ beoð temptatiuns.
 ne hit ouerworpen."

(ibid. pp. 74-5)

This concept of the spiritual battle being fought in a different dimension to the temporal battle, and being a necessary part of the defence of society, goes back at least as far as Aelfric.¹⁶³

The idea of the power of prayer and purity as a force in society is also seen in an earlier part of Aelfric's treatise,¹⁶⁴ where it is stated that compassion for people is more valuable, if coming from the anchoress, than her actual help would be.

These suggestions concerning the Ancrene Wisse can be placed in a wider perspective by considering the life of a wealthy recluse, Loretta, Countess of Leicester.¹⁶⁵ Loretta lived from about 1180 to 1266,¹⁶⁶ and for the last forty-five years of her life was enclosed at the church of Hackington near Canterbury.¹⁶⁷ Powicke believes that she would have known Ancrene Wisse,¹⁶⁸ a supposition reinforced by

Dobson,¹⁶⁹ and her life casts a different light on the ideas that recluses of this period would necessarily have been remote from the world of religious affairs.

Loretta was a very devout and holy woman, and was very highly regarded by a number of religious figures including Lord Simon Langton, Archdeacon of Canterbury,¹⁷⁰ and Theobald of Morly, Abbot of the Cistercian house of Vaux de Cernay.¹⁷¹ She was living as a recluse, therefore, with all the contemplative associations which concern their state, but she was also closely involved with the outside world in a variety of different spheres. There are records which show that she exerted her influence to help people in financial difficulties,¹⁷² and also, those who had broken the law and needed an advocate.¹⁷³ In addition to relatively minor matters such as these, she also played a prominent part in larger issues. She was instrumental in assisting the Friars Minor to become established in England, and worked with Lord Simon Langton and Lord Herbert of Sandwich to ensure that there would always be someone to whom they could turn when, on their travels, they met with hostility. She is mentioned as being important in this matter by Thomas of Eccleston in his contemporary history of the Friars Minor in England.¹⁷⁴ She was also consulted by Simon de Montfort on matters of state¹⁷⁵ and was advisor to King Henry on a legal matter.¹⁷⁶

Powicke believes that anchorites and hermits were more important in such ways than has generally been accepted,¹⁷⁷ and whether or not the author of the Ancrene Wisse regarded such prominence as desirable, there seems little doubt that it was quite often the case.¹⁷⁸ There is some ground for believing that this writer would not have sanctioned such a degree of involvement, in his classification of recluses with those who, in S. Bernard's scheme,¹⁷⁹ hang voluntarily on the Cross with Christ. In view of this stringent attitude, the concessions outlined in earlier pages, which occur in the Ancrene Wisse, are all the more remarkable.

This brief survey of a small but representative group of writers who reveal major aspects of the currents of ideas in English writings on action and contemplation at their various times, reveals that whatever divergences there were in native English traditions before the Conquest, the full adoption of the European Latin tradition was not long delayed once the Conquest had taken place.

2. Fourteenth-century concepts of the three lives.

The Fourteenth Century

The concepts of action and contemplation can be seen from the preceding account to have received a wide diversity of interpretations during the mediaeval period. The comprehensive analyses which have been undertaken of these writers who made important contributions to the traditions concerning action and contemplation, have shown in detail the modifications which were made by each writer, but in such a treatment, the broad outlines tend to be obscured. A brief survey of the material, which draws out the most important points, can make possible a clearer view of the developments up to 1300, and place the fourteenth-century writers in perspective.

There are two related traditions which are of particular importance to the theme of action and contemplation: one received its formulation during the first four centuries A.D. and concerns ascetical and mystical theology; the other stems ultimately from Plato and concerns the relative claims of the life of withdrawal from society and the life of involvement. These two traditions are related because the life of withdrawal from society, or the contemplative life as it became known, inevitably concerns asceticism and mysticism.

The tradition of ascetical and mystical theology is derived from the writings of S. Augustine of Hippo. As has been shown, a considerable number of modifications to this tradition were made by those who transmitted it between the fifth and fourteenth centuries, but in essentials it remained the same. S. Gregory the Great and S. Bernard of Clairvaux gave the traditional ideas new emphasis, some of which were of considerable importance. The practical interests of Gregory found a sympathetic audience amongst the more pastoral and pragmatic of the English spiritual writers of the fourteenth century,

and the affective devotion of Bernard played an important role in determining the later mediaeval spiritual climate. The scholastic method which had been central to the writings of Richard of S. Victor, S. Bonaventura, and S. Thomas Aquinas had resulted in an exhaustive and systematic exposition of the relevant materials, though the rigorous nature of the method had been considerably modified by the time of writers such as Hilton. The ideas of the friars gave yet another emphasis to the tradition, and though the fervency of the thirteenth century had slackened by the late fourteenth century, the example they had given of apostolic devotion and poverty left its impression. It will be seen that Augustinian ascetical and mystical theology forms a recognizable corpus of ideas in many fourteenth-century writings, though with modifications of tone and emphasis due partly to the processes of transmission and partly to such special factors as audience.

The tradition of ideas concerning the relationship between the life of involvement, and the life of withdrawal from society had a more complex history. John Cassian¹⁸⁰ is typical of many early writers on the subject. He wrote almost exclusively for the cloistered monk who was following the example of the early Christian communities in Jerusalem as recorded in the Acts of the New Testament. His words were intended for men who believed that to "flee from women and bishops"¹⁸¹ was the necessary course to ensure salvation. Action and contemplation were the two parts of the spiritual life, not separate lives, which led to a fleeting knowledge of God as a foretaste of eternal bliss¹⁸². In addition, the monk was obliged by Christ's precepts to undertake charitable work. The inner spiritual life was only possible in either solitude or the cenobium, and the charitable work was of the type

usually associated with monastic pastoral care. The monastic life therefore comprised two parts: the inner development consisting of action of the purgative, illuminative and contemplative stages, and an outer involvement with those in need of charity. The two parts were both necessary to the full monastic life. This scheme was not devised with secular people in mind and it did not attempt to consider their problems. S. Augustine inherited the same tradition which Cassian had received, and was in accord with most of the views of his contemporary on the subjects of asceticism and mysticism. The problems associated with involvement and withdrawal received fresh treatment, however, since Augustine suggested undertakings for the monk which could be described in modern terms as civil administration;¹⁸³ the importance of this was that such undertakings, which were completely different from the monastic charity discussed by Cassian, and which were usually carried out by secular rather than enclosed figures, could now be considered to be consistent with a fully developed inner life. A monk could involve himself in the affairs of the world without being ipso facto cut off from contemplative experience leading to the vision of God. The strong implication that an inner life is not impossible in a life also concerned with worldly matters is borne out by other statements by Augustine to the effect that contemplative experience is available to anyone, secular or enclosed, who is prepared to work towards it,¹⁸⁴ though he recognized that not all people will make the same progress nor achieve the same goal. It is true that this difference of emphasis between Augustine and Cassian is due partly to the fact that the former was addressing a cross-section of society in his episcopal capacity, where the latter was addressing an exclusively monastic audience, but it also arises from a difference of temper and

attitude. Augustine's breadth of concern again becomes apparent if he is compared with S. Gregory the Great, who despite his high office and the involvement in public affairs which it occasioned, moved gradually to the view that the regular life ¹⁸⁵ resulted in vision of God without the fruition of preaching, that the average secular man may intend well but cannot obtain vision of God, and that the ¹⁸⁶ only person who can attain both vision and good works is the preacher. It is of significance that involvement for Gregory is restricted to preaching, representing a return to the relative narrowness of Cassian, and that the regular life, by implication, can only encompass monastic good works. ¹⁸⁷ Augustine stands as the only early writer who did not see the problems of involvement and withdrawal in terms of the life of a member of a religious body.

S. Bernard was the next major writer in this tradition, and he combined the monastic intensity of Cassian with the pastoral concern of Augustine, but he reduced the applicability of Augustine's scheme from any Christian life to an ascetic life which was only completely possible in a regular framework. ¹⁸⁸ Where Augustine wrote for Everyman, Bernard wrote for the monk. At the same time, however, the latter sought to make the cloistered life available to all who wanted it, and this was part of the function of his work of conversion. This mitigates the apparent narrowness of his concern, making the combination of the life of toil and the life of spiritual development available to almost anyone who wanted it, but it still could only be properly undertaken in a broadly regular life. The fervour which characterized Bernard's approach to spirituality in the context of action and contemplation was seen in a modified form in the thirteenth-century friars. They were in accord with him on many issues, but took

the view that the way to emulate Christ's example was not to trace his footsteps into the desert, but to follow him into the cities and preach. This is borne out by the writings of Bonaventura, James of Milan, the author of the M.V.C. and S. Thomas Aquinas. These writers believed that mystical experience was available to people in any walk of life, and that contemplation did not prevent action, but actually precipitated it. Conversely, they held that action enriched the life of the contemplative. The views of these writers of the thirteenth century thus return to the broadness which was seen in S. Augustine of Hippo, and prepare for the wide area of concessions for those in the active life, which is made by fourteenth-century writers. The works of Richard of S. Victor are important in regard to this, although he did not write with the secular in mind, as he made the first post-Bernardine assertion that action and contemplation are essential within one life.

This brief survey of major writers on the subject of action and contemplation throws two main features into relief. The first is that there is a tendency in most pre-twelfth-century writers to regard the life of involvement and the life of withdrawal as mutually exclusive, and the second is that when the writers concede that they can be compatible, they are concerned with the narrow area of the life of a member of a religious body and are mainly interested to show that involvement with society need not necessarily hinder the inner spiritual development of the regular. In contrast to this is the rapid development of post-twelfth-century ideas. Richard of S. Victor held that action arose from fervent contemplation, and the Meditationes Vitae Christi, a relatively short time later, describes how everyone who wishes may develop contemplation in their lives, and follow it with action. This is echoed by James of Milan. It will be seen that this is developed in the writers of the fourteenth century, especially Hilton.

The fourteenth-century is characterized both by a decline in the respect accorded to some of the religious institutions, and also by an increase in lay interest in religious experience. Many factors seem relevant to this superficially paradoxical situation.¹⁸⁹ The slackening of fervour amongst members of regular institutions, satirized by Chaucer and Langland, coincided with friction within the Church at the highest levels. Complex internal disputes which arose from a confused pattern of conflicting loyalties in matters of doctrine and observance were accentuated by the strains imposed by the development of nationalism in Europe. An international body like the Church was very vulnerable to such strains, as political decisions often had ecclesiastical ramifications, and religious controversy was often connected with a political problem. For the devout layman who desired higher spiritual development, this presented many problems. Before the fourteenth century he could have entered a monastery, perfected his inner life as far as he was able, and then, if he wished, he could have alternated his life in the cloister with preaching or other good works. Now, he found the church in spiritual disarray and there would have been little incentive to enter institutions which were in evident decline. Since the church was unable to provide help through its usual channels, people either had to develop their own religion, or turn to such figures as Hilton. Those unable to do either were catered for either by copies of works by such writers as Hilton, or popular catechisms. In order to gain an understanding of the reaction in the fourteenth century to the situation outlined above, a selected group of writers on action and contemplation will be examined.¹⁹⁰ First, simple catechisms for the lay will be analysed, the examples chosen for this purpose being

Pore Caitif, Dives et Pauper, and the Book of Vices and Virtues, though the audience of the last is perhaps more complex than is suggested by its inclusion with the other two works. The writings of Uthred of Boldon will be considered in order to gain an insight into the views of the educated ecclesiastical élite. The Cloud of Unknowing and the writings of Richard Rolle will be used to demonstrate the ideas of the fourteenth-century English mystics, and one of the mystics, Walter Hilton, will be examined separately as his ideas are of paramount interest to the theme of action and contemplation.

Pore Caitif, Dives et Pauper, and the Book of
Vices and Virtues

The first treatises to be analyzed from the fourteenth-century are Pore Caitif¹⁹¹, Dives et Pauper¹⁹² and the Book of Vices and Virtues¹⁹³, which will reveal the type of literature concerning action and contemplation which was available to lay people and to the less well-educated members of the clergy. These tracts seem to have been a response to the demand for manuals of instruction, which arose from the thirteenth-century movement to provide religious education for the laity. Pore Caitif contains a variety of subjects and is typical of many manuals which provided instruction on the Six Points of Archbishop Peckham¹⁹⁴, which were the Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments, the Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Virtues, and the Sacraments. Dives et Pauper is a development of these manuals, being an extended consideration of the Ten Commandments. The Book of Vices and Virtues is a translation from a French text, as will be discussed below. These treatises can enable an insight into the concepts of action and contemplation which were available for the laymen, and also show the ideas which the writers felt were appropriate to their audiences, which, as indicated above, included the less well-educated parish priests and other clergy. Because of the diversity of material found in these tracts, and the different lay audiences for which they were written, they give a panoramic view of the ideas available to the laymen in the fourteenth-century. The disadvantage of heterogeneity in the choice of tracts is counter-balanced by the wide view that such a diverse group makes possible.

The author of the anonymous Pore Caitif disclaims any credit for the matter he has written,

"alle þese sentencis bifore goynge. I have gedryd of hooly writte; and of diverse seyntis and doctouris"

(Pore Caitif f. 99r.)

and his fidelity to his sources results in a surprisingly sophisticated account of concepts of action and contemplation, when it is remembered that he was writing for a general audience. Allen has pointed out¹⁹⁵ that this treatise seems to be a late fourteenth-century compilation and suggests that parts are taken from a number of places including the writings of Rolle. It is of interest that despite considerable borrowings from Rolle, the section on the active and contemplative lives is in some respects more complex than his account.¹⁹⁶ This may arise from a direct borrowing from earlier writers - the author names S. Gregory the Great and Bede - and gives rise to the situation that a treatise for the laity¹⁹⁷ offers a greater complexity than Rolle's works for recluses. In addition to emphasizing the eccentricity of Rolle in these matters, this shows a more direct dependence on different and earlier versions of the Augustinian tradition.

The section of the treatise which deals with action and contemplation begins by noting that Martha and Mary signify the two lives.¹⁹⁸ The writer then describes the relative merits of the lives in traditional terms, and refers to the ending of the active life at death and the continuing of the contemplative life in heaven. The two lives are then given fuller definition. The active life is described as the observance of the commandments and refraining from sin

"actyf lyf is ... enterely to kepe þe commaundments of god. and hym sylf undefoulyd fro þe world. and to wiþ holde. soule. hand and tunge. and alle membris of þe body; fro alle fylþe of synne and temptynge".

(Pore Caitif f. 98R.)

The second part of the actyf lyf is to helpe þe nedis of neizebors¹⁹⁹ in the works of corporal mercy, and also to schewe þe weye of trupe²⁰⁰ and azenclepe þe proude neizeboure to þe weye of mekenesse.²⁰¹ This is most interesting as it reveals a belief in a two stage active life comprising an approximation to asceticism (though it lacks an explicit concept of purgation) and a concern with the spiritual welfare of one's neighbour and also with his corporal needs. This concept of the active life is dependent on the Augustinian tradition to a considerable degree. Although the idea of illumination by virtue has been replaced by the act of charity, which was, however, regarded by Augustine as a means of attaining illumination, the fourteenth-century treatise is clearly formed by the early tradition despite the author's apparent lack of knowledge of his ultimate source. As is noted above Pore Caitif forms its concept of the active life in the activa virtus of S. Augustine, and results in a complexity beyond the corresponding writings of Rolle. The most important divergence from Rolle is the belief in the inclusion in the active life of a rudimentary concept of spiritual welfare, which is seen in the rebuking of a proud neighbour, and revealing to others the way of truth by example.

The contemplative life is given a similarly complex definition and comprises two stages. The lower is

"in meditation ei þer þenkynge of howly wretyngis. and in oþur swete þauzttis of ihesu and in swetnesse of preyers."
(*ibid* f 98 R. 98 V)

and the higher is

"in biholdynge of hevenly þingis" (*ibid* f 98 V)

Those who are called to this life forsake the worlde in wille and then, after purging ydil þauzttis, they receive the fire of love which burns in their hearts and make them clene of alle erbely filþe.²⁰²

This is followed by a sight of eternal things

"god... openib to þe ize of suche a soule. þe gate of
hevens. so þat þe same ize lokib in to hevene"
(ibid.)

Despite the simplified framework of this concept of contemplation, there is a surprising complexity of material. The work was written for the layman but it becomes unmistakably mystical in character, and it is of great interest that there was felt to be a lay audience for such sophisticated instruction. This is explained in terms of source by the author's dependence on early writers, but this does not reduce the significance of the presence of such material in a popular catechism.

Dives et Pauper is a second example of a dialogue for lay people, but, unlike Pore Caitif, it reveals a simplified conception of action and contemplation, and also a change of emphasis. This shows that the complexity of Pore Caitif was not the only available instruction in vernacular manuals.

Dives et Pauper changes the emphasis in discussion of the two lives by placing them in the context of the Ten Commandments. The author states that the first three commandments concern man's relationship with God, and that the second seven regulate his conduct to his neighbour. Thus the Ten Commandments are comprehended in the two great commandments to love God first, and one's neighbour as oneself.²⁰³ The two commandments are themselves the bases of the active and contemplative lives; the contemplative life

"standeth principally in besynesse to knowe god. and goddes lawes and to love hym above all thyng....The iiii fyrst preceptes of þe fyrst table longen to all but principally to hem þat been in lyf contemplatyf þat han forsaken þe world and wordly besynesse for þe love of god."

(Dives et Pauper f. 17R)

The contemplative life can be a mere observance of the first three commandments or a simple withdrawal from the world with no reference to visionary experience. The mystical connotations are extremely slight. The active life is defined by a similar process; it

"standeth principally in good doyngs and good rewele. and helpe of oure evencristene....The VII preceptes of þe secunde table also longen to all. but principally to hem þat been in lyf actyf and in besynesse of þe world."

(ibid.)

The active life is defined more simply than in Pore Caitif, and though many of the traditional concepts are alluded to, there is a considerable distance between such concepts and the text. The rudimentary nature of these concepts is confirmed in a contrast of the two lives.

"The lyfe contemplatyf is in ese and reste of hert. The lyf actyf is in doying and traveyll and besynesse of body and soule."
(ibid.)

The concepts of action and contemplation are simplified, and also changed by being linked to the Ten Commandments. This process moves them away from the Augustinian tradition of action and contemplation and relates them to the exegetical tradition concerning the commandment. By this process, the mystical and ascetical connotations are lost. At the same time, however, the two lives are brought firmly into the life of the ordinary Christian, who in his observance of the commandments can partake in the two lives. The first three concepts concern the lyf contemplatyf primarily, but they also longen to all; indeed, þe fyrst precept of charity. been necessary to allþat wollen haveþe lyf wythowten ende²⁰⁴. This life, which has no significant visionary undertones, becomes the life of the ordinary Christian, and a combined life becomes obligatory for all. This is only achieved, however, by a drastic and debilitating redefinition of terms. This simplification is important as is noted above, as it shows that the complexity of Pore Caitif was not the only type of instruction on action and contemplation, which was available to the layman.

The Book of Vices and Virtues, a work with a complex textual history, is a

"fourteenth-century Midland translation of the Somme des Vices et des Vertus or Somme le Roi by Lorens d'Orleans, a thirteenth-century Dominican friar".²⁰⁵

Francis holds that the original work must be seen in the context of the thirteenth-century movement for lay education²⁰⁶, and though this is of importance, it must be borne in mind that the purely didactic element of a work written to a king's commission²⁰⁷ is almost certain to have shifts of emphasis when compared with an ordinary catechism. In addition, the work was written in a different century and in a different vernacular tradition. These complications indicate a need for caution, but as long as they are remembered, the Book of Vices and Virtues can be approached as a means of casting another light on popular devotional treatises.

The Book of Vices and Virtues contains an explicit section on action and contemplation, but it also contains a discussion of the different states of God's elect on earth which is formed by traditional concepts of the active and contemplative lives. Although this material did not originate either in England or in the fourteenth-century, it is interesting that the treatise was felt to be worth translating, and significant that its ideas were available in the vernacular.

The active and contemplative lives are given a traditional simplified exposition:

"þe first lif is cleped actif, þat is þe lif of besynesse in goode workes, þat is to profigt of hymself and of his neizebore. Þe secunde is contemplatif, þat is gastliche, for þat is in reste as wip-oute in worldeliche bisynesses, and entendeþ to no þing in his world but to love God and serve hym and know hym."

(The Book of Vices and Virtues.p.220).

Both lives are cast in simple, though orthodox terms, but the definition of the contemplative life is then developed, it:

"is idel as to workes of þis world and al aslepe, but sche is wel wakne wiþ -ynne in herte to þenke on God and to love hym, and desireþ no þing but onliche to see hym and to love hym, and for þat sche forzet alle opere þinges so þat sche is y-ravesched and is y-sett on God and desireþ to be departed fro þe body, þat is dedliche, for to be evermore wiþ Jhesu Crist."
(ibid.)

This has the fervour and mystic overtones of contemplative vision, and is a considerable modification of the original definition.

Immediately after this there is a contrast of the two lives in which the discussion returns to a simple level.

"þe first lif is at þe bataille in þe feld of goode dedes, where þat Goddes knyghtes assaien hemself to gete loos and pris. þe secunde restep wiþ God in þe chaumbre of clene conscience. þe first þenkeþ to fede God wiþ þe mete of goode werkes. þe secunde þenkeþ & understondeþ to be fed and fulfilled of God by verray gostiliche comfort."
(ibid.)

This part of the book, which deals with action and contemplation, is characterized by a relatively unsophisticated approach which occasionally becomes more visionary. The first extract is quite simple, but the development of contemplation is informed by concepts of recollection and introversion in which there is a real sense of the fervour and all-consuming nature of contemplative vision. By contrast, the author then refers to contemplation as mere rest. This degree of inconsistency could be due partly to the differing influences of the different complex sources on which it draws, and partly to the rhetorical nature of the language, where logic can become secondary. The alternation between simplicity and complexity is further seen in the author's statements concerning the active life as a prelude to the contemplative life. In common with such tracts as Pore Caitif, the Book of Vices and Virtues asserts that the first life must precede the second, but, unlike such tracts it moves into a region of greater complexity.

"þe first is weie and comynge in-to þe secunde. For non may come to lif þat is gostliche, lif þat clerkes clepen contemplatif, but zif he be wel proued & assaied in þe lif of bisynesse of þe world, þat clerkes clepen actif lif."
(ibid. p.p. 220-1).

The framework is simple enough, but the terms proued & assaied, have strong associations with purgation, and seem out of place with such univocal concepts as bisynesse of þe world. This characteristic of the work, whereby straight forward catechism is pregnant with complex associations, may perhaps arise from its authorship by a friar, as the avowed aims of the friars was to make complex spiritual truths available in simple language. It is of importance that such a work which is easy to understand, and yet which contains more advanced teaching, should be felt to be worth translating in fourteenth-century England. Although the desire to promulgate lay education was an important factor, it is possible that the demand for works with a contemplative bias, caused the Book of Vices and Virtues to be chosen widely²⁰⁸ as a text for this purpose.

In addition to this explicit discussion of the two lives, there is a section of the Book of Vices and Virtues which concerns the states of God's elect on earth, where concepts of action and contemplation are clearly the organizing factors. This is interesting because this section is preceded by a description of the states of the citizens of the kingdom of Heaven, and whereas the heavenly host is spoken of as a hierarchy, the earthly folk are discussed in a system which consciously breaks away from this system in terms of both type and order of merit. This divergence would have only occurred if the author thought that the new system was sufficiently important. The contrast is most easily seen in an examination of both sections.

There are three states in heaven, þe hizest, þe mene, and þe lowest.²⁰⁹ The first are the greatest in merit,

"þe iþat ben as þe kynges counseil." (ibid. p.120)

and who

"ben alwey wiþ God, maþe more þan þe oþere and heren and seen hym and his pryvetees." (ibid.)

Those in the middle state

"ben as þe barones and grete stiwardes, þat gouerneþ
and kepeþ þe rewme and gon and lernen of hem þat ben of þe
counseil what þei wole have y-do, and done o þere to do it."
(ibid.)

Those in the lowest state

"ben as sergeauntes & officers, þat han offices and þe
messages to don and to kepen as men seien hem."
(ibid.)

This heirarchical stucture is based on a chain of authority from superiors to inferiors, by which commands are passed down rather in the manner of a royal court. The differences between each state are really of degree rather than of kind, since it is lack of authority which separates the bottom state from the middle, and the middle from the highest. Any other differences arise from this unequal authority. This section is followed by an analysis of the þere states of Godes children in erþe,²¹⁰ but the author both classifies the states differently from the heavenly states, and arranges them in an order of merit which does not start at the highest and work to the lowest. It would have been very easy to construct a parallel scheme in both order and type of state, but this is not done. Although the terminology of action and contemplation is not used, the relevant concepts form the discussion, and the order in which the states are discussed is the familiar one of the active, contemplative, and the combined lives:

"þat on staat is of hem þat bep in þis world and lyven as God comaundeþ and as þei bileuen and heren of here prelates. þat o þer staat is of parfyzt men and wommen þat han al y-sette here hertes oute of þis world and þat seen God as moche as a man may in þis lif, and han here conversacioun in hevne and þe bodies in erþe and here hertes wiþ God. þe þridde ben in þe mene staate, and governe himself wel and o þere and lyven after þe comaundementes."
(ibid.)

The first type of person is the humble layman who follows the dictates of his superiors, and is a man whose way of life is formed by concepts

of the active life. The second type is clearly contemplative. The third, or mene state, is of those who govern themselves well, and also govern others, and, in religious terms, this is the pattern of the combined life. The translator refers to this life as the mene, but this does not mean lowest, but the middle. The Ayenbite of Inwit²¹¹, a parallel translation, gives be middel stat²¹² and confirms this usage of the word mene in the Book of Vices and Virtues where the word is used to describe those in the middle state in heaven. This is given strong corroboration in the section which follows immediately where the translation of the Book of Vices and Virtues states that the Holy Ghost gives twin gifts to each type, and refers in order to be first staate...be mene staate.....be highest staate,²¹³ and the nature of the gifts makes it clear that the order intended is active, combined, contemplative. It is very interesting to find the concepts associated with action and contemplation forming this discussion, and very surprising to find a treatise written originally by a friar referring to the combined life as only second in merit. This may be partly due to the high honour which was accorded to the contemplative life, and partly due to an imperfect assimilation of the implications of the combined life, resulting in there being no explicit belief in the availability of full contemplative vision to those in such a life.

It can be seen from these analyses of Pore Caitif., Dizes et Pauper, and the Book of Vices and Virtues that a diverse group of treatises made a basically Augustinian tradition available in the vernacular, and that despite the usual simplifications, this type of tract was capable of providing moderately sophisticated material.

Uthred of Boldon

The writings of Uthred of Boldon²¹⁴ are of considerable importance to the theme of action and contemplation; they are the reflections of a man who divided his time between the cloister and the world of religious affairs. In addition to acting as proctor of his house, definator and special visitor, he was also involved in the highly controversial matter of papal subsidies which culminated in his being a member of the delegation to Avignon in 1373. In the complex world of fourteenth-century politics, with its constant interaction between crown and church, and its disputes between the religious institutes and the landed aristocracy, the line between religious and secular affairs was often blurred. The questions of papal subsidies, dominion, and the place of mendicant orders were often debated against a background of lay interest, frequently had financial ramifications which widened the sphere of their impact, and almost always had some greater or lesser political connotation. The crown in particular often found that a question of religious loyalty brought a whole train of political, financial or other practical considerations in its wake, and that a simple decision at the religious level could set up currents which affected diverse matters and people. Uthred found himself at the centre of a number of these debates, and an example was when a delegation went to the pope in 1374, and the controversy in hand was debated between Uthred and John Marchiley, a Franciscan, before Edward, Prince of Wales, William Whittlesey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and a group of temporal and spiritual lords of the realm. The pope had demanded a subsidy from England of 100,000 florins, and the question had ramifications far beyond the payment of the immediate sum, and excited interest outside religious circles.

It is in this context that the religious debates of the period must be seen, and the importance of such figures as Uthred calculated.

In addition to his excursions into the world of politico-religious affairs, Uthred was an important figure in the elite of the ecclesiastical world. He was Warden of Durham College, Oxford, and was one of the educated and scholarly monks whose careers were notable during the fourteenth century. The monasteries went to considerable trouble and expense to provide their gifted members with a full university training, and Uthred was at Oxford, where he incepted as D.D., from 1347 until about 1367.

These diverse interests made intermittent claims on Uthred's time, and he was frequently called away from Durham Priory and its dependent cell of Finchale, where he spent his life between 1360 and his death in 1397.

His writings are characterized by a mellowness and breadth of concern which are suggested of the reflections of mature years, and both Pantin and Marcett conjecture that most of his works are from the last two decades of his life. The man of affairs would have found a fit setting in the secluded quiet of Finchale for his deliberations. The two tracts which are of particular interest to the theme of action and contemplation are De substancialibus regule monachalis²¹⁵ and De perfectione vivendi in religione.²¹⁶ An examination of these two treatises reveals some of the attitudes of an educated and active monk of the fourteenth century, to the monastic life. The implications of these works reach beyond the monastery walls, however, and through them an insight is possible into his beliefs on the spiritual nature of the layman.

De substancialibus regule monachalis concerns the substancialia or underlying principles of monasticism. A number of writers, including Wyclif, had attacked monasticism on the ground that

it was a private religion, and in being divergent from the true Church, was heretical. Instead of mounting a vitriolic counter-attack based on narrow or prejudiced dogma, Uthred sought to justify the regular life by showing that not only was it lawful, but also that the principles on which it was based were fundamental to human nature. He broadened the arena of the debate to provide a convincing defence for his vocation, and in doing so, posed basic questions about the human condition. If he could show that the principles of monasticism were central to man's nature, then he could demonstrate the lawfulness of the regular life. At the same time, however, he would have to contend with problems raised by his arguments, concerning the spiritual nature of man.

Uthred states that the three substantialia are the abdication of property, continence, and obedience.²¹⁷ These are not arbitrary or peculiar to monasticism, however, but are the bases of the lives of all men by virtue of the faculty of reason. Reason dictates that man should not indulge in a completely unrestrained manner in food, drink, and sexuality, but should temper his impulses according to need, his age, his complexion, and so on. Natural reason thus imposes a degree of continence on all men. The same reason regulates the relationship of God to his creatures, and thus all men are enjoined to obedience to a natural order. In the matter of property, man is only a dispensator or villicus Dei and has only the use of things and not the absolute ownership. Abdication of property is thus imposed on all men. Because these basic rules are part of the natural order of things, and are communicated to man by reason, Uthred calls them, collectively, the naturalis regula rationis.²¹⁸ This regula is the obligation of all

men having the use of reason:

"Scilicet proprietatis abdicatio continencia et obediencia sunt omni homini habenti discrecionem et usum rationis ex obligacione nature. indita et inscripta: et in hiis tribus religionem substancialibus instituitur a natura. contra mundum, contra carnem, contra spiritum, regula naturalis sine regula rationis." (ibid. F.82v)

("It is clear that the disowning of property, continence, and obedience are imparted and prescribed by the obligations of nature to every man having discretion and the use of reason, and in those three underlying principles of religion was established by nature against the world, the flesh, and the spirit, the rule of nature or the rule of reason.")

(Translations are my own).

It thus becomes a basic premise of the treatise that the regular and lay lives are not different in kind, but only in degree, since they are both founded on the common factor of man's rational nature. As a result of this, Uthred's discussions are relevant to the layman as well as to the monk, unless distinctions are drawn in particular cases to show why particular arguments relate only to the regular life. Because of this, his words refer to both types of life, except in discussion of technical points of importance only to monasticism, and thus throw light on his views of the spiritual experience available to the layman.

Uthred again uses the technique of widening the area of discussion to answer the objection that monastic rules are superfluous because God has already created in man the naturalis regula rationis. The answer also reveals his belief in the basic identity of the secular and the regular, as was also seen in the previous argument. The objection is countered by the assertion that even when man was in a state of innocence in Paradise, the rule of natural reason was deemed by God to be insufficient. This is proven by the additional command He gave concerning the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This extra command reinforced the natural rule since its observance comprehends the abdication of property, continence, and obedience. Uthred calls this the regula paradisi superaddita. 219

This rule, Uthred says, was the first religio, and God was thus the primal abbot:

"Ista itaque regule paradisi superaddita regule naturali: continens et exprimens et imporens ista tria substancialia. tam regule rationis naturalis quam regule ipsius paradisi: immo cuiuscumque religionis posterioris ab ecclesia approbate ut est dictum: erat prima religio sive regula particularis vivendi ab ipso deo patrono excellentissimo et abbate notorie...."
(ibid. F 85 R)

("In such a way, therefore, the rule of Paradise having been added to the rule of nature, holding together, and moulding, and setting in place the three fundamental principles, as much by the rule of natural reason as by the rule of Paradise itself, approved by every later order of the church; as it is said, the first religion or particular rule of living was from God himself, the most excellent founder and distinguished abbot....")

Uthred thus demonstrates that the three substancialia are fundamental to the Christian concept of the human condition. He then continues his defence of monasticism by saying that the regular life is not in any sense a divergence from Biblical truth, but is only a formal acceptance of the order of things ordained by God. The monk accepted his frailty and followed a set rule which was written by saintly men under the guidance of God. Uthred fully accepts the implications of this position. The most important are that lay Christian life is not to be considered a diluted and eccentric version of the good life, which is itself defined as monasticism, and that monasticism, conversely, is not per se superior to the Christian lay life. The corollary of this is that whilst monasticism may help man towards perfection of living (which Uthred defines later), that perfection, on the grounds mentioned above, must be equally obtainable in a lay life.

The tract which follows De substancialibus regule monachalis is entitled De perfectione vivendi in religione, and its purpose is to examine the questions raised in De substancialibus. The main question is the problem of whether perfection of living is best obtained in a regular or whether in a secular life. The relationship between this problem and the conclusions of the first treatise is suggested by the fact that in the two manuscripts in which they survive together they are consecutive.²²⁰ The heading of the second

treatise is, after the title, "Incipit tractatus secundus de perfectione vivendi".²²¹ and this also suggests the importance of the juxtaposition of the two works. In addition, there are a number of references in the second tract to points made in the first, the most important of which are the relation of the substantialia to some of the arguments. This interrelationship is important, because there is an implicit assumption, often made explicit, that unless otherwise indicated, the arguments refer to both secular and regular lives. The argument of De perfectione grows out of the conclusions of De substantialibus.

De perfectione vivendi in religione is, then, partly a modification of the tract which precedes it, and partly a continuation. As indicated above, Uthred's defence of the monastic life depended on an identification of the nature of man with the nature of the regular life. The two central issues were that all men are governed naturally by certain principles which monasticism merely formalises, but that the important criterion of a man's fidelity to them is the degree of inner rather than outer observance. This second issue was not made a feature of the foregoing discussion of De substantialibus because it was simply stated in that tract, and though important, it presented no problems of interpretation, and also because it is thoroughly discussed in relation to the second tract where its real importance becomes apparent. Uthred seeks to show, in De perfectione, that the monastic life can be perfect in these terms when undertaken in the right way, and he then continues to discuss the way in which a man should relate to society. To do this he examines different aspects of the concept of the perfect life, and while his main aim is to show that this life is to be had in the monastic vocation, his deep awareness and intellectual honesty lead him to make a number of

concessions to the secular life. It is a triumph of Uthred's sensitive awareness and concern that in answering a broad-fronted attack on monachism, possibly by Wyclif,²²² he not only defends the regular life in a carefully reasoned and creative way, but he also shows how perfection can be gained in a secular life. In a period of increasingly bitter controversy he raises the debate to a level of calm and thoughtful discussion.

De perfectione begins with a discussion of one of the most crucial passages in the Gospel for the monk's vocation. In Matthew²²³ 19.21 Christ told a young man who had asked how to gain eternal life, that he must follow the commandments. The young man said that he already followed them, and asked what else he should do. Christ said:

"Si vis perfectus esse, vade vende quæ habes, et da pauperibus, et habebis thesaurum in coelo; et veni, sequere me." (ibid.)

The idea of the total renunciation of worldly goods, and of obediently following Christ's example of poverty and chastity was the cornerstone of monasticism, and was enjoined in addition to the observance of the commandments. The young man failed to follow this second part of Christ's answer, and thus suggests a distinction between those who can win eternal life by following the commandments, and those who respond to the second call and try to achieve perfection. The simplicity and depth of the call is electrifying; it is an act of final and utter renunciation which is inwardly and outwardly complete. Monastic writers interpreted t command as a call to the cloister, and saw it as the New Testament fulfillment of the law. It was the completion by the second Adam of the natural law created for the first. It was thus that many twelfth-century and thirteenth-century writers saw monasticism as intrinsically superior to the

secular life. Uthred, in accordance with earlier tradition, states that since Christ lived what must be termed a secular life, monasticism as an outward form could be considered as actually divergent from divine teaching. This objection to monasticism is met with the explanation that the three substantialia were observed by Christ, and in a sense he may be considered a regulares.²²⁴ In that case, however, all the saints, though in secular habit, may be considered as regulares, and so must all ecclesiastics and even laymen as well. A digression is necessary at this point, on the definition of certain crucial terms. The term "secular" usually referred in mediaeval debates to such secular religious figures as the secular clergy. Uthred concurs in this usage, but in the present treatises he broadens its frame of reference, and while his comments would still apply principally to the secular religions, it is clear that he intends that they could also apply to secular people in the sense of laymen. This is suggested by the broad concern of the treatises, the opposition in one section secularem et regularem vel clericalem et laicalem (ibid.F.100v) which describes the two parts of society, and also by the following distinction between the secular the regular:

"...illi dicantur regulares seu religiosi qui ex professu sua tacita vel expressa militant sub aliqua de particulari regulis per legem militantis ecclesie approbatis ut ceteri omnes dicantur generaliter seculares." (ibid.F 105v)

("...they may be said to be regulars or religious who from their tacit or plainly spoken profession, struggle under some one or other particular rule approved by the laws of the church militant, while the rest may generally all be said to be seculars.")

Since the adoption of a rule was the normal practice for a number of religious callings which were otherwise secular in every way,

and the category of regulars is therefore extremely wide, this would suggest that all those who might in any way be considered non-secular were brought into the regular category in order to use the term "secular" to describe all those who lived the good life outside a formally religious life.

In addition, the context of the treatise, as stated earlier, was a debate between Uthred and such figures as Wyclif, and the strength of Uthred's arguments lies in his inclusion of lay people in this scheme. The frame of reference dictates that the word "secular" must also refer to those who were not in a formally religious life of any kind, as well as to those who were secular by a normal definition. The position now reached is thus, that monastic rules are an aid to a frail humanity, and have divine sanction both in the moment of creation, in that man was given reason, and in Christ's words to the adolescentus of the Gospel. However, the process of logic which gives this broad base to monasticism also inevitably concedes that a full and holy secular life is just as valid a way to perfection as a regular life. The rest of the tract seeks to discover whether perfection is most likely to be found in the regular or the secular life, and to take up the challenge offered by the provocative statement in the Gospel that the commandments are not sufficient to perfection:

"Sacratissimo siquidem dei evangelio Mat.19 asserento observationem legalium mandatorum homini non sufficere sed adhuc unum sibi deesse ad vite perfeccionem Ideo querunt plures an talis perfeccio in vita seculari an in conversacionem regulari verius sit ponenda."

(De Perfectione F.97 r).

(" Indeed, the most sacred evangelist of God, in Matt.19, claims that the observations of the law's command is not sufficient for a man, but that in this context concerning the life of perfection he is lacking in one thing. Because of this, many men have enquired whether such perfection may be had in the secular life or the regular mode of life.")

In facing these crucial issues, Uthred enunciates his views on the two types of life, and he comes to a sympathetic awareness of the possibilities of each.

The question of the regular versus the secular life is of importance to the theme of action and contemplation in both a positive and a negative sense. In a positive sense, the active and contemplative lives were, for a number of writers, synonymous with the secular and regular lives. It is easy to see how this association arose, and there is a degree of justification for it. Since this association was often assumed, Uthred's words would have been taken to refer, in part at least, to the active and contemplative lives. The negative sense in which the two groups of concepts are important to each other arises out of the first sense. Since this identification tended to take place, and since it has been seen to be incorrect in a large number of important writers, then it is important to examine Uthred's implicit denial of this identification in his discussion of the active and contemplative lives. He sees their relationship as a much more subtle and complex interaction than the naive equation of active and secular, and of contemplative and regular.

Uthred moves directly to the heart of these problems in De perfectione by examining the nature of perfection. He distinguishes three forms: perfection secundus tempus²²⁵, which is proper to man in his natura condita; perfection by nature which is proper to glorified man; and universal perfection which is proper only to God. Since the purpose of De perfectione is to examine perfect living in the church militant, it is concerned only with the first type. This perfection secundus tempus has an inner and an outer frame of reference. The inner is concerned with personal perfection, perfeccio homini personalem,²²⁶ and the outer is concerned with perfection of degree

or state in society, perfeccio gradualis.²²⁷ Each is examined in detail.

The first and inner type of perfection, perfeccio hominis personalem, relates to the inner condition, as its name suggests. Man's original via to this state, through first innocence, was lost by Adam's disobedience and the resulting state of sin in which mankind was doomed to live. Christ's sacrifice on Calvary atoned for this act, and by grace made perfection possible once more. Perfection consists of the following of the dictates of the three theological virtues;

"quod ipse tres theologice virtutes continent quicquid tempus huius vie requirit et convenit secundum tempus hoc haberi...est perfeccionis primum membrum." (ibid. F.100v).

("who keeps these three theological virtues, whatsoever time of this life he inquires after and finds the secundus tempus...is of perfection the first member.")

This perfection is essential to the perfeccio vivendi which is the subject of the treatise, and though degree may help a man to be inwardly perfect it cannot make him so:

"Ne gradus aliquis nec status in Christianismo secularis religiosus aut ecclesiasticus qualiscumque reddit vel efficit hominem sic perfectum sed eius conversacio virtuosa quamvis gradus et status huiusmodi multum invent...." (ibid.)

("Neither the degree nor the state of anyone in Christendom, secular, monastic, or clerical, of what kind soever, renders or makes a man so perfect, but his virtuous manner of living, however much this kind of grade or state may help.")

More important, is the statement that this perfection can be achieved in any walk of life. Following Anselm, Uthred says that the world is divided into tres ordines, oratores, defensores et agricultores, and into two parts, secularem et regularem vel clericalem et laicalem.²²⁸ Not only can personal perfection be had in any of these, but there are some people who would be perfect in a secular life, but not in a regular life:

"alicui homini utilis et perfecta est conversacio
secularis, cui feret vita regularis inutilis et peritus
imperfecta." (ibid.)

("the mode of secular living is fit and perfect for some men,
to whom the regular life may have been unfit and inwardly
imperfect.")

This clearly shows that Uthred believes in personal perfection in the secular life, since he actually states that some perfect seculars would be unsuited to the regular life. He speaks of being inwardly imperfect (penitus imperfecta) and this once more throws the emphasis on the inner observance of the three theological virtues. This stress on inner matters recalls Hilton's words on the subject of the supreme importance of resembling God in love, and the statement that station cannot compensate for spiritual aridity. He holds that a deep and genuine love will be rewarded in Heaven by nearness to God, and that the humblest members of society might be superior in this matter, to those higher in the social order:

"it schal fallen ^{bat} sum... marchaunt or ploman...schal have
more mede þan sum prest orefrere or ~~make~~..for he ~~lof~~
more God in charite of his giefte "
(Scale of Perfection 229 f.42R)

The matter of degree is taken up in, the next part of Uthred's treatise, and it is interesting to compare Hilton's attitude to the relationship of inner perfection and perfection of outer mode, with Uthred's beliefs on this subject. As stated above, both writers agree that inner perfection is crucial. Hilton, however, sees the outer mode as a way in which a different type of perfection can be expressed, but which is not organically related to inner matters. In his discussion of the extra meed given for martyrdom, maidenhead and preaching,²³⁰ there is a definite sense that these activities may be an expression of the inner love which is felt by the person concerned, but that they are forms

which it is no detriment not to undertake. They are highly laudable but optional. The mode of living of a ploughman is seen as constituting no actual detriment to the good life of the man involved, as it is an arbitrary occupation. Inner life and outer mode are totally separable facets of the individual which bear no inevitable causal relationship. When Uthred's beliefs are considered, a difference becomes apparent. He also feels that degree is no necessary guarantee of inner perfection, but sees the two aspects of outer and inner modes as intimately related. It will be seen that the outer mode is a vital expression of the person concerned, and just as important as the inner mode. The latter may be a sine qua non, but so is the former. Uthred believes that it is just as important to find the right outer mode as it is to find the right inner one. Together, they constitute perfeccio vivendi, and both parts are essential. Hilton's writing lacks this sense of the unity of the two parts of the person's life.

The integral nature of perfeccio hominis personalem and perfeccio gradualis is seen in the next extract which opens the discussion of perfection of degree:

"Oportet investigare unde consurgat perfeccio gradualis id est perfeccio gradus, sive status ecclesie militantes. quatinus perfeccionem hominis personalem et perfeccionem militantis ecclesie gradualem insimul combinando..."

(De perfectione F.101 R.)

("It is proper to enquire from whence might arise perfection of degree, that is, perfection of degree or state in the church militant, since the personal perfection of a man and perfection of degree are fit to be combined...")

Both are important to the individual, and the right relationship between the two must be found. It would be misleading to suggest that these two aspects of the life of a man, and the two commands of

Christ to the young man, are to be equated. However, there is a certain parallelism of situation between them, because Christ told the young man to perfect his life in what can broadly be regarded as personal matters, and then to apply what can be considered as an external regulation to his mode of life. Similarly, Uthred's personal perfection and gradual perfection are broadly speaking, inner and outer matters, the first largely relating to the inner person, and the second to the outer. Uthred saw a relationship between the second command of Christ and the outer mode in that both posed the question of what a man should do with his life, assuming he is striving already for inner perfection. Perfeccio gradualis is concerned with this problem, and it is to this that Uthred now turns.

The gradus or status in the church militant, which is the means by which perfeccio gradualis is to be achieved, is defined by Uthred as being a twofold life:

"Constat equidem duplicem esse vitam statum sive gradum ecclesie militantis scilicet contemplativam et activam sive secundum philosophos speculativam et practicam."
(ibid.)

("It is well known, indeed, that the life, state or degree in the church militant is twofold, namely, contemplative and active, or according to philosophy, speculative and practical.")

He then continues to discuss the nature of each in turn, starting with the contemplativa vita.

The contemplativa vita is also twofold, and the two parts correspond to the two parts of higher and lower reason:

"Est...contemplativa vita duæ sicut sunt due portiones superior et inferior rationis."
(ibid.)

("The contemplative life is twofold, just as the higher and lower parts of reason are two.")

The two parts of the contemplativa vita are described in detail, and the equation of these parts with higher and lower reason indicates the technical nature of discussion, and, as will be seen, provides evidence for the assertion that Uthred conceives of the active and contemplative vitae as states and not as lives.

"siquidem suprema et digressima vita contemplativa pertinens ad superiorem rationis portionem et sic ad sapientiam vacat solis divinis et eternis meditationibus contemplandum. Secundus contemplativam vita pertinens ad portionem rationis inferiorem et ad scientiam secundum quod alii per spiritum dantur servis sapientie alii ad servis scientie.."

(ibid. ff. 101 R-101V)

("Indeed the supreme and separate life contemplative pertains to the higher part of reason and so to wisdom; it gives leisure for the single divine and eternal aforementioned contemplation. The second part of the contemplative life pertains to the lower part of reason and so to knowledge, according to which, some by the spirit are given to the service of wisdom, and others to the service of knowledge.")

Uthred is thinking in terms of philosophical distinctions, and this view is supported by his comparison of the contemplativa vita with the speculativa vita of philosophy:

"Consimiliter de speculatione... scientiam primum dignissimam honorabilissimam quam nominant theologice speculari solum res immateriales. id est res divinas separatas immobiles.. sed aliam inferiorem scientiam speculativam versari circa res. mobiles vel quasi materiales." (ibid. 101v).

(" Similarly concerning speculation...of knowledge the first, most worthy, and most honorable (part) which is called theology, observes only things immaterial, that is, divine, apart, unchangeable...but the other lower (part) of speculative knowledge engages about things changeable or, as it were, material.")

The higher contemplativa vita according to Uthred is an intellectual and spiritual state, and concerns the higher acts of reason leading to wisdom and the contemplative vision of God. The inferior part of the contemplativa vita concerns the lower reason and thus leads only to knowledge. The distinction is shown in another way by being compared to the two parts of speculative knowledge which pertain to things

material and immaterial respectively. These are the distinctions of a writer within an intellectual and specialist tradition. Where Hilton usually spoke of men as basically either active or contemplative and advocated that each should strive to include the other part of life into his existence, Uthred saw the contemplative and active states as different types of condition into which different men tend to go. Although higher reason leads to contemplative vision, Uthred's distinctions are not concerned with simple equations of mode of life and types of experience. It will be seen later that he considers that certain types of people will undertake certain combinations of action and contemplation, and that some men will be suited to one rather than the other, but this is not the same as a rudimentary division of men into actives and contemplatives. Where Hilton might have said that a given individual was a contemplative, and should fulfill himself in that life, Uthred would have said that a given man, by reason of his spiritual and intellectual gifts, would find himself most completely in the contemplativa vita. The distinction is fine, and the end result is almost indistinguishable, but it is important. It may be that Uthred's more sophisticated audience gave him a greater freedom to enter into exact discussion, where Hilton felt constrained not to become too technical for his lay and relatively untrained readership. If this is so, it does not diminish the importance of the differences in ideas, however, because each type of writing was available to the literate world of fourteenth-century England, and each made its impact. The presence of a very complex background to ideas of action and contemplation will later be seen to be important in relation to a number of works.

One of the important points raised by Uthred's definition of the contemplativa vita is the availability of reason to man. The two treatises rest on the assumption that man is a rational animal, and on this ground, Uthred says that all men habenti discrecionem et usum rationis ²³¹ are bound to observe the three substancialia. The implication here is that all men have this use of reason, not just that the select number who do have the use of reason are so bound. In the discussion of perfeccio vivendi which follows, it will be seen that defensores et agricultores ²³² are included in the category of those who live according to the twofold active life. Therefore, there is a contradiction, in that all men are bound by reason to observe the three substancialia, but, by definition, those who live only the twofold active life do not rise to contemplation which is itself defined as the operation of reason. The answer to this problem is to be found in the tendency of mediaeval writers to use terms in both a special and a general sense, without warning of changes between the two. Uthred uses the term, reason, in the general sense which means that man is capable of rational thought and is thus distinguished from the animal world. He also uses it in a specialist sense to denote the use of a trained and able mind at a high level. Thus, all men are capable of using reason, but some are capable of a very much more advanced use of this faculty. Also, this apparent contradiction is not explicitly resolved in the treatise because Uthred is not comparing the active and contemplative lives, but the regular and secular lives. It will be seen that concessions are not made to those in the active state, but to those in the secular state. Uthred's concern is with the man who is capable of both the contemplativa vita and the activa vita, and he wishes to discuss whether such a man is more likely to reach perfection as a secular or a regular. Bearing in mind this lacuna in the

philosophical structure of the treatise, it is possible to examine Uthred's concept of activa vita.

The twofold activa vita is concerned with the utility of the soul and the necessities of the body. Uthred introduces the concept in relation to the state of one's fellow man, through whom the concerns of the activa vita are expressed.

"sicut proximus consistit ex duabus anima scilicet et corpore sic est activa duplex. Primaria vita activa et dignior versatur circa utilitatem anime. Secunda corporis necessaria subministrant."
(ibid.)

("just as (one's) neighbour is made up of two parts, the soul, of course, and the body, in such a way is the active life twofold. The principal and most worthy part of the active life is engaged about the utility of the soul. The second ministers to the needs of the body.")

Comparison with the practical life amplifies this definition;

Consimiliter de scientia practica duplex prima et superior circa virtutes morales non solum sciuntur sed ut viventes secundem eas boni in anima efficiantur...alia practica ista certa homini corporales gubernationes quo insimul viventes regulentur debite et quiete ac corporis necessaria provideant."
(ibid. 102 v)

("Similarly concerning twofold practical knowledge. The first and superior part concerns moral virtues, not only that they may be known, but in order that living according to them may result in the good of the soul...That other part of practical knowledge, to be certain, governs the bodies of men, by which at the same time that they are being regulated duly and quietly in living, even provides bodily necessities.")

When translated into practical terms, the two parts of the active life are comprehended in Christ's words to his disciples;

"primo predicando regnum dei populo...postea infirmos curando et famelicos sanando."
(ibid. 102 r)

("First preach the kingdom of God to the people....afterwards heal the infirm and nourish the hungry.")

A man following Uthred's active scheme would undertake a life which closely resembled Hilton's conception of the active life. The difference between the two schemes is that Hilton discusses a rather

mechanical division of life into two parts, and the relation between the active and contemplative facets can sometimes seem arbitrary, whereas Uthred sees the active life as part of a complex and articulated scheme deriving from a philosophical view of the nature of man. An example of this is that where Uthred refers to utilitatis anime and corporis necessaria. Hilton speaks of acts of corporal and spiritual mercy, reflecting a more simplified view. The same precision and delicacy of handling which characterized Uthred's discussion of contemplativa vita is seen here, whereby the end result is the same but the process by which it is derived is different. The intellectual nature of the scheme is again seen in the comparison with the practical life, with its emphasis on moral virtue and the governing of the body.

Uthred's concepts of activa vita and contemplativa vita derive, therefore, from a hierarchical view of the human condition, which divides the functions of soul, mind and body in a mathematical scheme. Each of the two aspects of man, the activa vita and the contemplativa vita, refers to a certain area of intellectual and bodily function, and these are the constituent parts of the gradus or status in which perfeccio gradualis is to be sought. They are types of activity which men can undertake, and Uthred explains how each man can find perfection in the gradus to which he is suited.

Thus, the type of activity which a man performs, according to which parts of the contemplativa vita and the activa vita he is suited, constitutes the gradus which is appropriate to him, and this is why Uthred described these two vitae in detail before proceeding to discuss perfeccio gradualis. He has very clear ideas about which sort of man is suited to which gradus, and he takes up Anselm's threefold and twofold divisions of society once more to express his views.

"omnes gradum sive vivendi modum licitum pro hoc via... trifarie dividendo in tres ordines scilicet oratores defensores et agricultores vel bifarie in status regularem et secularem sive clericalem et laicalem. constat omnes illos ordines officia sive gradus sub dictis portionibus rationis superiori scilicet et inferiori et sub hoc vita predicta contemplativa videlicet duplici vel activa duplici contineri Ordo enim sive officium oratorum sicut et status clericalis, sub illa duplici contemplativa et digniore que ad salvationem anime pertinet. continetur. Reliqua vero duo officia seu ordines defensorum scilicet et agricultorum sicut et status laicalis continetur sub illa inferiori parte active vite. que satagit communis corporis necessaria ministranda."

(ibid. 102 r)

("every degree or mode of living permitted according to this way is divided in three parts into three orders, namely preachers, those concerned with defence, and those who work, or into two parts into the state of the regular and the secular or the clerical and the lay. It is well known that all these orders, offices or degrees are included under the said parts of higher and lower reason, and under the said life, namely, the twofold active and the twofold contemplative. The order or office of preacher, and the state of the cleric indeed, is contained in the twofold contemplative and the more worthy active, which pertains to the salvation of the soul. The remaining two orders or offices, those concerned with defence and those who work, clearly, with the state of the layman, are contained under the lower part of the active life, which has enough to do to administer the corporal necessities of the community.")

This hierarchical division of society, which has its ultimate roots in Plato's works, is a translation of Uthred's intellectual scheme into social terms. It sees a stratified society of which each level has its own distinctive character, and area of activity. The oratores concern themselves with the search for wisdom and contemplative experience, and then they undertake the cure of souls in the higher activa vita. The defensores et agricultores are concerned only with the bodily needs of the community. Uthred asserts that high state will not of itself ensure contemplative experience.

"quamuis ... plurimi sepius devotissime contemplantes. et sanctissime vivendo... et sic illam contemplativa et illam superiorem vite active partem que ad comodum anime pertinet ad implentes non cum ratione officiorum in quibus vivunt sed ex debite ascendendi intendum ad dei contemplationem."

(ibid.)

("However much....there may be many more devoted contemplatives and most holy lives...and in this way, concerning contemplation and the higher part of the active life, the satisfaction of the soul has advantage; not by reason of the offices in which they live will they of right from time to time ascend to the contemplation of God.")

This passage, with its realistic awareness answers the criticism that Uthred's views are rigid, or bound by theoretical considerations. It is at this point of the treatise that a certain narrowness of interest makes itself apparent, however, since the discussion of perfeccio vivendi does not concern itself with those who are capable only of the activa vita. Uthred is concerned with the relative claims of the regular and the secular lives, and his words are addressed to an elite . As such , they deal only with those people, regular and secular, who are capable of achieving the activities of the contemplative life. It is not that Uthred lacks sympathy with a wider group, or that he rigidly or specifically excludes them from his discussions, but that his interests lay elsewhere. It is worth following him, because he specifically discusses how perfection is to be gained in the context of the contemplativa vita and the activa vita, and because his views provide an insight into the attitude of the administrative elite of the monastic circles of fourteenth-century England.

There have already been a number of signs in the treatise that the orientation of interests mentioned above is not far behind the explicit purpose of the defence of monasticism. As the work progresses, this exclusive interest becomes more evident, and the discussion of the right involvement in the activa and contemplativa vitae is a clear illustration of this. Uthred briefly states that the two lower orders of society, the defensores and the agricultores are fully occupied in the ministering of the corporal need of the community, and then passes

on to discuss the oratores in detail. It was pointed out above that in the context of the active and contemplative lives, the expression

"homini habenti discrecionem seu rationis usum"
(ibid.)

("A man having discretion or the use of reason.")

does not refer to any man, but only to the man who is capable of the contemplativa vita. In the following extract Uthred discusses such a man, and says that the following of the active part of his life is not sufficient.:

"Neutra activa vita homini habenti discrecionem seu rationis usum. sufficit per se solum sed requiritur..."
(ibid.)

("Neither is the active life of a man having discretion or the use of reason sufficient by itself alone, but he is wanting...")

Men having the use of reason, who are capable of the contemplativa vita, must not remain in the superior activa vita which is part of their gradus, but must ascend to the contemplation of God from time to time (interdum). Uthred explains that such men must ascend to contemplation in order to ensure salvation.

"vita contemplativa....est omni homini usum debita rationis habenti necessaria ad salvationem."
(ibid. 102 r - 102v).

("the contemplative life...is to all men having the use of reason, necessary to salvation.")

However they must not neglect the lower activa vita, as Christ instructed his disciples to preach the word of God and to heal the sick, and thus, in Uthred's terms, to concern themselves with the utility of the soul and with corporal necessity:

"Immo dominus noster ihesus misit apostolo suos predicare regnum celorum et sanare infirmos...et dominus in persona propria hanc vitam duplicem exercuit."
(ibid. 102 r)

("Indeed, our Lord Jesus sent his apostles to preach the kingdom of Heaven and to heal the infirm...and the Lord practised this twofold life himself.")

Thus the two parts of the active life are necessary to oratores as Christ himself left clear guidance on this matter. It has already been stated that the two parts of the contemplative life are necessary to salvation for the oratores, and it follows, therefore, that they must follow a fourfold life. Uthred says that such a life is where perfeccio gradualis is to be found:

"In hoc itaque vita quadruplici consistit perfectissimi dilectio dei et proximi."

(ibid. 102 v)

("In this quadruple life, therefore, is contained the most perfect love of God and of one's neighbour.")

This is repeated in slightly different form

"Ista igitur quadruplex vita nunc secundum membrum unum nunc secundum alterum pro veriis causiis personis locis et temporibus.."
(ibid.)

("This fourfold life, therefore, now following one part, now following the other, according to the actual business, the place of the person, and the times...")

The oratores must undertake, according to circumstances, the fourfold life, comprising the twofold active and the twofold contemplative. Perfection of degree is the concern of the individual with all aspects of creation, from the bodily needs of a beggar to the contemplation of God. The individual who is able to achieve this quadruplex vita finds perfeccio gradualis in the fulfillment of all his spiritual, mental, and social functions. The defensores et agricultores are completely occupied with the bodily needs of the community, and are clearly unable to undertake the quadruplex vita, and are therefore unable to achieve perfeccio gradualis. They are excluded by not

having in Uthred's special sense, usum rationis, and cannot therefore undertake the contemplativa vita. This exclusion is also suggested by the fact that the exponents of the quadruple life were Christ himself, John the Baptist, the apostles, and the saints.²³³ This is a most esoteric group whose emulation is clearly considered by Uthred to be difficult to achieve. When Uthred preaches what is very clearly a combined life, he is speaking to a small section of society only, the people he calls oratores. This limited concern recalls Hilton's Epistle on Mixed Life as this was addressed to a worldly lord, but Hilton's other writings have a wide range of application which contrasts sharply with the narrower range of people who are Uthred's concern.

Uthred has now discussed the perfeccio hominis personalem and the perfeccio gradualis, and is in a position to return to the wider concept of perfeccio vivendi of which those two are constituent parts. The inner mode of personal perfection and the outer mode of perfection of degree must be combined, and when this is possible, the perfect life is achieved:

"Primo constare poterit ex premissis in quo modo vivendi sit ponenda pro hac vita hominis perfeccio personalis quia videlicet in vita virtuosa secundum illas tres virtutes theologicas et pro quanto in illas est virtuosa de tanto perfeccior est persona. ut superius est ostensum. Secundo quod perfeccio gradualis ecclesie militantis consistit in illa vita quadruplici varie prout oportunitas exegerit executi. quam dominus noster ihesus in persona propria exemplavit, Johannes Baptista, apostoli et eorum successores inferioresque prelati diligentius exequabantur...ut cum simul coincidunt perfeccio status sive perfeccio gradualis ecclesie ac correspondens perfeccio hominis personalis, in tali vivendi modo videtur cuiuscumque hominis habentis perfeccionem ponenda. perfeccio suprema..."

(ibid. 103v-104r).

("Firstly, perfection can exist , by premiss, in that mode of living which may be achieved through this life of personal perfection of a man, by reason of the life of virtue following those three theological virtues, and depending on how virtuous it is in that, so much more perfect will a person be, as can be seen above. Secondly, perfection of degree in the Church militant consists in the fourfold life, diversely undertaken as the occasion dictates, which our Lord Jesus in his own person exemplified, and which John the Baptist, the apostles and their successors and lesser prelates diligently followed....when perfection of state or degree in the church, and corresponding personal perfection come together, in this way of life the greatest perfection seems as if it must belong to a man who possesses perfection....")

The oratores must strive for personal perfection and undertake the fourfold life according to circumstances. Perfeccio vivendi will be achieved when they are able to achieve both forms in their lives.

Uthred's exposition of perfeccio vivendi has now been examined, but the treatise does not finish at this point. It continues to discuss a number of considerations which qualify what has already been stated, and it will be seen that these modifications have considerable importance for the secular life.

The first modification is one that has already been implicit in a number of places, but which is now clearly stated. The regular life has been shown to be conducive to perfection of degree because it allows a man the right circumstances for the contemplativa vita, and because the accepted monastic good works are precisely the activities prescribed by the activa vita. However, the very fact of being a member of a regular body does not of itself guarantee that perfection of degree will be achieved,

"... nec in conversacio regulari est generalita, ponenda hominis perfeccio pro hac vita..."

(ibid. f.105v).

("perfection of a man is not generally to be found in the regular mode of life by reason of that life.")

The importance of the corresponding inward assent and joy in the operation of the outer forms is crucial. This is stated with further ramifications in the next extract;

"Tanto igitur quibuscumque perfeccion sive secularis fuerit sive regularis quanto vitam Christi similis et propinquius sequitur nec in vivendo. nec talis similitudo vel propinquitas ad vitam Christi consistit in habitu exteriori seculari vel regulari aut observantiis corporalibus quibuscumque sed in virtuoso habitu interiori secundum illas tres virtutes theologicas. quo ad perfeccionem personalem et secundum vitam quadruplicem quo ad perfeccionem gradualem."

(ibid.)

("Only by as much, therefore, is he whoever would be more perfect, either secular or regular, as he follows closely and precisely the life of Christ. Neither in mode of living, nor in closeness or similarity to the external condition, the life of Christ consists, either regular or secular, or even in corporal observances of any sort, but in the virtuous interior condition according to those three theological virtues which lead to personal perfection, and according to the quadruple life, which leads to perfection of degree.")

The inner virtuoso habitu is more important than the outer form of a regular or a secular life, or bodily observances, and the perfeccio vivendi comprising both inner and outer perfection is entirely dependent on the inner condition. That inner condition itself must be modelled on the life of Christ, and it is implicitly to be gained either in a regular or a secular life. It is not available to just anyone, however, as the vita Christi consists in the following of the three theological virtues and also of the quadruple life. By definition, the fourfold life is not available to those who are only capable of the activa vita, and have enough to do to minister to the needs of the community (que satagit communis corporis necessaria ministranda ²³⁴). Perfeccio vivendi is thus only available to a person capable of ascending to the contemplativa vita, and this includes only able seculars. This position is consistent with Uthred's concern with the administrative elite of whom he is writing, and in whom he is most interested.

Another qualification made by Uthred is that the three substantialia must be observed by both the secular and the regular,

"Dicitur ad illud quod tam seculares quam regulares, immo...
omnis homo discrecionem et usum rationis habens ad illa tria
que dicuntur religionem substantialia...obligatur."
(ibid. f. 109 r).

("It is said to anyone, as much to seculars as regulars, indeed..
every man having discretion and the use of reason is obliged to
follow those which are known as the underlying principles of
religion....")

The discussion of perfeccio vivendi is again extended to concern the secular; the monk will observe the three substantialia literally, and the layman will observe them in spirit, as discussed in the previous treatise. Uthred goes on to say, however, that the observance of the substantialia and the question of the following of the mode of either the secular or the regular are not the important things, and further emphasis is given to the importance of the inner state:

"Perfeccio vivendi consistet in sequi Christum, et de quanto quis propinquius vel similis sequitur in vivendo. de tanto perfectior erit talis. et de solo habitu exteriori sive seculari sive regulari peritus non est cura. immo nec relinquere huiusmodi nec illa tria que dicuntur religionis substantialia profiteri arguit vel probat relinquentem vel sic profitentem ex hoc perfectum esse sed talia multum adiuvant et facilitant quoad quosdam personas ad perfeccionem non habitam adquirendam sive ad perfeccionem habitam nutriendam ut amplius augmentatur."

(ibid. F.110 r)

("Perfection of living consists in following Christ, and in so far as a man closely or precisely follows Him in living, to that degree does he become perfect, and he need not be deeply concerned, with the question of mere external state, whether secular or regular. Moreover, neither the relinquishing of the external modes of observance nor the observing of those three things which are called the substantialia of religion, demonstrates or proves that he who relinquishes or he who observes is therefore perfect. But such things are of great help and assistance as long as they are used by certain people towards the acquiring of perfection (not yet having been developed), or towards the increase of perfection, (already having been developed), so that it may be richly increased.")

Uthred believes that the externals of secular or regular mode, and the three substancialia can be of great help in bringing people to perfection, or increasing and enriching the state of those already living the perfeccio vivendi. The really crucial issue, however, is the inner state and the following of Christ in a true manner. Such following has already been defined as the observance of the three theological virtues and of the fourfold vita. These inward things can be helped by the outer forms of the mode of secular or regular, and the three substancialia, but will not be achieved automatically by such outer observance. Uthred is not saying that perfeccio vivendi is easily obtainable, or that it is attainable by anyone, but that outer modes need not constitute a barrier; the way is hard and demanding, but all states, though not all degrees of people, may come to it if they wish.

De perfectione continues after the point now reached to discuss matters which relate specifically to monasticism. They do not reduce the force of any of the points already made, though they concentrate almost exclusively in the monastic life. The narrow and technical nature of the discussion takes it beyond the purview of the theme of action and contemplation.

The two works of Uthred of Beldon which are examined above are thus highly important to the theme of action and contemplation. Uthred's technical and philosophical definitions of the two vitae contrast with Hilton's more simplified conception, and provide a completely formal version against which to place other contemporary ideas on the subject. They demonstrate the survival of a formal mode of conception which characterized the works of Cassian and S. Augustine, and which can be considered to be a philosophical version of the tradition of the active and contemplative lives which

contrasts with the more simplified tradition which first found expression in the evangelizing interests of Gregory the Great. These two variant traditions seem to have co-existed, finding expression according to the different interests and circumstances of the writers concerned. S. Gregory's version could be considered as a stream of thought which manifested itself in writings by educated laymen, or those ecclesiastics such as Hilton who wrote for a non-specialist audience. The other stream was continued by writers in more formal circumstances and with specialist audiences in mind, such as Uthred. The first is characterized by a tendency to dissolve the distinction between state and life, which results in men being divided into actives and contemplatives, though the fact of the importance of the inner criteria prevents this process from becoming complete. The second is characterized by an awareness of the two vitae as technical states. The two different versions come to the same destination, however, the first instructing men to live both the active life and the contemplative life, and the second instructing them to include both the active state and the contemplative states in their lives. The two traditions also agree on the primary importance of the inner condition.

Another significant facet of Uthred's two treatises is the emphasis on the possibility of sanctification in the secular life. The active and contemplative lives are both possible in the regular life, but Uthred insists that they are possible in the secular round as well. The urge to take to the desert to await the second coming of Christ is as old as Christianity itself, but there was always an awareness that neither the disciples nor Christ himself had preached this course. This awareness has been seen in the writers discussed

in earlier chapters, as far back as Cassian, and it took the dual form of a realization that not only was the lower activa vita, in Uthred's terms, necessary, but also that there was much to support the desirability of living a holy life in the world at large. The deep humility and realistic vision of the monastic writers discussed above, led them to a belief that the important criterion of holiness was inner state. Uthred takes this awareness to its logical conclusion and states that the secular life can lead to perfection just as much as the regular life, though the former is fraught with difficulties not encountered in the latter. He even goes further and states that some men who would be imperfect in the regular life can be perfect in the secular. It is important that a man of Uthred's background adopts this view as it probably reflects the general opinion of the monastic élite of the late fourteenth century, even if he took it further than some might be prepared to go. The result of this is that Hilton, and those who write in similar vein, can be seen as disseminators of a simplified but orthodox opinion rather than as radicals.

Uthred's works thus shed light on the views of the monastic élite of the late fourteenth-century on the subject of action and contemplation, and provide evidence for a belief in the availability of perfection in a secular life.

The Writings of Richard Rolle, and the Cloud of Unknowing

The popular catechisms examined above contrast with the academic approach of Uthred of Boldon and, in a sense, they are less prone to making concessions than the more formal writer, who is able to use his more detailed analyses to explain his views more minutely and, as a result, arrive at a deeper and broader position. When the Cloud of Unknowing²³⁵ and the writings of Richard Rolle are considered, there are seen to be two forces working against this type of position. The first is the commitment of these two writers to the contemplative ideal, and the second is their relatively briefer treatment of the subjects of action and contemplation which reduces the chance of an articulated scheme. In most respects, a progression from the writings of Uthred, to the works of the two mystics under discussion, and finally to Walter Hilton, would be logical. The first wrote for theologians in Latin, the second two for lay people, usually enclosed, often in English, and the last wrote his long work the Scale of Perfection, with all men in mind.²³⁶ In terms of the willingness to consider the possibility of a combined life, however, Uthred is considerably nearer to Hilton than either of the other two. It will now be seen, therefore, that the combined life is less important in the next section than either the one which precedes it or the one which follows it.

The Cloud of Unknowing and the works of Rolle are not of the same academic nature as the writings of Uthred, therefore, but they were for a more specific audience than such tracts as Pore Caitif. The Cloud warns the reader, concerning his book,

"I charge þee & I besече þee, wip as mucche power & vertewe as þe bond of charite is sufficient to suffre.. þat in as mucche as in þee by a wille & avisement, neip er þou rede it, ne write it, ne speke it, ne zit suffre it be red, wretyn, or spokyn, of any or to any, bat zif it be of soche one or to soche

one þat hab (bi þi supposing) in a trewe wille & by an
hole entent, purposed him to be a parfite follower of Criste,
not only in actyve levying, but in þe souereinnest pointe of
contemplatife levying." (Cloud of Unknowing pp.1-2)

The reference to actyve living will be shown later to apply only to the inner ascetic stages of action, and this rigorous qualification as to who should read the treatise is clearly intended to warn that the author is writing for a restricted audience, and though there are some concessions later in the work, there are also many places where there is evidence of the relatively high intellectual capacity and spiritual discipline expected of the reader. Similarly, Rolle may have attacked the exclusive claims of the church, but he writes of complex and exalted spiritual experience. These two writers reveal the diversity which is to be found in the group known as the English Mystics, as the Cloud shows the purely contemplative approach, where Rolle demonstrates a belief in a more general availability of mystic experience. Together these writers help to provide a context in which to place the important ideas of Hilton and other fourteenth-century writers.

The significance of the writings of Richard Rolle in relation to the theme of action of contemplation is difficult to assess. On the one hand, he writes in an unremitting vein of the difficulty of achieving contemplation, yet on the other, he proclaims that mystic vision is available to anyone. His personal eccentricity must have made him a difficult figure to come to terms with, yet, judging by the great number of manuscripts of his work that survives, his writings were felt to be accessible. A brief examination of two of his treatises can attempt to elucidate these problems, The Form of Living, and

Incendium Amoris ²³⁸ being chosen for this purpose, as they comprehend between them most of his relevant beliefs.

The Form of Living, entitled The Form of Perfect Living in Horstman's edition, was written to the recluse Margaret de Kirkby ²³⁹ and takes an exclusive view of the active and contemplative lives. The active life, according to this tract, comprises the works of corporal mercy, and the observance of the commandments.; it also includes an area of concern which Hilton discussed in his Epistle on Mixed Life. ²⁴⁰ The relevant section of the Form of Living states that active men and women must maintain þaire menhye in drede and in luf of God ²⁴¹ and provide these followers with þaire necessaryes ²⁴².

It is interesting that such an activity should be described in the context of an epistle to a recluse, and this may reflect a growing attitude in the period that the works of the active life are conceived mainly in terms of the duty of a temporal leader. This is of interest as an indication of the influence of simplified concepts of action and contemplation, and also, as pointed out above, as these were some of the terms in which Hilton discussed the active life of the temporal lord. ²⁴³ This suggests, as does Pore Caitif, that this concept of the active life as a round of busy affairs is of growing importance. The contemplative life in Form of Living is conceived of as a twofold progression comprising meditation and the singing of psalms, and biholdyng and ylerning of þe thynges of heven, ²⁴⁴ This is later further defined as the sight of God. This is a simplified but traditional concept, and the Form of Living reveals Rolle writing in an immediate and vivid way to a recluse.

The Incendium Amoris is written explicitly for the simple, according to its prologue :

"Istum ergo librum offero intuendum, non philosophis, non mundi sapientibus, non magnis theologicis infinitis quescionibus implicatis, sed rudibus et inductis, magis Deum diligere quam multa scire conantibus."

(Incendium Amoris ²⁴⁵ p.147).

("Wherefore I offer this book to be seen; not to philosophers nor wise men of this world, nor to great divines lapped in infinite questions, but unto the boisterous and untaught, more busy to learn to love God, than to know many things.)

Rolle says later that he wishes to address all people

"Proinde quia hic universos excita ad amorem.."
(ibid.)

("And since I here stir all manner of folk to love...")

This section of the prologue has an air of polemic, however, and it seems that he is more eager to assent that the simple can attain mystical experience, than to instruct them how to do so. The reference to learned people is not of the same order as that by the Cloud author in his prologue, where he seems to be genuinely reassuring his reader that learning is not necessary, but an attack on the learned themselves. The writing of the treatise in Latin would have placed it beyond the reach of the rudibus et indoctis and would have made it suitable for perusal in an academic context. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this part of the prologue is a conscious posture rather than a real address to an intended simple audience. Most of Rolle's important work was in Latin, and this may have been partly due to a desire to give his tracts a status which he felt they would have lacked in the vernacular, or partly due to a wish that they should be regarded as contributions to a learned debate. His apparent scorn of men of learning and institutions of the church would make these seem unlikely at first sight, but he may have not wanted his ideas, which he thought were revolutionary, to be condemned simply on the grounds that they were in English and therefore lacking in respectability. The very difficult question of why Rolle

wrote so much in Latin is beyond the scope of this thesis, though it adds to the confusion and inconsistency which is to be found in dealing with this writer.

The Incendium Amoris reveals that Rolle conceives of two separate lives when he refers to action and contemplation:

"Activi vero in labore et discursu exteriori serviunt Deo, et in interna quiete modicum immorantur. Unde delectari non possunt nisi raro et breviter. Contemplativi quippe quasi iugiter fruuntur amplexibus amati sui."
(ibid. p.205)

("The active truly serve God in labour and outward running about, and tarry but little in inward rest, wherefore they can not be delighted save seldom and shortly; the contemplative soothly love as if they were continually within the halving of their Beloved.")

There is a clear distinction here between a life of involvement and a life of contemplative withdrawal. The treatise gives the traditional view that the contemplative life is better than the active life, but then goes further, and states that the achievement of the utmost pinnacle of contemplation prevents action:

"Qui vero dono superne contemplacionis predicto modo sublimatur, ad activam non descendat..." (ibid. p.207)

("He who truly is raised in the manner aforesaid with the gift of heavenly contemplation, comes not down to active.")

The only concession which is made to this judgement, which reverses the belief of Richard of S. Victor in the overflowing of superabundant love into action, is that people who achieve lesser vision can descend to action:

"Alii autem contemplativi bene passunt ad hoc eligi, quia minus fervore amoris sunt imbuti."
(ibid.)

("Other contemplatives can well be chosen for that, because they are less imbued with heat of love.")

This serious attack on the possibility of a complete combined life prevents those people who have the highest spiritual gifts from enjoying contemplative vision and also fulfilling action. The combined life, has, for Rolle, become a second-best to pure contemplation. This reverses traditional views, and in this matter, Rolle is completely unorthodox. Despite the fact that he is the only major writer considered so far, to explicitly state this position, his wide popularity gives his view an importance out of proportion to its eccentricity.

It becomes clear, however, that Rolle's view is not dictated by a belief in the undesirability of action, but by the contention that since action and contemplation are mutually exclusive at the highest level, action must be rejected by the gifted mystic; he believes that even the most gifted person can only successfully achieve one life,

"Si quis autem utramque vitam possit adquirere, scilicet, contemplativam et activam, et ipsas retinere et implere, magnus esset ille, ut videlicet corporale impleat ministerium et nihilominus in se sonorum celicum sentiat et in gaudium eterni amoris canens liquefiat." (ibid. p.206).

("Truly if any man might get both lives, that is to say, contemplative and active, and keep and fulfil them, he were full great; that he might fulfill bodily service, and nevertheless feel the heavenly sound in himself, and be melted in singing into the joy of heavenly love.")

Rolle believes that such a combination has only been achieved by Christ and the Blessed Virgin, and thus held that the combined life was not beneath the dignity of the contemplative, but above his reach.

The importance of Rolle's beliefs concerning action and contemplation are difficult to assess. It is possible to detect a

logic in his eccentric and often inconsistent views as his burning devotion made him particularly prone to overstatement through exuberance. His views are a flurried eddy in the stream of ideas on action and contemplation, and his wide popularity made his unorthodox beliefs available to a diverse audience. It is possible to detect a degree of disapproval in the Scale of Perfection, which is shortly to be examined, and such a reaction is seen in other writers. Rolle stirred up hostility amongst monks and canons, and the rancour he occasioned must have been evident at times to those outside the institutional life. It would seem reasonable to believe that such a widely popular writer, who was given to eccentric beliefs, must have had both a disseminating and a confusing influence in the areas of the thought with which he was concerned.

It has been shown in an earlier chapter that the Augustinian tradition of action and contemplation was of crucial importance throughout the mediaeval period and this judgement is valid for the fourteenth century. Despite the deep significance of the Dionysian tradition in the Cloud²⁴⁶, the concepts of the active and contemplative lives are formed by Augustinian influence. Professor Hodgson demonstrates this²⁴⁷ by close reference to the works of S. Thomas Aquinas and S. Augustine, and this facet of the Cloud is of such importance that it requires examination here.

The concepts of the two lives in the Cloud demonstrates an ambiguity which is common to many writers in the field of action and contemplation. Cassian regarded the activa vita and the contemplativa vita as inner stages within one life, whereas later popular catechisms usually regarded them as separate modes of life. Augustine articulated the distinction between these attitudes and spoke on one hand of the activa virtus and the contemplativa virtus as inward states, and on the other hand of a busy life (negotiosus),

a withdrawn life (otiosus), and a combined life (ex utraque genere temperato) in which the stages of inner development were combined with a life of concern with affairs of the world. The more learned writers of the later mediaeval period often used the terms activa vita and contemplativa vita to refer specifically to inner stages, but also to refer to separate lives. This ambiguous use of the terms is seen in the Cloud; the active life and the contemplative life are each employed to refer to a composite concept where the author is allowing connotations from both the inner stages and the separate modes to coalesce, and sometimes the cumulative concentrated notion is used to apply primarily to either the inward or the outward aspects, and sometimes it is used as a hybrid term without emphasis on either of its elements. This phenomenon is seen in the following extract. The author defines active liif and contemplative liif partly in external, and partly in internal terms. The active life loses its connotations of purgation and the activities of the busy life of involvement become its dominant characteristics. The higher active and lower contemplative stage is defined in terms of the activities of the inner life, and the contemplative life is expressed purely in terms of the act of contemplative vision,

"þe lower party of active liif stondeþ in good & honeste bodily werkes of mercy & of charite. þe hier party of active liif & þe lower party of contemplative liif liþ in goodly goostly meditations, & besy beholding - unto a mans owne wrechidnes wiþ sorow & contricion, unto þe Passion of Crist & of his servauntes wiþ pite & compassion, & unto þe wonderful ziftes, kyndnes, & werkes of God in alle his creatures, bodili & goostly, wiþ þanking & preising. Bot þe hizer partye of contemplacioun (as it may be had here) hongep al holy in þis derknes & in þis cloude of unknowyng, wiþ a lovyng steryng & a blinde beholdyng unto þe nakid beyng of God him-self only."

(Cloud of Unknowing pp. 31-2)

It would seem that the author is intending to refer to inner stages if the last part of the extract, from Bot ~~be~~ hizer partye of contemplacion, is taken alone, but the lower part of the active life seems to be intended to refer to a mode of living. The concepts associated with inner stages are being used to refer to outer modes. Yet later on, the writer speaks of the lower active, the higher active and lower contemplative, and the higher contemplative parts, as being contained within two lives,²⁴⁸ and thus implies that they are states rather than modes. This is corroborated by a further statement²⁴⁹ to be examined later, that the middle part is the highest that an actyve can achieve, and the lowest to which a contemplatif can regress. The two terms an actyve and a contemplatif refer to people in separate and identifiable lives, yet the three parts are stages in between which they move, with certain limitations. No further elaboration is needed to demonstrate the fluidity of these concepts.

The importance of the Augustinian tradition is seen in the extract discussed above. The lower active life is a narrowed form of the external aspect of S. Augustine's activa virtus. The second part, the higher active and lower contemplative, concerns the meditation associated with the early stages of contemplation, and also the purgative element of action. The contemplative life concerns the acts of contemplative vision, but is cast in Dionysian terms. The Cloud author thus inherits both the material of the Augustinian tradition, and the ambiguities associated with its development.

A major facet of this tradition was that the life of involvement with society should be combined with a life of contemplative withdrawal. The Cloud author states that the two lives should be

combined, in accordance with tradition, but his definitions of the lives create a difficulty. Augustine had referred to outer modes when he was speaking of combination, but the Cloud author, as seen above, defined the outer lives in the terminology and concepts of the inner stages. He thus has to apply the theory of combination to outer modes which are cast in the form of inner stages, when Augustine had not intended that the inner stages should enter the issue in this way. These stages, in fact, are mutually exclusive because the activa virtus is concerned only with personal development where the contemplativa virtus requires a total rejection of all things not associated with God. The only way in which these concerns can be combined is by, creating a middle ground which has some elements of each, but not the definitive elements of either. The Cloud author does this by his unorthodox assertion that the higher active and the lower contemplative stages are the same. He said that the higher part of the active life, and the lower part of the contemplative life, concern meditation, contrition, and compassion. The traditional definition of the activa vita includes contrition and compassion, but no meditation, whereas the traditional definition of the contemplativa vita includes meditation, but not the other two elements. It is realistic to state that active men can achieve meditation and contrition, and that contemplative men must also spend part of the time at this stage, but it is not the same as adhering to the orthodox concept of the combined life comprising active involvement with society, and contemplative vision. The Cloud author achieves his position by constructing an inner scheme which is parallel to the Augustinian concept of the combined life, and creating a middle ground which is common in part to both lives. He is thus able to assent, in accordance with tradition:

" man may not be fully active, bot zif he be in party
contemplative; ne zit fully contemplative (as it may be here)
bot zif he be in partie active." (ibid. p. 31)

As shown above, this is not a true combined life, and the Cloud
author reveals his belief that a combined life in the Augustinian sense,
is usually impossible; he says, of the middle part,

" þus hize may an active come to contemplacion, & no hizer;
but zif it be ful seldom & by a specyal grace þus lowe may a
contemplatif com towards actyve liif, & no lowere; but zif
if be ful seeldom & in grete neðe." (ibid. pp. 53-4)

He feels that there is a clear distinction to be drawn between those
people in the active life, and those in the contemplative life. This is
seen in a reference to Martha and Mary;

"by Mary is understonden alle contemplatyves, for þei schuld
conforme here leuyng after hirs; & by Martha, actyves, on þe
same maner, & for þe same skil in lices." (ibid. p. 48)

The extract quoted above, and many other parts of the Cloud,
confirm that the author is writing for enclosed contemplatives

"in.....solitari forme & maner of.....levyng
(ibid.p.14)

The author rigorously excludes involvement with society from the life of
the solitary, therefore, but he does occasionally reveal an interest in
some of the ideas concerned with a life in which the solitary and society
can interact.

The first occasion to be considered, on which the Cloud
author reveals a concern with society in relation to the solitary, may
seem rather academic at first sight, but it was nevertheless an important
matter in the Middle Ages. It concerns the concept of the contemplative
as a positive force in society because of his presence as a powerful
focus of purity and love. A similar idea was seen earlier in Aelfric's
writings ²⁵⁰ and in Ancrene Wisse, ²⁵¹ where, respectively, the
monasteries were said to be the battle-grounds of the spirit where
monks fought off the Devil, just as soldiers fought off invaders, and
where the anchoress was said to be an anchor of the church. In the

Cloud there is a development of the Pauline allegory ²⁵² of the church as a body and all Christians as the limbs. The Cloud adapts this idea to refer to the invigoration of the body when one limb is perfectly sound, and states that all Christians ben gladid ²⁵³ when a soul achieves a state of perfect love. The recluse must therefore give himself fervently to contemplation, as he not only enriches himself, but also works for the salvation of others:

"who-so wile be a parfite dissiple of oure Lordes, him behoviþ streyne up his spirite in þis werk goostly, for þe salvacion of alle his breþren & sistren in kynde, as oure Lorde did his body on þe cros." (ibid. p.61)

A little earlier, the writer had said that to hold all men in the same regard, enemies and friends alike, was to fulfil the lower part of charity. ²⁵⁴ The author regards such actions and dispositions in the same light as S. Gregory the Great and many others would have regarded active works of charity, which were traditionally known as the lower branch of charity. This is not to say that the Cloud author is recommending a combined life, but that the exclusiveness which might have been expected from such a treatise is modified, and that the author is thinking in terms which are usually associated with considerations of a combined life.

A more important concession is made in the prologue where there is a brief reference to contemplative vision being available to an active person. The author has stated that the treatise is not intended for fleschely ianglers, opyn preisers & blamers of himself, ²⁵⁵ or for corious lettred or lewed men ²⁵⁶ or even for ful good men of active levying. ²⁵⁷ He then, however, continues to say that some people, who though they are active according to their mode of life, are inclined towards contemplation, and that the treatise may be of value to them

"zif it be to þoo men þe whiche, þouz al þei stande in actyvete bi outward form of levynge, neuerþeles zit bi inward stering after þe prive sperit of God, whos domes ben hid, þei ben graciously disposid, not contynowely as it is propre to verrey contemplatyves, bot þan & þan to be parceners in þe hiezst pointe of þis contemplative acte." (ibid. p.3)

This is intended as a reference to full contemplative vision, and such a phrase as þe hiezst pointe of þis contemplative acte can have no other meaning in this context. This is of interest from two points of view. Firstly, and most obviously the statement that an active man can achieve contemplation is important. It is true that there is a very major qualification in that the active man is not able to participate in the contemplative life contynowely as is propre to verrey contemplatives, and this is couched in the same terms as Hilton's contention in the Scale of Perfection that there is a distinction to be drawn between verrey or thorough-going contemplatives, and those who only ascend to this state occasionally.²⁵⁸ The second point of interest which arises from this part of the prologue is ancillary to the first point, but puts it in a more significant context. Many writers from S. Augustine of Hippo onwards had said that anyone could at some time in his life, rise to contemplation, but only as a special grace, and with the implication that it would be a unique occurrence. This is of little interest because the writers concerned are only deferring to the unpredictability of God's grace, and showing due humility when making pronouncements about God's love. It is of great importance, to note, however, that the Cloud author is not just making this traditional deference to the possibility of God vouchsafing grace where He will, but is saying that some actives despite their outward form of living, are inclined to contemplation and do not just receive grace as a sudden and unique event, but rise to vision from time to

tine. This does not imply a sudden inpouring of God's love to an active, in a gratuitous and unprecedented way, but that some actives bi inward stering of þe prive sperit of God are inclined to contemplation in a more enduring way - þan & þan . This is not a combined life, but it is considerably nearer to it than the earlier part of the prologue might have suggested was likely.

The Cloud of Unknowing is important in two ways, therefore, to the theme of action and contemplation. The first way is that it provides an extreme position in contemplative theory against which to assess both Hilton and Rolle. The second way in which Cloud is important is that it reveals that a tract written for a pure contemplative can contain allusions and references that are of importance to the theory of the combined life.

A point of subsidiary interest in the Cloud is that it has a number of references to complaints against contemplatives. The author makes it clear that he thinks of this as nothing new -

" & riȝt as Martha pleynid on Marye hir sistre, riȝt so
ȝit into þis day alle actyves pleinen of contemplatyves."

(ibid. p.48)

It is impossible to be categoric about the degree to which people over the centuries have muttered darkly about contemplatives, but it is reasonable to suppose that just as there must always have been those who would regard the solitary with awe, there must also have been those whose attitude was less respectful. The number of defences of the contemplative life in the Cloud, which Professor Hodgson refers to as "lengthy and quite disproportionate digressions" ²⁵⁹ suggests something more than this residual discontent. Professor Hodgson notes that the Cloud author takes up a position which is "definitely one of

defence, sometimes of counter-attack,"²⁶⁰ and suggests that like Rolle, he had been under attack, possibly from supporters of the Wycliffite movement at the end of the century. The Cloud author refers to rude complaints and abuse which clearly comes from opponents,²⁶¹ but he also refers to the disapproval of relatives and friends who know nothing of contemplation but still rebuke sharply the intending contemplative, and try to discourage him.²⁶² In addition to this type of disparagement, fourteenth-century mystical writers were frequently attacked for heresy; the continental mystics were particularly open to suspicion, and twenty-eight propositions of Eckhart were condemned by the Pope in 1329.²⁶³ There were a number of sects in Germany, including the Beghards and the Beguines whose teachings were clearly heretical, and the Cloud author's concern over the matter of heresy is revealed by the fact that Chapter 67 of his treatise is, in effect, a lengthy disclaimer of Pantheism. The horror of heresy in the popular mind in the fourteenth-century would have been a possible source of distrust both of contemplative writers and recluses in general, and must be considered a potentially important factor in contemporary beliefs concerning the contemplative life. Whilst these attacks at all levels can not have been a serious deterrent to the educated mind, the reaction of the Cloud author shows that contemplatives were subjected to a variety of related pressures. It could be argued that this would have helped to foster the acceptability of a combined life inasmuch as the would-be contemplative might to a certain extent dispel criticism by action, but this advantage to the life of both contemplation and action might

be outweighed by the tendency for contemplation to become regarded as potentially dangerous by active people. The popularity of mystic writings in the period demonstrates that a number of people at least, were not discouraged, and though later apparent acceptance of Margery Kempe would substantiate this, it must be remembered that she was frequently criticized. Amongst all this uncertainty, it can at least be asserted that despite criticism at a variety of levels, contemplation exercised a sizeable influence on the fourteenth-century mind; the attitude of Wycliff and his supporters was an important facet of contemporary ideas, but it was not by any means the dominant philosophy.

The popular tracts, Pore Caitif, Dives et Pauper, and the Book of Vices and Virtues, present one aspect of the type of religious instructions available to the lay devout, and the Cloud of Unknowing presents another. Rolle reveals the extremes which were possible in fourteenth-century spirituality, and, with the other writers named above, creates a context in which to understand the important works of Walter Hilton, who is of paramount importance for the theme of action and contemplation.

3. Walter Hilton

Walter Hilton

Walter Hilton was an Augustinian canon at Thurgaton Priory in Nottinghamshire, and very little is known of his life except that he died in 1395 or 1396.²⁶⁴ He seems to have enjoyed a wide reputation during his life, and, as will be seen below, he was asked by people in a number of different walks of life for spiritual advice. It will also be seen that Hilton's major importance lies in his explicit commitment to a wide audience for his works, and his insistence on the availability of contemplative experience to a cross-section of society. Before turning to the work of greatest importance in these respects, the Scale of Perfection,²⁶⁵ it would be helpful to examine the minor works where the ideas which are seen in embryo in the Scale are made more explicit. These are the Epistle on Mixed Life,²⁶⁶ Of Angels Song,²⁶⁷ and De Imagine Peccati.²⁶⁸ These works place the Scale in a clearer perspective, and enable the significant developments which occur in that treatise to be seen against the background of Hilton's beliefs on relevant matters.

The following pages examine briefly the three works indicated above, in the order in which they are given.

The Scale of Perfection was apparently written for a recluse to help her in the spiritual vocation she had entered, and then Epistle on Mixed Life ²⁶⁹ was also written, according to the terms of its address, to help someone who had requested advice. In this case it was apparently a man of some standing who seems to have indicated that he wished to serve God in some sort of regular life. Hilton's answer is that he should serve both God and his fellow-men, and it is the explicit purpose of the epistle to show how this can be done

"Here beginneþ a luitel Bcc þat was writen to a wordli lord to teche him hou he schulde haue him in his state in ordeynd love to god and to his euencristene."

(Epistle on Mixed Life p.264)

In the Scale, it will be seen that Hilton deals with spiritual experience in fine detail, but here he concentrates on the external issues of how to combine the duties of the high-born Christian to both God and his fellow-men. The devout man in temperal estate ²⁷⁰ wished to

"serve ur lord be gostli ocupacion al holi wiþ -oute lettyng or troubling of worldli bisynes"
(ibid. ca.i. p.267)

but he is reminded that he has other responsibilities. Hilton tells him that þis desyr is good....and of god ²⁷¹ but that this impulse of love should be set in ordre & in rule, þat it schulde not be lost þorw.... undiscrecion. ²⁷² It is necessary to pursue the desyre of God according to individual circumstances, and Hilton tells the devout man

"pursue hit, aftur þi de-gree aske þ, and aftur þe liuyng þat þou hast used before þis tyme."
(ibid.)

God has determined the responsibilities which he must fulfill

"ure lord haþ ordeynd þe & set þe in þe stat of souereynthe ouer oþ ur men as muche as hit is, and lente þe abundaunce of worldli godes for to rule & susteyne speciali alle þo þat are under þi gouernaunce."

(ibid. ca. vii. p.271)

and he must humbly accept them

"he hap put þe in þat state for to trauayle & serue ober men,
þatis his wille þat þou schulde fulfille hit in þy miht"
(ibid. ca. viii. p.273)

It is important because God has ordained that certainmen of ability
must govern, and if

" þise men standynge þe charge & þe bond, þat þei han take,
wolde leve utterli þe bisynes of þe world, þe wꝛuche auzte
skilfulli be used (in) fulfillyng of heor charge, and holi zeue
hem to lyf contemplatyf, þei do not wel."

(ibid. ca.iii pp. 268-9)

If they fail, the implication is that wordly matters will suffer from
neglect, presumably to the detriment of the men under their governance.

He must not, however, utterli leve gostli ocupacion²⁷³ for his
stat askep to do boþe in diverse tymes²⁷⁴ and he must medle þe
werkes of actif lyf wiþ gostly werkes of contemplatyf lyf.²⁷⁵ It is
as bad to become so involved with the active life that spiritual
development is forgotten, as to ignore wordly responsibilities

"on þe contrarie wyse who so hap so gret reward to werkes of
actyf lyf & to bisynes of þe world þat for love of his
evencristen he leved gostli ocupacion utterliche, aftur god hap
disposed him þerto, he fulfilleþ not fulli charite."

(ibid. ca. iiii p.269)

It is necessary to achieve balance,

" þou schalt bisili and gladli occupie þe in sum bodily
ocupacion unto þi evencristen....(and then) breke of & turn azeyn
to þi preyeres & þi devocion...and þou schalt be ever wel ocupied
ou þur bodily or gostli."

(ibid. ca. ix. p.274)

Early mediaeval writers who were concerned usually with the way of life
of the monk were fully aware of the problems of combining service to

both God and other men, and their answer was to insert into the monastic horarium a certain period of involvement with society, or of duties relating to those in need. ²⁷⁶ Hilton's medled lif is a more thorough mixing, since the worldli lord is neither predominantly religious nor predominantly secular if he completely fulfills the duties prescribed for him; his life alternates between devotion and service to society in a way which is distinct from either the rule-based life of the religious or the basically secular life of the active man who attempts to attain contemplative experience. The medled state is distinct from the active state, and Hilton usually refers to temperal and worldli men rather than active men in this context. As will be seen, active men in the Epistle are by definition those who do not attain contemplative experience, or even the state of devotion which will be discussed in relation to the Scale. The concept of a combination of the two lives is not new, but the medled life is an innovation, its only approximate parallel being Augustine's life combining the negotiosus and the otiosus. The worldli lord will willingly turn to God, but he must also gladly turn to his secular duties

" þou schuld do þus gladli, and not forth þinke loþ for to leve sum-tyme gostly ocupacion & entermateþe wiþ worldly bisines, in wys keyþing & dispendyng of þi wordli godes, in good rule of þi servauntes & þi tenauntes, & in oþur gode dedes doying to al þyn evencristen in þi mizt." (ibid, ca. ix. p.273).

Not only is the active part necessary, however, but it is also beneficial to the development of the contemplative part,

"Hit may fal sum-tyne þat þe more troubled þat þou hast ben outward wip actyf werkes, þe more brennyng desyrf þou schalt have to god, & þe more cler sigt of gostly þinges be grace of ure lord in devocion whon þou comest þerto."

(ibid. ca. xii. p.276)

The two lives, or parts of life, are so integral that they mutually benefit each other, and though the goal of the medled life is pure contemplation in heaven, Hilton shows that service to men is as important as service to God.

Hilton gives very full definitions of the three lives in the Epistle on Mixed Life and it would be helpful to examine them before considering more closely the type of contemplative experience he considers appropriate to the man of the medled lif.

The three lives are described in detail, and Hilton states to whom they are appropriate. The purely contemplative life is for those who can forsake the world completely

"Contemplatyf lyf alone longeþ to such men or wymmen þat for þe love of god forsaken al open synnes of þe world & of heore flesch, & al bisynes, charges & governaunce of wordly godes, and maken hem pore & naked, in to þe bare nede of þe bodily kuynde, and fleen from souereynte of o þur men to þe servise of god."
(ibid. ca. iii. p.268)

In this life is pursued the ascetical-mystical path to vision, passing through purgation and illumination to contemplation.

"be distruyng of sinnes & receivyng of vertues, and so forto come to contemplation."
(ibid.)

The term contemplatyf lyf as defined here relates to a completely external state, spiritual experience not even being implicit. The same univocal reference will be seen to restrict the term "adyf lyf" to a state. These contrast with the wider connotations of the terms

which will be seen in the Scale, and may arise partly from the need to speak in terms of state because of the position of the addressee, and partly from the more crystallized character of the shorter work, where scope for discursive development is limited. As stated above, the term actyf lyf refers to a type of life rather than a stage of life,

"Actyf lyf alon longeþ to wordly men & wymmen which are lewed, fleschly, & boistous...To þise men hit is nedeful & spedeful to use werkes of actyf lyf as bisili as þei may, in help of hem-self & of heore evencristen. for þei can not elles do."
(ibid.)

This life is amplified in spiritual terms by a statement regarding the limitations of active men

"þei fele no savour ne devocion be fervour of love as o þur men don, þei can no skile of hit, and zit neverþeles þei han drede of god."
(ibid.)

This extra detail does not, however, widen its reference, as it is still firmly a type of life and not a stage in a spiritual process. The limitations on the people concerned are, by implication, total. They wish to come to heaven ²⁷⁷ and by good works they can do so, but the terms of reference seem to suggest that the people could not develop beyond their present state. This again conflicts with the considerable flexibility which will be seen to characterize the Scale. The third life is medled and is a combination of the other two,

"To þise men hit longeþ sum-tyme to use werkes of actyf lyf, in help & in sustinance of hem-self & of her soiettes & of oþ ure also, and sum-tyme (forto) leve al bisynes outward and zive hem for a tyme to preyers, meditacions, redynges of holi writ, & to oþer gostly ocupacions."
(ibid.)

Although this life combines the active and the contemplative, they are in no sense stages of life, but different parts. Even in the allegory of Martha and Mary, traditionally used to designate the two stages within one life, the explicit parallel between the two sisters and the two parts of the medled life, and the time with which it is associated, result in the two types of activity remaining separate.

" þou schalt o tyme wip Martha be bisy for to ruile & governe þin household, þi children, þi seruauns, þi neizebors, and þi tenauntes;A noþ er tyme þou schalt wip Marie leve þe bisynes of þe world & sitte down at þe feet of ur lord".
(ibid. ca.ii. 267).

This life is to be followed by the religious who have responsibility for the cure of souls, and, as indicated by the term speciali, it is primarily thus,

" þe þridde lyf, þat is medlet, longeþ speciali to men of holy churche, as to prelates and to oþur curates, þe wʒuche han cure & govereynte over oþur men for to kepe & rule hem, beþ e heare bodies & principali here soules, in fulfillyng of þe dedes of merci, bodily & gostly."
(ibid. Ca.iiii p.268)

It is also the responsibility of some secular men, though not in the same particular way, as indicated by the term generali

"Also hit longeþ generali to sum temporal men þe wʒuche han sovereynte wip mucche havyng of worldly godes, and also han as hit were a lordschipe over oþur men to governe & susteyne hem"
(ibi.)

Generally speaking, the spiritual and temporal responsibilities are to be undertaken respectively by the religious and secular men of hei3 degre; ²⁷⁸ Hilton makes the distinction clear in the following extract,

"A man þat is in spiritual sovereynte as prelacye, in cure & governaunce of obure as prelates & curates are, or in temporal sovereynte as worldly lordes & maistres are ... " (ibid. ca. vi. p. 270)

However, if a man is in need, then he must be helped, and both the religious and the secular must be prepared to undertake worldli bisynes, bodili or gostly, in help of his evencristen. 279

This confirms the earlier impression of the extent of Hilton's innovation regarding the assignment of the combined lives to the secular individual, as spiritual ministrations is here seen to be the duty of the worldly man. Another innovation occurs in this Epistle which is, however, restrictive and categorizing rather than extending by nature. The Scale spoke of the spiritual experience of seculars and implied a flexible inter-relationship between the two types of life for the active man. The Epistle introduces a more rigid schematism, whereby anyone who has ability and position and who attempts to attain higher spiritual experience is no longer a person of the active life, but of the medled life. A further restriction is seen in the concept of the medled life itself. For Gregory, combination of the two lives was the careful introduction, by a member of a religious body, of pastoral or evangelical work into his essentially regular life. This was a sensitive and conscious extra dimension to that life. For the Scale, the combined life occurred when a secular threw off, if only for a while, the fetters of his mortal existence and attempted to experience more immediately the mysterious love of his Creator. Such a man tries in a deeply subtle way, to widen his spiritual scope by an imaginative compulsion to approach the Godhead, and enters into a double-faceted life. In the early part of the Epistle or Mixed Life he alternates rather mechanically between two activities which are not sympathetically fused as two essential parts of his life. Later in the work they become integral,

but this does not occur at first, where an overt schematism which probably arises from the explicit position of the person addressed makes the discussion of the problems involved less sensitive than the corresponding parts of the Scale. The part of the epistle which deals with the spiritual experience of the worldli lord receives more detailed treatment, however, and more closely remembers the larger work in this respect.

The worldli lord had wished to come to more knowing & gostly felyng of god,²⁸⁰ and this will be seen in a similar form in the cognitive and affective elements of contemplation which are discussed in the Scale.²⁸¹ The Epistle later refers again to a man who wished to seke knowyng or feeling more gostly of þe godhede²⁸² and the apposition remains implicit in much of the discussion. There are occasions, however, when it seems uncertain whether or not the person in the medled life can achieve the cognition essential to true vision, and Miss Russell-Smith comes to the conclusion that Hilton "speaks mainly of the middle stage of 'devotion'...(and) only at the end of the work is there a discreet mention of the third part of contemplation."²⁸³

The "discreet mention" is a very oblique reference from a writer who is usually explicit in these matters, and concerns grace which enables a man to

"seo & knowe more of him þen....bifore".
(ibid. ca. xx. 291)

If this reference, which occurs almost at the end of the Epistle, were the only one to mention vision, then the discussion of contemplative experience in this work as regards the man of the medled lif would be

restricted to "devotion". There are a number of statements which do indeed point to this conclusion, which are not cited by Miss Russell-Smith. Hilton says that the man of the medled lif can in parti savour of gostli occupation²⁸⁴ and refers to sum-what knowyng of bi-self & gostli desyr & savour of his love²⁸⁵ as appropriate to this life. These imply a definite limitation both of kind and degree. They are felt in parti or sum-what, and the experience is conceived in terms reminiscent of affection rather than cognition. Although Hilton speaks of contemplation twice,²⁸⁶ it is not defined specifically enough to determine whether or not he intended reference to vision. On a number of occasions the term contemplation is used in a general sense, such as contemplation be devocien in preyer & in meditation²⁸⁷, and the term devotion is likewise used in a general way - turn azevn to bi preyeres and devocien.²⁸⁸ There are, however, in addition to references to knowyng & felyng, sufficient instances where contemplation is used in a specific sense, to believe that Hilton intended that the man of the medled life should experience full vision. At an important point, halfway through the Epistle, there is a reference to the experience of the worldli lord, where Hilton tells him

"pou schalt be maad feir & brist & clene in beholdyng
sovereayne bryghtnes, pat is god, begymyng of al pat is mad."
(ibid. ca x. p.275).

This is the cognitive and metaphysical vision which is characteristic of true contemplation, and is much more explicit than the "discreet mention" discussed by Miss Russell-Smith. It is of further interest, as it corresponds to the discussion of vision outside a purely contemplative life which will be seen in the Scale. In the discussion, the man of medled lif who has transient vision can sometimes become

a verrey contemplatyf in this life, as God may

"delivere (him) and make (him) free of (his) charge and bisynes."
(ibid. ca x. p.275-6)

The verrey contemplatyf is the pure contemplative, but this does not mean that those in other lives cannot occasionally achieve the same vision. The man in the medled life will, in any case, come to the uninterrupted vision in þe blis of heven,²⁹⁰ if he is not relieved of his responsibilities in this life. The distinction between the thorough-going and the partially contemplative life which will be seen in the Scale also occurs in the Epistle.

There are three other works ascribed to Hilton in which he gives advice to people who have sought guidance on spiritual matters. Of Angel's Song²⁹¹ is in answer to someone who had asked in what way heavenly melody could be heard in the soul, and though there is no reference to different states or lives, it is significant that spiritual advice is being given on subjects not usually associated with the teachings of the church. It is as if the church as a monolithic and unquestioned source of doctrine were inadequate, and an individual who seeks knowledge feels he has to get away from the standard catechism and ask someone in a private and confidential way. If the request came from a secular, as it may have done, it reveals a search by a non-religious for spiritual truth, which regards such truth as no longer a monopoly of those in the regular life. It seems that the person who wrote to Hilton is imaginatively attempting to understand problems which can only have arisen from a questioning approach to religion, and this suggests a person who is unwilling to accept uncritically the ideas of the established church;

it also provides a possible context for an individually formulated belief which was seen in the extreme form in the Lollards. This was a desire to understand religion as well as believe it, and this probably arose partly from the education which was available to certain new sections of the community, and the resultant creation of a questioning attitude. It may also have arisen from the declining acceptance of the Church as an unquestioned source of authority. The various controversies which raged between priest and monk, and possessioner and mendicant seem to have undermined the stature of the church, and the proliferation of sub-clerical figures such as Chaucer's pardoner must have further stimulated a desire to understand religion for oneself. This reaction seems to have varied from a wish to examine the Bible personally and discuss it with a known and respected figure, as did those people who communicated with Hilton, to a more extreme rejection of the Church or some parts of it. This is not to say that Hilton would have countenanced unorthodoxy, as parts of the Scale of Perfection will be seen to reveal quite unambiguously, but that he was willing to help people to try to understand, within the governance of the church, the spiritual matters which would at one time have been appropriate to members of religious bodies.

De Imagine Peccati ²⁹² was written to a recluse who was troubled and sought comfort. Hilton voices the fear which must have troubled many recluses when he speaks of the lack of activity which inevitably characterises the anchoritic life,

"quid ergo facimus, tu et ego nostrique similes hominesque pigri et inutiles. tota die stantes ociosi. non laboramus in vinea domini sacra ecclesiastica ministrando nec discurremus per parochias uerbum dei predicando nec cetera misericordie opera spiritualiter exhibemus neque iugum obediencie sub alterius imperio tanquam vitula effraym docta diligere trituram voluntarie." 293

(Ibid. f.74)

("What (he goes on) do we do, you and I and our like, lazy and useless men, standing all the day idle. We do not labour in the vineyard of the lord, administering the holy rites of the church, nor do we go from parish to parish, preaching the word of God, nor do we show forth spiritually the other works of mercy, nor do we willingly bear the yoke of obedience, beneath the rule of another, like the heifer of Ephraim, who was taught to love to tread out the corn.")

He then continues to justify their place in the mystical body of Christ, but what is important for the theme of the active and contemplative lives is the awareness of necessary work being left to others, and the further point that the oxen were taught actually to love their labour. Even though he shows that the recluse is justified, he is clearly aware of the arguments in favour of also undertaking pastoral work.

The problem is resolved in Epistola Aurea²⁹⁴ which was written to Adam Horsley, an official of the King's Exchequer, who was about to enter the Carthusian house of Beauvale. Hilton praises the religious life, and then breaks off to say

"sed forsam cogitacio tua dicit tibi ipsi mirando forsam cur alias tam instanter ad religionem provochem. eamque religionem commendem ut sanctam sed tamen ei⁹sdem religionis habitum me suscipere minime dispono...fateor me miserum illud spirituale et feruens desiderium ad ingressum religionis ex divina gratia inspiratum minime sentire sicut sentir (i) necesse est ab eo qui zelo devocionis et puris mentis affectu religionem ingredi disponit."
(ibid. f. 125 v)

("But perhaps you are thinking to yourself with amazement, why do I urge others so earnestly to religion and praise it as holy and yet do not decide myself to take upon me the habit of that same religion...I confess, alas, that I do not feel that burning spiritual desire for entry into religion, inspired by divine grace, as it ought to be felt by those who from zealous devotion and pure desire of the mind plan to enter religion.")

He continues,

"Unusquisque in qua vocacione vocatus est in ea permaneat, tantum-modo sciat quisquis vocacionem suam quia a deo sit et tunc in ea perseveret."
(ibid.)

("Let each man remain in that calling in which he is called; only let each man know his calling that it is of god and then persevere in it.")

Different people receive different callings, and each person must pursue diligently his vocation. Some are called to solitude, and some to a life of worldly responsibilities combined with spiritual experience, and Adam Horsley was in the first category, and the worldli lord in the second. Hilton believed that the purely contemplative life was the best, but that it was equally praiseworthy to fulfill a medled life if that was the station in which an individual found himself.

Hilton thus wrote for different people advising them on various aspects of spiritual experience. This advice varied from clear discussion of action and contemplation, to the teaching of people outside the established institutions of the church, on various religious matters. The common factor is the giving of advice to people who in various degrees were, save Adam Horsley, outside traditional religious orders. In the following examination of the Scale it will be seen that Hilton increasingly allows for the participation in spiritual experience of those in the secular life. Since this involves a different conception of the traditional contemplative life, it will be helpful first to examine Hilton's use of the terms contemplation and contemplatyf lif.

The ascetical-mystical path of purgation, illumination and contemplation can be seen in the Scale of Perfection,²⁹⁵ though Hilton does not give an ordered exposition, and the passages which refer to this progression are scattered through his work. The method of this treatise is of discursive elaboration whereby total impact is more important than doctrinal organization, and this can be seen in the discussion of the traditional way to contemplative experience. The strength of Hilton's adherence to tradition is not affected by the

way in which the arguments he advances have to be pieced together from different places and disentangled from other matters. This is not to say that the Scale lacks organization, but that this organization exists on a separate level, and for other purposes than catechism in religious dogma. As will be seen from a brief analysis²⁹⁶ of the intended audience as indicated by forms of address, this arises from awareness of immediate and wider audiences.

Purgation of sin is introduced in an allegory of a man who had a garden which was corrupted by

" a stinkinde welle wiþ many renneles fro it".
(SP. ca. lv. 297 37 v.)

It is necessary to cure the corruption at its source, and it is no good simply stopping up the runnels, which are the seven deadly sins. If this deeper self-purification does not take place, sin will stand between the soul and the contemplative act, as the chaos stood between Dives and Abraham.²⁹⁸ Hilton describes how it is necessary to purge this sin.

" þerfore as þi trauaile haþ ben here bifore to again stonde grete bodili synnes; ²⁹⁹ and open temptatons of þe enemy as hit were fro wiþ outen; riȝt so þe bihouiþ now in þis gostli work wiþ inne þi self. for to destroien and breken; þe ground of synne in þi self."
(ibid. ca. xl ii 26v.)

The stage of purgation prepares the soul for the illumination of the cultivation of virtue, and this second stage is seen in Hilton's discussion of the virtues of meekness and charity. He says that they are essential for spiritual growth:

"þer is no vertue ne werk þat þou maȝt don mai make þe like to oure lord wiþ outen meknes and charite, for þese to arn speciali gooddis lifen."

(ibid. ca l i. 34v).

Meekness is necessary for awareness of sin and true wisdom

"he þat kan nouȝt parfitli dispice hym self; he fond
ȝit never þe meke wisdam of oure lord ihesu"

Charity is given a traditional definition:

"Charite is nouȝt ellis bute for to lufe god and his
even cristne as hym self."

(ibid. ca. 67 46r)

Hilton describes in detail how these two virtues are necessary to the
spiritual life, and how as the contemplative life develops, they
deepen and quicken.

Before the act of contemplation, the recluse must undertake
recollection and introversion, though they are not discussed in these
terms. Recollection is the process whereby the contemplative withdraws
his mind from worldly things:

"a man bihouþ to drawe his herte + his mede fro þe (fleissli)
lufe and þe likynge of all erthli creatures. fro vayne þouȝtes
and fro fleschli ymaginacions; and out from þe lufe and þe
vicious felynge of hym self."

(ibid. ca. xl ii. 26r)

It is necessary to still the imagination as well as the senses, for
the soul

"þe fed wilfulli bi ymageninge in vanities of þe worlde".
(ibid. ca. 81 55v).

When this is achieved, the soul is free from all the dangers of the flesh

"from þe grete crynge & þe bestly noise of fleschly desire
& unclene þoȝtis." (ibid. ca. 40 124 r)

and Hilton uses the image of sleep for deadness to the world's
distractions.

"I slepe gostly when þurȝ grace þe luf of þe world is slayn in
me & wicked stirynges of fleschly desires are dedid so mikel
þat unnes I fele hem."

(ibid. ca. 40 126v).

The next step towards the vision of God is introversion, when the soul looks inward. This is necessary, for

" a soule....may not have knowynge of a kynde above it self; bot if it haf knowynge of it self."

(ibid. ca. 30 102 r)

A man must withdraw his soul from the world, look inwards, and then finally he will be able to attain divine vision. The whole triple process of recollection, introversion and contemplation is seen in the following extract."

"if þu wilt fynde (thy soul) withdrawe þi bozt. fro alle bodily þinge outwarde & fro mynde of þin owne body also & fro alle þi fyfe wittes. as mikil as þu maizt & þenke of of þe kynde of a resonable soule gostly; as þu woldest þenken for to knowen any vertue....Rizt so þinke þat a soule is a life undedly & unseable & haf mizt in it self for to seen & krowen þe sovereyn soþ fastnes & for to lufen þe sovereyn godnes. þat is god whan þu seest þis þanne felist þu sumwhat of þi self...I sey not þat þi soule schal rest stil in þis knowynge bot it schal bi þis seke hizere knowynge above it self & þat is þe kynde of god."

(ibid. ca. 30 102r-102v)

This passage reveals Hilton's awareness of the metaphysical aspects of vision, but the next extract speaks of contemplative ecstasy in

Biblical terms

"þis is vereyly a tastynge so litel as hit is; and an ernesse; of þe sight of hevenli ioye. Nought clerli; bute half in mirknesse; whilk schal ben fulfeld ond openli clered; in þe blisse of heven."

(ibid. ca 1X 5v)

In accordance with tradition Hilton asserts that continued vision is above mans kynde ³⁰⁰ and is transient,

"mai noman lyvende in flesch dedly have hit continually".

(ibid. ca 1x. 5v)

The special grace which is given during contemplation gives to prayer a spontaneous joy; this prayer is

"like to a sparcle spryngande out of a fire bronde ³⁰¹ þat chaufiþ alle þe miztes of þe soule & torniþ hem in to lufe."

(ibid. ca. 42 130v)

In addition to the sight of God, the contemplative is given a clearer understanding of the Scriptures,³⁰² a vision of the spiritual states of men,³⁰³ and the knowledge of the natures of both blessed and damned angels.³⁰⁴ If Hilton's discussions of contemplative vision and the state of grace are of his own formulation, both they and the ascetic route are within the spirit of the Augustinian-Victorine tradition.

It is now possible, having examined the outlines of Hilton's concept of contemplation, to analyse his use of the term contemplatyf lif. In its most usual sense it refers to a state of spiritual being,

"Contemplatif lif lith in parfif love and charite. felid inwardli bi gostly vertues, & bi sothfast cnowyng; and siz(t) of god."
(ibid. ca. iii 2v.)

This state is usually associated with those in either a cenobitic or an anchoritic life

"Þ is lif longeth specially to hem; whilk forsaken for þe love of god; alle worthli richesse wurschipes and outward bysynesses and holly given hem body and soule; up here might & here connyng to service of god; bi gostly occupation."
(ibid. ca iii 2v -3 r)

Hilton tells the anchoress that her enclosing is to enable her to achieve this state,

"Þ i stat asketh for to ben contemplatif. for þat is þe ende & þe entente of þin enclosynge; "
(ibid, ciii 3r)

This suggests that an enclosed life and a contemplatif lif are not synonymous terms, though this type of life often gives its name to the state usually associated with it, and that it is conceivable that the anchoress will fail to achieve the real contemplatif lif. The suggestion that this life does not refer merely to an external form is given substance by a discussion of the three parts of the contemplatif lif, which analyses a series of inner states. The

general definition which has already been seen refers in traditional terms to parfit love and charite and sothfast cnowynge; and sig(t) of god but this is given a more detailed analysis in which it becomes apparent that the contemplatif lif comprises three stages which together can form a spiritual progression. The first is religious knowledge gained by man's intellect:

"þe first lith in cnowynge of god & of gostly þynges. geten bi reson; bi teching of man; & bi studie in holy writ. withouten gostly affection; & inly savour feled bi þe special gifte of þe holy gost, þis partie han specialy some lettred men, and grate clerkes....þis cnowynge is god....& a cnowynge of gostly þynges. Neverþeles hit is bute a figure and a schadue of vereie contemplation. for hit hath naughtst gostly savour in god. ne inwardli swetnesse.....hit mai ben hadd withouten charite."
(ibid. ca iv. 3r - 3v)

This is not contemplation in its traditional sense, and Hilton acknowledges this by his qualification

"hit is bute a figure, and a schadue of vereie contemplation."
(ibid.)

and by his later statement that this stage can be

" a god waie and a gret disposing to vereie contemplation."
(ibid. ca iv. 3v)

This distinction between vereie contemplation, and religious experience which is part of a general concept of contemplation is new, as previous writers would not have included any experience other than the vision of God, in this term. Contemplation traditionally referred to the actual vision of God, but in Hilton's writings, this advanced stage is called vereie contemplation. The term "contemplation", when used by Hilton, includes types of experience such as religious knowledge gained by intellect, which are not visionary in the traditional sense. The infused devotion of simple men, which is examined immediately below, is another

type of non-visionary experience which the Scale includes in the term contemplation and which would in traditional writings be only considered as a preliminary to contemplation, This matter will be considered further below. Hilton is well known for his opposition to the ecstatic extremes of writers like Rolle, but here is seen what may be a suspicion of the divorcing of intellect from devotion; it is at the very least a reserve against an imbalance of intellectualism in religion. The second part of contemplation is infused devotion which is usually experienced by simple men who give themselves entirely to religion,

"(þ) e seconde partie of contemplation lith principali in affection withouten light of understondynge of gostli þynges & þis is comunely of symple & unlettred men; whilk gyven him holly to devotion....(Such)a man of a womman....felith þe þouzht of his hert; drawe up....in to oure lord bi fervent disir. and with gostly delit; and neuerþeles in þat time he hath non open seizthe in undrestandynge of gostli þynges.... þis felinge mai naught ben had withouten gret grace;"
(ibid. ca. v 4r-4v)

This part has two degrees. The first is momentary experience which God can give to an active man, and the second is the more enduring experience which is given either to the "unlettred" man or to the future full contemplative who is progressing to the higher state through the earlier stages. This experience is of a higher kind than the first part of contemplation but is still not full vision. Many earlier writers had presented their ideas but had not concerned themselves with those who, while they might lead a life in the contemplative manner, were intellectually or otherwise, incapable of vision. This is where Hilton's development of tradition becomes one of his major contributions, as he discussed the type of experience which was appropriate to the religious individual who could not achieve full contemplation. The third part of contemplation is full

traditional vision.

"þe þridde partie of contemplation whilk is parfit as hit mai ben here; liþ boþ e in cognition & in affection, þat is for to seyen in knowynge & in parfit lufinge of god...a mannys soule...(is) y ravisched; out of þe bodili wittes and....illumined for to see bi undristondynge soþ fastnesse; whilk is god...þanne god & a sowle aren nouzt to bute boþ e on". (ibid. ca. viii 5r-5v)

Hilton considered that both cognition and affection were necessary for vereie contemplation. It is

"vereyly a tastynge so litel as hit is; and an ernessee; of þe sight of hevenli ioye. Naught clerli; bute half in mirknesse; whilk schal ben fulfeld and openli clered; and in þe blisse of heven." (ibid. ca. ix 5v)

It is generally reserved for those devoted entirely to religion.

"þe ful use of hit; may no man have; bote he be solitarie and in lif contemplatif." (ibid. ca. ix 6r)

This is the experience to which the route to contemplation leads, and is fully traditional. Hilton amplifies further the distinction between this and other religious experience in his comparison of the second and third parts of contemplation. He says

"þe to þer partie; mai be kalled brennynde love in devotion; bute þis is brennynde love in contemplation. þat is lowir; þis is þe heizer." (ibid. ca. ix. 5v)

and

"þe to þer partie is milke for children; þis is holl mete for parfit men." (ibid.)

For Hilton, then, the word devotion is not merely a general term for prayer (though he sometimes uses it for this) but a term relating to an elevated form of affective worship, distinguished from contemplation by its lack of visionary experience. This basic difference is further seen in the following comparison,

"þouȝ, it be so þat bodili peine eiþer of penaunce or of seþnesse or ellis bodili occupaton som time lettib nouȝt þe fervour of love to god in devocion bute often encessiþ it, so þli I hope þat it lettib þe fervour of lufe in contemplation."

(ibid. ca. 75 53v)

This distinction between devotion and contemplation, and the terminology involved, will later be important for the different types of religious experience available to non-contemplatives.

It can thus be seen that Hilton's contemplatiflif is a general term for certain types of religious experience, but it is also a specific term for a life of mystical vision. The wide variety of experiences which are included in it, and the different types of people undertaking them, show Hilton's pragmatic awareness of the need for flexibility when discussing these matters. He is able to make allowances for exceptions to the rules, and the rules themselves are, in any case, very variable. This characteristic of Hilton's thought is found also in his discussions of the religious experience available to people in non-contemplative state and a similar complexity results. Before considering the range of experience of non-contemplatives, it would be useful to examine the different aspects of the word actif in the Scale of Perfection, as Hilton often refers to the non-enclosed as men of the actif lif .

The actif lif is given a general definition early in the treatise,

"Actif lif lith in love and charite. Scheuyd outward bi god bodily werkes in fulfillynge of godes comaundemens, & of þe sevene werkes of merci bodili & gostly; to a mannes evencristen."

(ibid. ca. ii 2v)

The term actif is appropriate to a wide range of people.

"þis lif longeth to alle worlthiman whilk han richesse and plente of worthigod. & also to alle othe; whilk eiþer han stat office ore cure over oþer men & han godes for to spende, lerd or lewed; tempered ore spiritual and g(e)nerally alle worldli men þey eren bounden to fulfullen hit upon here mighste and here conynge; as reison & discretion askith zif he mikel have; mikel do zif he litel have; lesse do, and zif he nazuth have; þat he þanne; have a good will." (ibid.)

It includes the lowliest souls to be saved on the one hand, and the highest officials of Church and State on the other. Where tradition had discussed the active life (in different terminology) as the official activities of men in high positions or the pastoral activities of monks, Hilton uses it at its lowest level to designate the practice of the two great commandments concerning the love of God and of one's neighbour. It thus becomes a part of the life of Christians of all types and degrees, instead of an adjunct of contemplatives. The further element which Hilton includes in the actif lif are the charitable works of mercy bodili & gostly; to a mannes evencristen which originally had been discussed as part of the activa virtus of Augustine and the vita activa of Cassian. Hilton is not the first to designate the life characterized by actif works, the actif lif, but he is the first writer to draw all the traditional elements concerning the active stage and the involved life into one concept. Gregory and others had kept these elements separate. The actif lif can also refer to more complex implications of the commandment concerning one's neighbour. The external duties of the actif lif are determined by rank and personal resources, both financial and spiritual. The wealthy are expected to undertake large scale enterprises in aid of society,

"a good man in worldli stat for lufe of god makip kirkes chapeles abbeies hospitaless and oþer goode dedis of merci."
(ibid. ca. 66 45 r.)

Their responsibilities are not solely financial, however, as can be seen from following extract

"þo men whilk arn actif and han soveranite and cure ouer oþere; as prelatiſ and curatiſ and swilk oþere þei eren bounden bi here office and bi wey of charite; for to seen and seeken and demen rízt fulli oþer menniſ defautes, nouzt of diſir and delit for to chastisen hem; bute only for neede wiþ drede of god and in hiſ name fore luf of ſalvation of here ſoules."

(ibid. ca xvii llr)

This group of active men with responsibilities over others are subdivided into the ordained, prelatiſ and curatiſ, and the secular, if the reference to swilk oþere is interpreted in the light of a parallel discussion in Hilton's Epistle on Mixed Life. Hilton is discussing

"prelates of holichirche & also.....worldly lordes þat rule oþer men."
(Ep. on Mixed Life. p.268)

and in the discussion of cure and sovereynte over oþur men,³⁰⁵ he distinguishes between the secular clergy who are responsible for mainly spiritual ministration (principali here ſoules³⁰⁶), and temporal men who also have power over others and must accept this responsibility.

"Also hit longeþ generali to sum temporal men þe wꝛuche han sovereynte wiþ mucche havynge of worldly godes, and also han as hit were a lordschipe over oþur men to governe & susteyne hēm."
(ibid.)

Those without such cure & sovereynte must be more humble in relation to their fellow-men, but still must remember that they should help if they can

"Oþer men þat arn actif; and han no cure over oþer men þei arn iboundin; for to undirminen oþer men of here defautes bi wei of charite; only þanne whanne þe synne is dedli and hit mai nouzt wel ben correctid bi non oþer man, and whanne he troweþ; þat þe synnere schulde ben amendid bi hiſ undirminynge."
(SP. ca. xvii llr)

This gradation of responsibilities recalls the earlier extract

"Zif he mikel have; mikel do zif he litel have; lesse do,
and zif he nazuth have; þ at he þanne; have a good will."
(ibid. ca. ii 2v)

Hilton realistically expects from each type of man, only that of which he is capable, and evokes a vision of a Christian society acting in accordance with the benefit of all its members. The lay and the

religious with resources are expected to govern, help, and sustain and those lower in the scale, the majority of the laity, are to live well and help their neighbours when they can or when necessary. The concept of the active man is not simple, as it relates each man to his fellows according to his place in a complex social hierarchy.

The actif lif can thus take one of a number of related forms.

All men in the active life, according to the early chapters of the Scale, are unlikely to come to full spiritual growth because of the tumult of society,

"þei are so occupied wit worldly bisynes. þat nedid for to
be don; þat þei mowen not fully setten here hertes for to
profiten in gostly wirkyng."

(ibid. ca. 18 80r)

Because of the precariousness of the world, the man who is only partly secure in good living is at special risk,

"for he may so liztly lese þat he hap & fallen agayn to dedly
syn: for a soule may not stande stille alwey in on stat while þat
it is in þe flesche for it is eiþ er profitend in grace or
peirvynde in synne,"

(ibid. ca. 18 8lv)

Hilton has a fine awareness of the flux and change of mortal existence, and his method of giving discursive advice which is later repeated in a different form arises partly from this perception. The result of the distractions of the world is seen in the prayer of active men,

"For þei ofte.....formen in her hertes on worde þurȝ
þinkyng of werdly bisynes; & sownen in her mouþ an oþer word
of þe psalme songen or seid " (ibid. ca 42 131r-131v)

The higher parts of the life of contemplation, for this and similar reasons, are likely to be beyond the active man, and this is further suggested in the closing pages of Book I,

"also þese wordes þat i write to þe; þei longe nouȝt alle to a man wilk haþ actif lif bute to þe ore to on oþer wilk haþe stat of lif contemplatif."

(ibid. ca. 92 63r)

It can thus be seen that Hilton used the term actif lif in the sense in which Gregory (and, incidentally, Classical writers) used it, to designate a type of life rather than a stage of life, though he makes its application broader and more complex. However, in his formulation, the activities of the actif lif are only a part of the spiritual growth of some people, and the following extract discusses a part of the actif lif which in addition to being a mode of life, is also a necessary stage in the path to contemplation.

"Also a partie of actif lif lith in grete bodili dedes wilk a man doth to hym self, as gret fastyng (e) mikel wakyng and oþer scharp penaunce doyng for to chastice þe flesch with discretion; for trespasse biforn don, and bi schuilke penaunces; for to restreygne lustis and likynges of hyt."

(ibid. ca ii 2v)

Some men never proceed beyond this, and are thereby men of the active life, but others do progress beyond it, and to them it is the active stage in an extensive spiritual process. Hilton thus uses the term actif lif to denote a mode of life, but also to refer to the state of being spiritually inexperienced. He believes that the spiritual life is an organically developing complex whole, and this is seen both in his

references to gradual growth along different paths to contemplation, and in his belief that some types of contemplative experience can come to an active man. The boundaries between the active and the early contemplative states are often insensibly crossed, but the differences between them are very real.

Hilton has a concept of action for the contemplative which diverges from tradition. One of the most difficult problems of the life of a recluse was to decide what was the right sort of contact to have with other people. It can be seen from a discussion in the Scale ³⁰⁷ that a recluse should not leave his seclusion to reprove a man for sin except in great need, and this is partly because the contemplative state cannot be maintained through the interruptions of such active pastoral work, but partly also because humility forbids it. The same humility commands, however, that if people come to the recluse for advice or to advise, he is to break off his prayer as he will find God, albeit in another manner, in his fellow-Christians:

"(if) þe þinkip þou schuldist not lefen god for mannes speche, me þinkip nouzt so in þis cas, for if þou be wis; þou schalt nouzt lefen god bute þu schalt fynden hym and han hym and seen hym in þin evencristen als wel as in preiere, bute in anoþer maner."
(ibid. ca 83 57r)

The answer to the problem of the loquacious or malicious person is to speak little to encourage their departure; if they are in genuine need or can offer advice, he is to listen or speak accordingly. This seclusion does not mean that the recluse can forget his fellow-Christians

"Now siþ en it is þat þou owest nauzt to gon out of þin hous for to seken occasion how þou migtest profiten þin evencristen bi dedes of mercy bi cause þu art inclos, Never þeles þu art bounden for tolufen hem alle in þin herte."
(ibid. ca. 83 56v)

Hilton does not, therefore, in the case of the recluse, see contemplation being followed by positive, outward-seeking action in the traditional sense. Instead, he sees him as a source of advice for those who wish to avail themselves of his wisdom. This is very different from the positive involvement with society of which writers from at least as early as S. Augustine, until at least the author of the M.V.C. had spoken. Hilton, in effect, advises his contemplative reader to do the minimum which is compatible with the concept of helping one's neighbour, and this contrasts both with his own advice to a temporal lord in the Epistle on Mixed Life, and with traditional concepts of action arising from contemplative zeal.

It is now possible, having considered Hilton's use of the terms, actif lif and contemplatif lif, to see in context, the sort of religious experience available to men who live the active life.

It was seen earlier in this chapter that the external duties of the people of the actif lif differed according to a number of criteria, and there is a similar variety of religious experience available to the different types of actif men. Hilton speaks of the formidable obstacles to the achievement of contemplative vision even for the recluse, and then shows how the active person suffers not only from magnified versions of these obstacles, but also from problems which never complicate the solitary life. Despite this, however, his advice to the recluse reveals an awareness that such writing is likely to reach a wider audience, and there are a number of instances where he actually states that the experiences under discussion are available to non-contemplatives in certain forms. The most fruitful method of approaching these points is, perhaps, to examine briefly the spiritual

advice given to the contemplative and then to examine the modifications and qualifications which widen its intended audience. Since Hilton's discussions are almost all concerned with spiritual experience, the combination of the active and contemplative lives is being assumed to be possible when he implies the possibility of the spiritual participation of a non-contemplative, and when contemplative experience is seen, as a result, to be possible for a person living an active life.

The basic religious experience which is available to all Christians is the love of God. This is the most important part of the spiritual life, as seen in the fact that mede in heaven for this quality is best and sovereign. 308

"he þat most lovip god in charite heere in þis lif; wot degre he be inne be he lewid ore lewd seculer or religious he schal have most mede in þe blis of hevене, for he schal most love god and knowin hym and þat is þe sovereign mede, and as for þis mede it schal fallen þat sum worldli man or wuman as a lord or a ladi knigt ore skuiere marchaunt ore ploman ore wot degre he be inne man ore wuman; schal have more mede þan sum prest ore frere monke or chanon ore anker/inclus, and why; soþ li for he lufip more god in charite of his giefte."

(ibid. ca. 1 xi 42 r)

The crucial words are most love god and knowin hym, as these correspond exactly to the earlier description of contemplative vision as cognition and affection. 309 The strong implication is that even simple people -

"simple unkunand soules þat arn travailed wip temptation of þe world & kun not spekyn parfityly to god bi fervour of devotion. ne brynnande luf in contemplation."

(ibid. ca. 10 71 v)

will be granted full vision, albeit in heaven rather than this world. It is important because it reveals Hilton's willingness to concede that the central factors of personality and spirit should determine the type of mede, rather than judging solely on degree or vocation. This same flexibility will be seen to moderate Hilton's apparently

exclusive religious schemes in relation to the experience which can be attained in this life in the mortal world.

The rigid attitude to the religious experience of non-contemplatives which is commonly found in traditional writings is reflected in schemes of devotional activity which exclude the secular man from the highest levels of attainment. It is a characteristic of Hilton to adopt such schemes, or parallel versions of his own, and then to moderate their exclusiveness. The discussions of the three parts of the contemplative life, which have been briefly examined above, reveal a desire for flexibility. Hilton lays down a rigid scheme whereby the act of contemplation is reserved for those in a solitary or regular state. The two constituents of contemplation - cognition (in the sense of human knowledge) and affection - can be experienced separately by people in secular states but the highest experience of cognition in the divine and infused sense is barred. Hilton then makes two important qualifications. He had already said that affection could be experienced by active men

"þe lower degree of þis felynge, men whilk ƿeren actif; mowen have bi grace. whan þei ben visited one oure lord as mizhtli and as feruently; as þei þat zieuen hem holly to contemplatif lif."
(ibid. ca. vi. 4v)

but now he goes on to say that in exceptional circumstances, full contemplation is available to anyone,

"(The third) partie of contemplation; god gives whare þat he wile to lerd & to lewid men and w () men occupied in prelatie; and to solitarie also"

(ibid. ca ix 6r)

This only occurs in unusual circumstances, however, as is shown by the continuation of the last extract,

"but hit is special; nought comene and also paugh a man whilk is actif. have ~~Pe~~ ^{ze} ~~the~~ of hit by a special grace; neverpeles ~~be~~ ^{be} ful use of hit; may no man have; bote he be solitarie and in lif contemplatif."

(ibid.)

Hilton is thus determined to make it clear that God gives this experience where he will, and that the most humble person may be more richly deserving in spiritual matters than those who profess purity by their vocation. Nevertheless, he makes it equally clear that he regards such experience as normally available only to those in a special form of life. This is confirmed by the second qualification which ~~he makes to his other wise rigid scheme - the admission that~~ devotion (in its specialized sense) can be experienced by active men. The distinction between devotion and contemplation has already been examined, and in that analysis, it was seen that devotion was available to active men as well as unlettered people living a solitary life. The active man can receive occasional transient experience whereas those in a contemplative state can receive more continuous devotion. Hilton is thus making two distinct innovations. The first, discussed above, is that full contemplation is available to the active man. The second is that the experience more commonly available to active men, which Hilton discusses under the title of devotion, is included in the range of activities called contemplation, where previously it would merely have been regarded as a preliminary. It is also important to bear in mind that the vision granted to active men, although full and complete in itself, is a gratuitous and ephemeral experience, where the contemplative, who has ful use of hit achieves vision as part of a life which is geared to the highest experience. He does not receive this act as a sudden and unpredictable grace, but as a result of a way of life revolving round deeply spiritual matters. It is also implicit

in the phrase, ful use of hit, and otherwise in the treatise in addition, that the full contemplative is able because of his training to integrate the full significance of the experience into his life, and benefit from it in a number of ways which would be impossible for the less sophisticated active man. Julian of Norwich is perhaps the clearest example of a contemplative who drew immense spiritual edification and comfort from an ability to develop the full significance of contemplative vision into a way of life. Hilton's inclusion of the experience which he refers to as devotion, in the spectrum of contemplation is novel. It may arise from the obvious fact that not all those living the contemplative life are able to achieve true contemplation, and their experience is given the name of their calling, rather than only vice versa. It may also arise from the fact that tradition had always said that the calm of contemplation should be available to all members of the church whilst saying at the same time that it could only be achieved by a long ascetic preparation which requires at least a cenobitic life; Hilton may have wished to translate the theory into reality, especially at a time characterized by the decline of religious orders, and of movements such as Lollardy. It is a logical step, however, as the theological base is that man is only like God in terms of love, and a fervent love is therefore a crucial part of reformation of the soul to the image of its creator. Also, visio Dei could be broadly interpreted as an awareness of the unifying link between God and man, and a burning love would constitute this. This is a major breach of the theoretical objections to vision or even devotion (in its special Hiltonic sense) being available outside a

contemplative life. The active person of any degree could experience, according to this idea, the love of devotion as a normal part of his spiritual experience, and could even soar to contemplation if he is given a special grace. Hilton's rationalization is that the contingencies of a secular life may prevent understanding of God, but they need not prevent an infused and elevated love which is above the type of love and which the church normally regarded as available to the laity. It is the emotional equivalent of intellectual vision, and was regarded by Bernard as one of the forms of contemplation. For Hilton it was not vereie contemplation, however, and the true combination of action and contemplation was not yet normally available to the active man. The writings of S. Bernard and the authors of the M.V.C. among others, also discuss a non-visionary experience under the heading of contemplation, ³¹⁰ speaking of contemplation of the celestial court, and contemplation of the humanity of Christ. These are not experiences which should properly be described as contemplative either in quality or fervour. The authors of the M.V.C. accept this assertion when they say

"Et ideo ista de humanitate Christi rectius et proprius meditatio, quam contemplatio nominari debet."

(Med.Vitae Christi LI)

("For this reason, perhaps one should call this more directly and properly, 'meditation or humanity' rather than contemplation.")

This experience is included in the term contemplation 'technically, but the intention is not, as is the case with Hilton, to make an elevated experience available to those who are spiritually undeveloped.

A suggestion that Hilton's attitude to this problem is likely to be tempered by flexibility may be detected in his approach to a similar problem in his discussion of God's reward to those who give

themselves up to Him entirely:

"þe schal enoressen in grace and in charite here lifende and þei schul han for þis special wil; a special mede in þe blisse of hevене".

(ibid. ca. 1 x 41r)

He is speaking originally of those who entirely devote themselves to God;

"(who) zifen hem holli bodi and soule unto his service....as don anores enclus"

(ibid. ca. 1 x 40v-41r)

He then says that anyone who originally entered religion for unworthy motives, but repents may receive this reward,

"if it be so þat þei entren religion first for a werldli cause as for here bodili sustinaunce...if þei repenten hem and turne it to a goostli causeþei....arn trewe religious."

(ibid. ca 1x 41r)

The final and greatest step away from the original exclusive proposition is that not only those who entered religion unworthily can receive this grace if they repent, but also anyone who is unable to enter religion, if he forsake all in his heart, can receive the special mede.

"wat man or woman þat it be in wat degre he be in holi kirke. prest clerk or lewede man wydue wyf or mayden; þat wile for lufe of god and savation of his sowle forsaken alle þe worscheipes and likynges of þis world in his herte trowli and fulli atwix god and hym....schul han for þis special wil: a special mede in þe blisse of heven ."

(ibid.)

The will and the commitment within the heart are enough; Hilton states that it is the inner condition which is important, and that those in a secular life can receive the same rewards as those in seclusion. This inclusive attitude is important because it colours the discussions of the availability of contemplative experience for the active man in Book I of the Scale, and will be seen to assume greater importance in Book II. The examples of widening application of spiritual schemes

quoted so far have all been taken from Book I, and a comparison of the assumed audience of each book can show that the second, consciously or unconsciously, addresses a wider reading public.

Book I opens with an address to Gostely suster, and was apparently intended for a specific anchoress. But, as Miss J. Russell-Smith has shown in her article on Walter Hilton,³¹¹ it seems very likely that spiritual writers at this time were aware that their works would be read and considered by other writers, and both books of the Scale were translated into Latin per quemdam sacre theologie doctorem - Thomas Fishlake, the Carmelite. Hilton would therefore probably have written with this wider audience at the back of his mind; the instances quoted so far of the moderation of exclusive spiritual schemes show that he was at least interested in the problems of non-contemplatives, and may have even anticipated that his treatise was likely to be read by them.³¹² One of the earliest extant manuscripts³¹³ opens with Gostli broðer or suster, and this suggests that a wider audience was expected. There is internal evidence, however, for a difference between the assumed audience of each book, not only in the actual widening of the terms of its application of scheme of spirituality, but also in the groups of people to whom they refer. Book I refers in its discussions to definite groups such as active, contemplative, religious, and secular, and though Hilton blurs these sharp divisions, he writes with a basic concept of more or less well defined patterns of religious experience according to estate. It will be seen in Book II that these external divisions are gradually replaced with distinctions based on inner spiritual states. There is, for instance, a discussion of love whose reference is not made to forms of living but to states of soul,

"Soules bigynnande & profitande haf not þis luf"
(ibid. ca. 30 103r)

and the rest of the section is in this mode. This attitude is typical of Book II and will be seen to play an important part in discussions of spiritual experience.

In the opening chapters of the second book is a discussion of the failure of active men to achieve contemplation, and the stance adopted is an indication of what is to come later. The passage states:

"manye men þat arn reformed in faip setten not þaire hertes for to profiten in grace ne for to seken none heizere state of god lifyng þuryg bisy travaile in praying & þinkyng & oþer bodyly & gostly wirkyng; bot hem þinke it inowz to hem to kepe hem self oute of dedly syn for to stonde still in þat pligt as þei arn in for þei seien þat is inowz to hem for to be sauf & han þe leste degre in heven þei wile coueiten no more".

(ibid. ca. 18 80 r)

It would be inaccurate to conclude that this is totally a matter of inner will. Miss J. Russell-Smith says of this passage

"When Hilton answers the question why so few come to the experience of contemplatives, he has little to say about impeding outward circumstances but much about a lacking inward will." 314

The passage continues:

"þus per chaunce don sume of þe chosen soules þat lede in þe world actife lif & þat is litel wonder of hem for þei are so occupied wit wordly bisynes þat nedip for to be don; þat þei mowen not fully setten here hertes for to profiten in gostly wirkyng."

(Scale ca.18 80r)

This considerably qualifies Hilton's original statement as the lack of purpose is seen to originate in the distractions of the active life.

This whole passage is not important as a departure from traditional views that it is the active life rather than lack of purpose which hinders contemplation (Hilton says of active men

"þei arn sum what excusable for here state of lifyng"
(ibid.)

but for the statement a few lines further on that these distractions can be overcome

"o þer men....in seculer state þat han mikel reson & grete kyndely wit & mizten if þei wolden disposyn hem þer to come to mikil grace."

(ibid.)

It is not simply a matter of will. It is rather that the problems which are inherent in the active state can be overcome by will.

A statement which occurs towards the end of Book II sets the difficulties of the active man in perspective. Hilton discusses the man who is in a state of perfection:

"he is parfit þat is sequestred fro alle fleschly affections & comunyng wit of alle creatures & alle menes are broken away of corruption & of synne atwix ihesu & his soule fully oned to him wit softnes of luf."

(ibid. ca 41 128v)

This high state is evidently impossible for a secular, but Hilton immediately qualifies his statement by saying,

"þis is only grace above mans kynde" (ibid.)

He believes that such perfection is beyond the reach of man because of his kynde, and this places the religious active, and the contemplative, on the same plane of struggle; the difference between them is of degree rather than kind. The result of this attitude is that the differences between the two types of people are reduced, and since they share common struggles, the way is prepared for the secular to achieve to some extent at least, similar spiritual experiences to the religious.

The possibility of active men achieving high spiritual states is implicit in the section of the Scale which is discussed immediately above, ³¹⁵ and can be seen to become more explicit in an adjacent chapter. Hilton is discussing the solitude which is required for the vision of God (and this is one of the major factors mitigating against the secular) and the reason why it is necessary,

"Only is a soule whan it lufiþ ihesu & tentiþ fully to him & hæþlost þe savour & þe confort of þe world & þat it miȝt þe better kepe þis onlynes; it fleebiþ þe companye of alle men if it may & sekiþ onlynes of body; "

(ibid. ca 40 125v)

It appears that anyone who cannot achieve solitude cannot fully love ihesu, but the statement is qualified by the phrase if it may. If physical onlynes is not possible, grace and hizeres of þoȝt ³¹⁶ can bring inner solitude even amid the distractions of society.

" þan is þe soule alone mikel straunged fro felazschep of werdly lufers þowȝ here body be in middis amonge hem".

(ibid. ca 40 125r)

The requirements for the highest experience are being cut back to the rock-like essentials. The higher inner state which would justify supreme experience is left as the sole criterion of spiritual possibilities, whilst external factors which were seen by many others as central and inhibiting are cast aside. Contemplation in its highest form, and it should be remembered that the relevant chapter is discussing the actual sight of Christ, is no longer beyond an insurmountable barrier constituted by an unsuitable way of life.

As Book II progresses this attitude becomes increasingly dominant. The rigid schematism of Book I can be seen to diminish as the treatise progresses, and this is seen in a discussion of the reformation of the soul to the image of God. The scheme is still formal, but the categories are concerned with inner states which are then related to their usual external manifestations in terms of way of life. In Book I this process was only seen in reverse, specific ways of life being discussed, occasionally followed by a reference to an inner state. Hilton considers two types of reformation of which one is in fulnes and another is in partie. He examines the spiritual qualities of each type, and of the two sub-divisions of the

second type, and then, referring to these two subdivisions, says

"þe first reformyng is only of bigynnand & profitand soules.
& of active men; þe seconde is of parfite soules & of
contemplatif men."

(ibid. ca. v. 67r)

This shows the emphasis on inner state, with the outer form given only secondary importance. Whilst the first two categories, bigynnand & profitand soules and active men, could simply be acknowledgment that the lower experience is for the humbler soul and also for the soul moving from the lower to the higher state, the second two categories, which speak of parfite soules and of contemplatif men, could be taken to imply that it is possible to become perfect outside a contemplative life. The types of experience discussed in the section on the reformation of the soul are consistent with this, as they refer to inner feelings and changes, and not to either external circumstances or specialized patterns of religious forms. Hilton later comments that there are various specific ways of achieving reformation, but he adds, referring to a man's ways to God,

"wheþer he wirke þus or oþer wise by sundry menes in lengre tyme or schorter tyme wit mikel travaill or litel travaill if al come to an ende; þat is þe parfit luf of him þan is it good I now. For if he wil gif .o. soule on. o. day þe ful grace of contemplation & wit outen any travaill as he wel may; as gode is þgt to þat soule as if he had ben examined pyned mortified & purified twenty wynter tyme."

(ibid. ca 31 106 r)

In Hilton's scheme there is a complete flexibility and, no less important, an emphasis on inner states. This arises partly from a sense that having discussed outer states in detail he is concentrating on inner matters, but this does not reduce the importance of the increasing concentration he focuses on the deeper essentials of the spiritual life, and the inclusion of all people in schemes which are

appropriate to them on inner criteria.

The basic quality of the spiritual life is love, and Hilton's discussion of love again reveals his concern with the experience of active men. He says that it is the greatest gift of God,

"for amonge alle þe giftes þat oure lorde gifteþ ; is þer none so gode ne so profittable".

(ibid. ca 36 114v)

Such is the power of this gift, that it can lead to contemplative vision

"coveite þis gifte of luf principally as .I. hafe seide. For if he wil of his grace gife it;.....it schal openen & liztnen þe reson of þi soule for to sene soþfastnes.

þat is god.

(ibid. ca 36 115r)

Love in this exalted form was traditionally only available in solitude, but Hilton says that it is also experienced by secular men; love is

"not only in hem þat han rízt nozt of werdly gode; but also in sume creatures þat arn in grete werdly state & have dispendyng of erþly riches; luf sleepþ in sum of hem coueitise so ferþþ þat þei han no more likynge ne savour in hafynge of hem; þan in a stree."

(ibid. ca 39 121 r)

It thus follows that the highest vision is available to those with grete werdly state and erþly riches; to the traditional combination of action and contemplation in the preacher or other ecclesiast, is added the same combination in lords and other noble seculars. From ploman to those in grete werdly state Hilton offers, in the Scale, the highest vision in the context of a secular life.

The Scale contains advice for those who wish to achieve contemplation whilst holding secular office. Hilton is discussing the paradoxical light-darkness which precedes full vision and was generally considered to be available only to contemplatives. He says that seclusion is desirable for this state,

"for grace wolde ay be free. namely fro syn & werldly bisyness.
& alle oþer þinges þat letten þe wirkyng of it þow þei
be no synne;"

(ibid. ca 27 95v)

This apparently excludes the non-contemplative, but Hilton continues to say that this grace is available as long as the desire for fame, riches, and honour is utterly destroyed. If the secular covet none of these

"so þat he be pore boþe outward & inward or elles fully inward".
(ibid. ca 27 96r)

he can come to the gostly knowynge of ihesu. ³¹⁸ He can accept responsibility, state, and even fame, so long as he is of the right mind ³¹⁹

"if þei be put upon him taken hem wit drede;"
(ibid.)

If he fearfully and humbly accepts his responsibilities, he can still come to the mirknes which precedes vision. His absolute indifference to wordly things is his form of dying to the world, which the contemplative undertakes in body as well as in spirit; thus it can be seen that all degrees of men, both religious and secular can come by various paths to this mirknes.

"þis dyenge to þe werld; þis is mirkness & it is þe gate to contemplation & to reformyng in felynge & none oþer þen þis. þer be mony sundry weies. & sere werks ledend sundry soules to contemplation. for after sundry disposynges of men & after sundry states as are religious & seculars þat þei are in; are divers exercices in wirkyng."

(ibid. ca 27 96v)

The variety of ways set out here is also to be found in Hilton's elaboration of the allegorical journey to Jerusalem; the work to be done depends on the individual,

"what work þat þu schulde don after þe degre & þe state
þat þu standis in bodili or gostly. if it helpe þis gracious
desire þat þu haste for to lufe ihesu;...þat werke hold I beste."
(ibid. ca 21. 86 r)

Hilton has already stated that the lowliest members of society can achieve contemplation, and he here instructs a high official - one who is in worldly bisynes but who is indifferent to the fame, honour and riches he acquires - how to approach the same experience. All these people are living explicitly secular and involved lives, and it follows that Hilton is preaching a mixed life.

His discussion of secondarie mede which is given in Heaven to those who merit reward above the soverein mede can cast further light on his attitude towards the combining of action and contemplation. This secondarie mede is given for a special goode dede, which Hilton says can take one of three forms.

"martyrdom preching and maidenhed, þis þre werkes as for an excellence in als mikel as þei passen alle oþer schullen have a special mede."

(ibid. ca l xi 42r)

These are pure forms of personal oblation in which the individual offers his life to God either in solitude, service or death. It is of interest that perfect chastity, and the life of contemplative solitude with which it is usually associated, is given the same reward as preaching, which by Hilton's definition is a form of active life. If Hilton's discussions of the availability of contemplation to the humble laity are borne in mind, it would seem reasonable to suppose that he would have accepted that the good preacher would also be able to attain contemplative vision - a virtual acceptance of the traditional mixed life as discussed, among others, by Gregory the Great. This creates an apparent difficulty, since Hilton continually refers to the superiority of the contemplative

life, and yet states that the preacher and the maiden receive the same extra need. This is perhaps resolved by his constant references to the need for each person to persevere in the calling in which they find themselves, and that perfect service in one high vocation is as praiseworthy as that in another.

4. Piers Plowman and the Three Lives

Piers Plowman and the Three Lives

This chapter seeks to suggest a number of ways in which concepts of the Three Lives, especially the Mixed Life, have influenced Piers Plowman. The main purpose of preceding chapters has been a full documentation of Hilton's concept of the Mixed Life, and it is not possible to attempt a fully articulated argument in regard to Piers Plowman because it would be outside the scope of this thesis. The relationship between this poem and the concepts of the Three Lives is so potentially interesting, however, that a brief consideration of these matters is fully justified. The suggestions which follow are, therefore, in the nature of outlines and tentative sketches rather than carefully researched proposals.

Since Well's article in 1929,³²⁰ there have been a number of attempts to provide a key to the meaning of Piers Plowman by seeking a structural and theological basis to the poem in concepts relating to the Three Lives.³²¹ The approach taken has been a series of developments of the idea that the short definitions of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest, and the larger flow of the poem through the three vitae, can be shown to be influenced by concepts of the three lives. Successive articles have refuted the type of literary fundamentalism represented by Coghill's article, and have proposed schemes whereby the relationship between the poem and the concepts have become increasingly subtle. Dunning and Hussey represent two different facets of the outcome of the debate, as the former seeks increasingly subtle relationships, while the latter admits the tenability of general associations but is wary of attempts to demonstrate direct correspondences. These two approaches are not necessarily incompatible on all fronts, and the purpose of the following pages will be to show that a number of fruitful associations can be discovered without

abandoning the touchstone of healthy scepticism.

It is likely that if any group of ideas has influenced a poem, such influence will be detectable at a variety of levels from the superficial to the profound. Concepts of action and contemplation can readily be found influencing the poem at a superficial level, as seen for instance, in the brief reference to hermits and anchorites in the Prologue. ³²²

In prayers and penance putten hem many,
Al for love of owre lorde lyveden ful streyte,
In hope forto have hevenriche blisse;
As ances and heremites that holden hem in here selles,"
(ibid. B Pro. 25-8)

Langland speaks of the solitary religious in laudatory terms throughout the poem, and clearly understands and commends a virtuous contemplative life. Superficial influence can also be seen in Treuthe's letter to the merchants ³²³ where activities of the active life are mentioned, though not under that description, and again in the ploughing of Piers' half-acre, ³²⁴ where such activities are implicit in a number of places. The active life and the contemplative life are mentioned by name at one point, though the concepts are treated very simply:

"Kynde witt wolde that a wyght wrouzte
Or in dykyng or in delvinge ore travailyng in preyeres,
Contemplatyf lyf or actyf lyf Cryst wolde men wrouzte"
(Ibid. BVI 249-251)

These two lives are also mentioned in C Passus VIII where the people in the parable who made excuses for their inability to attend a feast are subsumed under the figure whose wife prevented his coming. He is referred to as Actif, whereas a willingness to attend is called Contemplacion. ³²⁵ This manipulation of the two lives should confirm that the reader of Piers Plowman is seeking in vain if he expects a completely logical and theologically straightforward treatise. This willingness to re-shape traditional material according to local need is a hall-mark of the poem, and in addition to putting the

theologian on his guard, should also lead the reader to expect that concepts are sometimes used in unlikely circumstances, and that apparently straightforward ideas may have complex associations.

The instances of active and contemplative concepts which are illustrated above are commonplace in the sense that they have no special associations within the poem, and are generally used as motifs in medieval spiritual literature of many kinds. The particular focus of this thesis has been Hilton's concept of the mixed life, and it is useful, before approaching Piers Plowman with this explicit special interest, to outline the particular areas of the active-contemplative nexus of ideas which are particularly relevant. The first special area is the question of the type of religious experience which is available to people who live active lives in society, and these people range from the extremely simple to the moderately sophisticated. The figure who springs most readily to mind in this context is Hilton's ploman, who would be unlikely to rise above very simple devotion either because of the pressures of daily life, or because of lack of sophistication. The second area is the question of the type of activity which is available to those who live in seclusion and contemplation. The third area concerns the sort of person to whom Hilton would have referred as a wordli lord, the type of person who is sophisticated and quite powerful and wealthy. He would have time for contemplation, and would have sufficient influence to be able to help others in the corporal works of mercy. This is the person who could live a full mixed life. These three areas of enquiry are prompted by a study of Hilton, but it is necessary to consider whether or not they are questions which are

relevant to a poem such as Piers Plowman. A clear answer can be gained in relation to the type of activity appropriate to recluses, since Langland regards them as holy people when they undertake their vocation properly, but he is not really concerned with their spiritual problems or their relationship with the world. Piers states that he will give them food and help ³²⁶, but the poem is examining life in the world and the problems of people who live in it; the life of the cloister per se is beyond its concern. The other two areas of interest, the ploman and the worldli lord are more fruitful possibilities, and may be considered in relation to a number of aspects of the poem. Relevant material may be sought in casual references and comments, and also in the much-discussed area of Piers' appearances, attitudes and activities. The Dreamer, his nature and function are also likely sources of material, as well as the movements of, and within, the Vitae. The suggestions which are given below are a number of first reactions to the questions posed above.

The special area concerning the spiritual experiences of fully active people arises from the fact that one of Hilton's important concessions was that someone in a lowly state could, by virtue of his love and devotion, have a greater reward in Heaven than a monk or recluse

"it schal fallen þat sum worldli mon or wuman as a lord ore a ladi knigt or skuiere marchaunt or ploman ore wot degre he be inne man ore wuman; schal have more mede þan sum prest or frere monke or chanon ore anker inclus, and why; soþli for he lufi more god in charite of his giefte."

(Scale of Perfection ca l xi 42r).

Langland makes a similar concession in a number of places in Piers Plowman. In translating a quotation from S. Augustine he says that plowman and pastoures are sooner saved than the learned.³²⁷

This is of limited interest inasmuch as it springs directly from a patristic source, but Langland twice refers to the same issue in his own comments. He refers to the idea that knighthood and kingship alone cannot help a person to gain entry to Heaven, ³²⁸ and comments elsewhere in the poem that a knight need not assume that he will automatically be superior to his serf in the after life.

"And mysbede nouzte thi bordemen thebetter may thow spede;
Though he be thyn underlynge here wel may happe in hevене,
That he worth worthier sette and with more blisse,
Than thow, bot thow do bette and lyve as thou shulde
Amice ascende superius
For in charnel atte chirche cherles ben yvel to knowe,
Or a knizte fram a knave there knowe this in thi herte."

(ibid. BVI 46-51)

This concern with inner matters rather than outer state occurs in Hilton in similar circumstances, and shows Langland's awareness of issues which were important in contemplative writings. The actual treatment of these ideas suggests considerable sympathy with them, and this suggests an affinity between Langland and contemplative writers on the important area of the spiritual state of those who live active lives.

Although Langland is not deeply concerned with many aspects of the life of the secluded contemplative, as noted above, he nevertheless shows concern over the question of where contemplatives should find sustenance. The speech of Patience ³²⁹ deal with this in some detail, and an example occurs in a discussion of the lives of the saints.

Patience says that a number of saints supported themselves partly by certain kinds of manual labour, but that the birds, and also a hind, brought them nourishment, ³²⁰ as a token of God's providing for those who serve him. This is taken further, as the narrative tells that only

the birds fed them, not the animals, betokening that hermits and others should only accept alms from just men. This belief that there is a Scriptural precedent for the contemplative receiving alms without being a beggar is an important sign of Langland's sympathy for the solitary, and of concern for his state. Interest in this matter goes a little further, and the poem examines in detail the ways in which alms should be given, and emphasis is laid on the fact that the just man should take positive steps to ensure that he gives alms to holy people. ³³¹ Langland goes even further, and concurs with the traditional view that a contemplative in need is entitled to steal food. These attitudes reveal Langland's concern that the right relationship should be found between the contemplative and society, and that the contemplative will be helped in his vocation.

The problems of religious experience for simple active people present certain types of difficulty, but the problems of the experience available to more sophisticated people are of a higher order. A very simple person, however, devoted to God, can only alternate simple labour and religious experience, but a more powerful and educated person who on the one hand has sufficient wealth to become a recluse, and on the other hand, sufficient power to lead a life of secular government, has to find a much more difficult balance. It is not in the nature of the poem that Piers Plowman should address these problems directly, but in the kaleidoscopic treatment of a variety of situations, certain aspects of Langland's beliefs can be discerned.

The mixed life, as seen in its most clear fourteenth-century form in Hilton's Epistle on Mixed Life, is a complete balance between action and contemplation. The worldli lord had to deal with the full range of domestic and social responsibility for his family, servants,

and workmen, both on spiritual and corporal levels. In addition, he had to lead a devout and virtuous inner life, with sufficient time given to God to enable advanced religious experience to be achieved. Langland's views on these issues, as implied above, can be determined to a certain extent by examining relevant material from a variety of situations, and by piecing together a composite picture of his beliefs .

A concern and interest in contemplative experience has been seen in a number of direct comments as indicated above. In addition to this, it is possible to see contemplative ideas influencing parts of the poem at a deeper level. The ploughing of Piers' half-acre, however it is interpreted, must be seen at least as a concern with secular activities which are reminiscent of the active life, and it is significant in the context of this argument that the level of symbolic interpretation of this episode is of greater prominence in the C. version. Perhaps this is because Langland would have been aware when writing the C version, of the symbolic ploughing of B XIX. It is entirely outward in its focus, and it deals explicitly with the corporal need of hunger. After the priest's translation of the Pardon sent by Treuthe, Piers tears up the Pardon and vows to turn from labour to prayer:

"I shal cessen of my sowyng, quod Pieres and swynk nougt so harde,
Ne about my bely-ioye so bisi be na more !
Of preyers and of penaunce my plow shal ben hereafter,
And wepen whan I shulde slepe though whete bred me faille."
(Ibid. BVII 117-20)

A number of points are of interest here. The idea that corporal needs are of no concern, and that prayer is the only matter of importance is very reminiscent of the attitude of the recluse who rejects worldly and

corporal needs in order to concentrate on inner matters. The motif of penance taking the place of physical concerns is seen in the line where Piers says that he will weep when he should sleep and thus is a purgative concept which extends the idea of inner matters taking precedence. Piers' attitude that preyers and penance shall be metaphorically regarded as his plow reflects the idea of purgative activities as a constructive undertaking which is the contemplative equivalent of physical labour. On a more indirect level, the whole concept of passing from outer to inner concerns, is the central assumption of the vocation of the recluse, and of the route to contemplation itself. This whole process is paralleled in the experience of the Dreamer. The idea of the visions occurring during sleep suggests the mystical motif of the bodily suppression which allows spiritual activity, which finds its Biblical origin in the quotation which Rolle used for the title of one of his treatises:

"Ego Dormio et cor meum vigilat".³³²

This concept also influences the narrative of the poem in the sense that the Dreamer's search for Dowel starts as a pilgrimage to find a person or place, before becoming an inner search. He turns from an unsatisfactory outer quest to the more fruitful inner quest within his own heart, where he meets such personifications as Imagination. Langland uses motifs of inner and spiritual regeneration as opposed to outer and social unfruitfulness, and this suggests that he believes in the necessity of a contemplative type of inner questioning to find the truth about man and his spiritual condition.

This belief in the requirement for inner questioning, of finding the Eternal in one's heart, has a more profound influence on Piers Plowman. The idea that man can become God-like through virtue is given expression in the first Passus of the poem:

"Whoso is trewe of his tonge and telleth none other,
And doth the werkis ther-with and wilneth no man ille,
He is a god bi the gospel agrounde and alofte,
And ylike to oure lord bi seynte Lukes wordes."
(Ibid. BI 68-9;)

This explicit statement, in some ways prophetic of the outcome of the poem, indicates a knowledge of the traditional idea of man working towards a God-like state. The concept is given much more comprehensive treatment in the course of the poem, as Barbara Raw has shown in a very detailed article ³³³ which demonstrates that the progress of the poem takes Piers closer and closer to a Divine state until the supreme and subtle moment when Christ and Piers become indistinguishably One on the Cross. This is a dramatic and poetic statement of a theological belief which has a long history, ³³⁴ and which is the ultimate goal of the contemplative life. The poetic visionary quality is a literary analogue of the contemplative spiritual vision. Piers' progress through the poem is an articulated scheme leading to this apotheosis and it is significant that Langland should use this concept as the mainspring of his work, as it reveals his knowledge and concern of the contemplative quest for God. It also suggests, yet again, that he would have believed that a contemplative element is important in a religious life. Although the poem does not deal explicitly with an equivalent of Hilton's worldli lord, the type of contemplative concern that Langland reveals, which would require a sophisticated approach to religion, would be appropriate to such a figure.

If Langland believes in the importance of a contemplative element in a spiritual life, he also recognizes the need for involvement with society. This is seen at a local level within the poem in a metaphor concerning Christ. ³³⁵ Hilton uses a similar metaphor in Epistle on Mixed Life:

"Þou art bly to worschipe his hed & his face, & array hit fayre & curiously, but þou levest his bodi, his arnes & his feet, al ragged & rent.....ure lord Inesu Crist as man is hed of a gostli bodi, þe wyche is holy chirche. þe lines of his bodi are al cristen men."

(Epistle on Mixed Life ³³⁶ p.272)

Langland refers to poor men, recalling that Christ said that everyone should help those in distress:

"For owre ipe and owre hele Iesu Cryst of hevene,
In a pore mannes apparaille pursueth us evere,
And laketh on us in her liknesse and that with lovely chere,
To knownen us by owre kynde herte and castyng of owre eyes
Whether we love the lordes here byfor owre lordes of blisse."

(B XI 179-83)

The same belief, that a man should help the poor and distressed, informs both of these extracts. In Hilton's tract, the opposition of the mystical head and the corporal body of the Church is explicit as an injunction to both action and contemplation. Langland's use of the metaphor is not explicit in the same way, but it reveals in belief in the need for active help of those in trouble, and this is an active involvement in society which is closely reminiscent of the deeds of the active life.

It can be seen that Langland regards both active involvement with society, and contemplative experience, as necessary parts of the Good Life for those who are in a position to undertake them. Piers Plowman is not a poem which deals with vague speculation, but is an urgent and searching exploration of the way to live the good life. As

such, the beliefs enunciated within the poem can be taken as indications of Langland's belief about such a life. He seems to believe that the true elements indicated above are both necessary, and as such, is in accord with Hilton's belief in the mixed life.

The progress of the Dreamer through the poem can support this contention, as it reveals both active and contemplative concerns. It is suggested above that the Dreamer moves from an outer to an inner quest, in the manner of a contemplative search, and that this is paralleled by Piers turning from the world to penance and prayer. Also, as mentioned above, Piers becomes Christ in a visionary moment on the Cross. The Dreamer is led, through his inner search, to discover that love is the highest truth, and he sees this in dramatic form in the parable of the Good Samaritan and in the Crucifixion itself. He thus moves from active and outer concerns, through inner and personal concerns, to a knowledge of love in God. He thus achieves understanding of the crucifixion through having come along a path of both active and contemplative concerns, and this understanding of the Crucifixion is an important facet of the knowledge of the love of God. The subsequent collapse of the institution of the Church, which occurs in the allegory of the barn Trite, leads Conscience, another persona through whom the poem is experienced by the reader, to seek Piers Plowman. There have been many suggestions as to what it is that Piers Plowman represents at this point; it may be part of the complex truth surrounding this issue, that Piers can be regarded as a life in Christ as seen in the twin symbolic visions of the active life in the incident of the Good Samaritan, and the contemplative life in the assumption of the Divinity by Piers' Love of God, and of one's fellow man, as given expression in

the acts of charity and of worship, comprise the Good Life which Conscience, and the Dreamer, and the reader, are to seek. This suggests that Langland is concerned with the two facets of the mixed life, and regards them both as necessary.

There are, then, a number of ways in which Piers Plowman can be felt to be cognate with concepts concerning action and contemplation, including the mixed life. The whole poem, in being an approach on a personal level to the problems of the spiritual life, is a kind of literary expression of the implicit advice of the English Mystics to seek for the truth oneself. It fits into the pattern of the fourteenth-century desire to clarify problems at an individual level, and Wyclif's translation of the Bible into English is a part of that pattern. It is of particular interest that this desire can be traced in religious tracts, such as the works of Hilton, and also in a poem such as Piers Plowman, with its large readership.

R E F E R E N C E S

1. For brief accounts of the development of the concepts of action and contemplation before Augustine, see:
PETRY, R.C. Late Mediaeval Mysticism (London, 1957) 22-7
KNOWLES, D. The English Mystical Tradition (London, 1960), 21-5.
MASON, M.E. Active Life and Contemplative Life (Wisconsin, 1961) 11-27.
2. See PETRY, R.C. op.cit. 31-3.
3. Philo saw action as prayer and the Liturgy, and Contemplation as the vision of God (see Petry, op.cit.)
4. Translations from WACE, H. & SCHAFF, P. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Oxford, 1890-1900)
5. Any discussion of mysticism is heavily indebted to C. Butler's book, Western Mysticism (London 1922, revised 1927; third edition with contribution by D. Knowles, 1967), which defined the scope of the concepts and documented them with care.
6. Quotations are from S. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO Opera Omnia (Paris, 1697) and translations are from PEEBLES, B.M. et al. (General Editors) Fathers of the Church, 67 vols. (Washington 1947-74). A major series comprising translations of the works of major writers of the early church.
7. There is considerable disagreement over this, and a number of modern authorities dispute that Augustine is referring to mystical experience. For a brief discussion of this problem see KNOWLES, The English Mystical Tradition (London, 1960), 25-7.
8. Butler discusses these ideas in detail in Western Mysticism, pp. 27-55 and 155-67.
9. See KNOWLES, D., From Pachomius to Ignatius: a study in the constitutional history of the religious orders (Oxford, 1966) 3.
10. Ibid., 4-5.
11. See DUDDEN, F.H., Gregory the Great (London, 1905), Vol. I. 225-6.
12. All quotations are from S. GREGORY THE GREAT, Opera Omnia (Paris, 1525). Translations are from WACE, H. & SCHAFF, P.A., Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Oxford, 1890-1900)
13. See De Trin. i.20
14. Matthew 22.37.
15. Ibid., 22.39
16. This interpretation is substantiated by the fact that the activa vita, as defined here by Gregory, has no mention or implication of the purgative element considered essential by Cassian and Augustine, and also by Gregory himself (see above).

17. See POURRAT, P. La Spiritualité chrétienne 4 tom. (Paris, 1918-28) Translated by W.H. Mitchell and S.P. Jacques, Christian Spirituality (London, 1922) vol.2, 2-3.
- BUTLER, C. Benedictine Monachism (London, 1919) 302.
- VERNET, F. La Spiritualité médiévale (Paris, 1929)
Translated by the Benedictines of Talacre. Medieval Spirituality
(London and S.Louis, 1930) 14-15.
- KNOWLES, D. The Monastic Order in England (Cambridge 1940;
revised 1949 and second edition 1963) 3, 17-18.
18. See KNOWLES, D. & OBOLENSKY, D. The Middle Ages (London, 1969)
being vol.2 of The Christian Centuries (A New History of the
Catholic Church) edited by L.J. Rogier et al. p.123.
- For further discussion, see the following two works which are
cited by Knowles and Obolensky, op.cit., in support of their view:
- FERRARI, G. Early Roman Monasteries (Vatican City, 1957) 406
- HAMILTON, B.F. The Holy See, the Roman Nobility, and the
Ottoman Emperors (Ph.D. Thesis, London 1960)
19. CHADWICK, W.O. Western Asceticism (Library of Christian Classics,
no.12; London, 1958)
20. KNOWLES & OBOLENSKY, op.cit., 117-8
21. GODFREY, C.J. The Church in Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge,
1962) 150 f.f.
22. KNOWLES, D. op.cit. 16-30.
23. See BENEDICT OF NURSIA, S. Benedicti Regula Monachorum ed.
by C. Butler (Freiburg-in-Brisgau, 1912) Translated by
W.O. Chadwick in Western Asceticism (Library of Christian
Classics, no.12; London, 1958).
24. See Chadwick, op.cit. C.10, 11, 5, 33 and 54, 1, 48 and
8-20 respectively.
25. Ibid., c.48.
26. GODFREY, C.J., op.cit., 152
27. CHADWICK, O., op.cit., c.4 and c.49.
28. Ibid., c.4.
29. Cited in PETRY, R.C., Late Mediaeval Mysticism, 43.
30. See above.
31. BUTLER, C., op.cit.
32. Ibid., c.61.
33. BEDA, Opera Omnia (Cologne, 1612), Tom.VII.

34. PERRY, R.C., op.cit., 41.
35. Ibid., 42.
36. SMALLEY, B. The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1941; Second edition, Oxford 1952) 36.
37. Ibid., 37-8.
38. See COPLESTON, F.C., A History of Philosophy, 9 vols. (London, 1947-75) vol.II Medieval Philosophy: Augustine to Scotus (London, 1952) 57-9.
39. See PAUL WARNEFRID, Exposition of C.XLVII of S.Benedict's Rule which is cited in C. Butler Benedictine Monachism.
40. Ibid.
41. KNOWLES & OBOLENSKY, op.cit., 120.
42. KNOWLES & OBOLENSKY, op.cit., 158-62.
43. Ibid., 161.
44. HUNT, N. Cluny under S.Hugh: 1049-1109 (London, 1967) 19f.
KNOWLES & OBOLENSKY, op.cit., 123.
45. KNOWLES, op.cit., 25.
46. HUNT, N., op.cit., 25.
47. KNOWLES, D., op.cit., 192.
48. Ibid., 193.
49. Ibid., 194.
50. KNOWLES, D. From Pachomius to Ignatius: a study in the constitutional history of the religious orders (Oxford, 1966) 20.
51. KNOWLES & OBOLENSKY, op.cit., 186 f.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. KNOWLES, D. The Evolution of Mediaeval Thought (London, 1962) 79
GILSON, E. La Théologie Mystique de S.Bernard (Études de Philosophie Médiévale, vol.20; Paris 1934). Translated by A.H.C. Downes, The Mystical Theology of S.Bernard (London,1940), 1-2.
56. MARTENE, E. Thesaurus Anecdotorum (Paris, 1717) v.1574.

57. All quotations are from S.BERNARD, Opera Omnia (Paris, 1690), and translations, unless otherwise indicated, from EALES, S.J., Sermons on the Canticle (London, 1895).
- 57a. Bernard obviously knew of the element of purgation, and elsewhere speaks of cleansing the conscience (see In Cantica Canticatorum XLVI.v) and of cutting away evil custom with the sharp blade of sincere repentance (ibid. XVIII. v,vi). It is of interest, however, that in the allegory of the kisses he does not specifically mention such activity, where previous writers made a very strong point of doing so. This demonstrates the way in which the fervent devotion, characteristic of his piety, dictated change of emphasis and disposition in his spiritual schematization.
58. Contra Faustum, xxii.52 (see above).
59. In Cantica Canticatorum LXVIII. iv.
60. See S.Bernard of Clairvaux above.
61. For Richard's works, see RICARDO, A. S.VICTOR, Opera Omnia in PL vol.196: 1-1366. Translations are in C.Kirchberger, Richard of S.Victor (London, 1957).
62. For biographical information see Kirchberger, op.cit., 15-20.
63. Op.cit., p.19.
64. See WEINBERG, J.R. A Short History of Mediaeval Philosophy (Princeton, 1964), p.26.
65. See SMALLEY, B. The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, p.107.
66. KIRCHBERGER, op.cit., p.77.
67. The doctrinal content of Benjamin Minor and Benjamin Major is summarized in the following works:
KIRCHBERGER, op.cit., pp.37-44.
PETRY, R.C., Late Mediaeval Mysticism, pp.83-85.
68. See the chapter on S.Bernard of Clairvaux. above.
69. Ephesians 4, 22-24.
70. See I.Corinthians, 13: 12.
71. Confessions vii.23
72. Moralia in Job, vii. 50
73. Extracts are from: From Glory to Glory. Selected by J. Daniélou, and translated by H. Musurillo (London, 1962).
74. Ibid., p.217.
75. Ibid., p.59.
For a more detailed account of the soul becoming Christ in Gregory's writings, see DANIELOU, J. Platonisme et Théologie Mystique (Paris, 1953), pp.325-6.

76. Ibid., p.197.
77. From De Diligendo Dei ca.X (PL 182.991)
78. All quotations and references are taken from D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera Omnia (Tournai 1902), t.xvi; the relevant chapters of which are quoted in full in HODGSON, P. (Ed.) Deonise Eid Divinite E.E.T.S. 231 (1957). The translations are by C.E. Rolt, Dionysius the Areopagite (London, 1920). The Latin is similar to the version which would have been available to Richard of S.Victor and is given for that reason. The translation by Rolt is from the Greek original and does not, therefore, correspond at all points. It was felt to be preferable, however, to use this translation because it at once gives a fairly close version of the Latin, whilst revealing the unmediaevalised Dionysius.
79. See From Cluny to the Twelfth Century
80. The information on the military orders is from SEWARD, D. The Monks of War (London, 1972).
81. Isaac of Étoile thought that the order could encourage a mindless and bloody fanaticism. See BOUYER, L. Le Spiritualité de Cîteaux (Le Portulan, 1955). Translated by E.A. Livingstone, The Cistercian Heritage (London, 1958).
82. Most of the following information regarding the Austin Canons comes from DICKINSON, J.C. The Origins of the Austin Canons and their introduction into England (London, 1950).
83. BEDE, Hist.Eccles. i.26.
84. See In Cantica Canticorum, XVIII.ii,iii, as discussed in the chapter on S.Bernard of Clairvaux.
85. Most of the following information on the Premonstratensians is from KNOWLES, D., The Monastic Order in England, c.205.
86. WILLIAMS, W. S. Bernard of Clairvaux (Manchester 1939) claims a number of English foundations between 1128 and 1170.
87. Most of the following information is from KNOWLES, D. ibid. 204.
88. See KNOWLES, D. ibid.
89. For a detailed account see: KNOWLES, M.D. The Religious Orders in England, 3 vols (Cambridge 1948-59), Vol.II, 3-8, 114.
90. Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis (Ratisbon, 1922) ed. by P.M. Helzenauer.
91. The authorship of the Meditationes Vitae Christi, which has important bearings on the question of audience, will be discussed later in this chapter.

92. These four writers have been selected for analysis because, as members of the friars' orders, their attitudes seem to be representative in terms of the issues which occurred in theological debates of the period. Such orders as the Carthusians were very specialized and extreme, and paid little attention to the concepts which form the subject matter of this thesis; they will not, therefore, be studied.
93. See below for the relevant quotation from: ST 2a 2ae. 181-4. Vol.46, p.63.
94. The following edition is used, and all quotations, references and translations are taken from it: AQUINAS, T. Summa Theologiae, Blackfriars Parallel Text (London, 1966), Vols. 46-7.
95. See Chapter on Uthred of Boldon, below.
96. Ibid., 2a 2ae. 179-2 Vol. 46, p.9.
97. See chapter on S.Gregory the Great.
98. See Meditationes Vitae Christi, Ca. LI
99. Ibid. 182-1, Vol.46, p.71.
100. Ibid., 182-4, Vol.46, p.
101. Ibid.
102. S. Gregory the Great was an exception to this, but his special case has been discussed in the relevant chapter.
103. Hilton's works are examined below.
104. See *ibid.*, 184-2, Vol.47, pp.23-5 for the relevant discussion.
105. See *ibid.*, 184-5, Vol.47, p.371.
106. Ibid., 187-2, Vol.47, p.151.
107. Ibid., 188-4, Vol.47, p.191.
108. The relevant volume of the Quaracchi edition is not available in York, so I have used the following edition: S. BONAVENTURA, Opera Omnia (Mainz, 1609) VI & VII, p.229. Translation by DEVAS, D., A Franciscan view of the Spiritual and Religious Life (London, 1922).
109. Stimulus Amicus can be found in S. BONAVENTURA, *op.cit.* Translations are my own.
110. Kirchberger assumes Hilton's authorship and cites three of the ten MSS as having an ascription to him. See C.Kirchberger The Goad of Love (Princeton, 1952), 19.

111. See S. BONAVENTURA, Opera Omnia (Paris, 1898) to. XII, p.569-88. All translations are from RAGUSA, I. & GREEN, R. Meditations on the Life of Christ (Princeton, 1961).
112. See SALTER, E. Nicholas Love's Myroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ. Analecta Cartusiana (ed. J. Hogg) no.10 (Salzburg, 1974), Chapter III.
113. FISCHER, P.C. "Die Meditationes Vitae Christi"; Archivum Franciscanum Historicum. tom. XXV (1932), 449-483.
114. See E. Salter, op.cit., p.42.
115. O. MAONAIGH C., Introduction to Smaointe Beatha Chrisst (1944), p.325.
116. RAGUSA & GREEN, op.cit., p. XXII.
117. This tract is abbreviated MVC henceforward whenever it is discussed intensively.
118. See my chapter on S. Bernard.
119. Chapter XLVIII.
120. Ca. LIV.
121. See Ca. LV.
122. See I. Corinthians 12, 12-31.
123. See GODFREY, C.J. The Church in Anglo-Saxon England, p.273 f.f.
124. Ibid., pp.290-1.
125. See KNOWLES, M.D. & BOLENSKY, D. The Christian Centuries, pp.74-5.
126. See GODFREY, C.J. op.cit., p.342.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.,
129. Ibid., p.344.
130. The relationship of English ideas to such writers as Walter Hilton will be examined in detail.
131. Aelfric's Metrical Lives of the Saints ed. W.W.Skeat E.E.T.S., 76, 82 (1881, 1885) and 94(1890).
132. Ibid., E.E.T.S., 94, p.120.
133. Ibid., p.122.

134. Aelfric, in the Lives of the Saints, was writing primarily for the use of clergy when preaching, though they were also used by monks. See WRENN, C.L. A Study of Old English Literature (London, 1967) pp.224-230.
135. GODFREY, C.J., op.cit., p.336.
136. The Blickling Homilies, ed. R. Morris E.E.T.S., 73 (1880).
137. ibid., p.73.
138. Ibid.
139. Luke 10, 38-42 and John 12 3 respectively.
140. MORRIS, R., op.cit., p.75.
141. ANDERSON, G.K. The Literature of the Anglo Saxons (London, 1949), p.342, ff.
The poor quality of the Blickling Homilies is examined in detail in WILLARD, R. "On Blickling Homily XIII" RES (1936), XII, 1-17.
142. See From S. Benedict of Nursia & S. Benedict of Aniane
143. GODFREY, C.J., op.cit., pp.346-9. It was believed that the world would end at the year 1000, and that Christ would return to judge the world.
144. Printed in PL 32. 1451-74. Translations are my own.
145. The reference in the last extract to nec debes distendi, sed extendi, possibly a pun (or at least a conscious play on words) may be an echo of Bernard's metaphor concerning preaching, where he recommends that a person should not immediately give to others the spiritual gifts intended for himself, as a canal dissipates water the moment it receives it, but be like a reservoir which only passes on water when it is filled itself. See In Cantica Canticorum XVIII.ii and iii in S. Bernard Opera Omnia. It may alternatively be, however, that Aelred is simply deriving the metaphor from Phillipians 3 13, where Paul says that he wishes to forget all distractions and press on toward the goal of Christ. He uses the verb extendere.
146. See SHEPHERD, G. Introduction to edition of Ancrene Wisse Parts VI and VII (Nelsons Medieval and Renaissance Library, London, 1959), p.xxxiii for information regarding this phenomenon.
147. It is of interest in this respect that a Middle English version of De Vita Eremitica by Aelred was made, and this corroborates the suggestion that there was a developing need for spiritual guides in English. For an edition of this translation see HORSEMAN, C. "Informatio Alrededi Abbatis Monasterii de Rievaille ad sororam suam inclusam: Translata de Latina in Anglicum per Thomam, N". Englische Studien VII (1884) 304-42.

148. For details of recluses see CLAY, R.M. The Hermits and Anchorites of England (The Antiquaries Books, London, 1914).
149. Ibid. Shepherd.
150. The English Text of the Ancrene Riwe (MS Cotton Nero A XIV) ed. M. Day, E.E.T.S. 225 (1946).
151. Ancrene Wisse (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 402) ed. J.R.R. Tolkien E.E.T.S. 249 (1962). Day is used above for a unique passage; all other references are to Tolkien.
152. DOBSON, E.J. The Origins of Ancrene Wisse (Oxford, 1976). The whole book is an account of the problems of the authorship (see particularly Chapter VI) and the audience (see particularly Chapter V).
153. Ibid., pp.251-70. It is of great interest that the Anglo-Norman translation of the text is shown by Dobson to be associated with Annora de Bræose, sister of Loretta, Countess of Leicester. Loretta's life is discussed later in this thesis.
154. See Day, op.cit., pp.85 ff.
155. Ibid., p.92 ff.
156. e.g. I Timothy, 2.13.
157. The author himself confirms this. See AW, p.177.
158. This is clearly stated on page 217.
159. Ibid.
160. Ibid., p.195.
161. AW, p.9.
162. The edition based on the Corpus Christi MS does not have this quotation in full, so it is taken from DAY, M. op.cit., p.4.
163. See AELFRIC Metrical Lives of the Saints, EETSOS, 94 (1899), 120.
164. Ibid., p.320.
165. All references are to POWICKE, F.H. "Loretta, Countess of Leicester", in Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait, ed. J.G.Edwards, V.H. Galbraith and E.F.Jacob (Manchester, 1933).
166. Ibid., p.249
167. Ibid., p.247.
168. Ibid., p.266.

169. See DOBSON, The Origins of the Ancrene Wisse, p.305-11. He shows that there were close ties between the Braose family and the Mortimers of Wigmore, through marriage, and, as noted earlier in this thesis, a translation of Ancrene Wisse was associated with Loretta's sister, Annora.
170. Ibid., p.268
171. Ibid., p.270
172. Ibid., p.266.
173. Ibid.
174. Thomas of Eccleston, De Adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam ed A.G. Little (Paris, 1898).
175. POWICKE, art.cit. p.247.
176. Ibid., p.267.
177. Ibid., p.268.
178. The recluses mentioned in SHEPHERD, op.cit., p.xxxiii are further examples.
179. This scheme, repeated in Ancrene Wisse (p.177 ff) divides believers into those who are like good pilgrims, the dead, and those who hang on the Cross with Christ.
180. See the relevant chapter.
181. Cited by Cassian as "the old maxim of the fathers which is still current". This is quoted by DICKINSON, J.C. in The Origin of the Austin Canons and their introduction into England (London, 1950), p.10.
182. This is discussed in detail in the relevant pages.
183. See the relevant chapter for detailed documentation.
184. See relevant pages for discussion of the appropriate texts.
185. i.e. a life lived according to a Rule, either as a solitary or in a religious community, involving chastity and the renunciation of property.
186. i.e. one who lives in society, whether ordained or lay.
187. This is all documented earlier in this thesis.
188. This is also documented above.
189. This complex problem is analysed in detail in LEFF, G. : "Heresy and the decline of the Medieval Church", Past & Present XX (1961), 36-51.

190. There will be no attempt at a comprehensive survey of fourteenth century writers, but a highly selective examination of diverse texts of which the common factor is a treatment of some important aspect of concepts relevant to action and contemplation. The vernacular situation is, in any case, very confused, and this would make very difficult any attempt at an articulated historical account.
191. MS. Ashmole 1286, F.32v - 108v.
192. Lichfield Joint Record Office, Public Library Lichfield (for MSS previously in Lichfield Cathedral Library)
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Dives et Pauper is not, strictly speaking, a fourteenth century work, but is believed to have been written c.1405.
193. The Book of Vices and Virtues ed. W.N. Francis, E.E.T.S. 217 (1942).
194. Ibid., p.ix.
195. ALLEN, H.E. Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole and materials for his biography (Modern Languages Association of America, Monograph Series no.3, New York and London 1927) 218 and 406.
196. See the account of Rolle below.
197. DOYLE, A.I. A survey of the origins and circulation of theological writings in English in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with special consideration of the part of the clergy therein (Ph.D. Cambridge, 1953).
198. Pore Caitif, ff. 97v - 98r.
199. P.C. f. 98r.
200. Ibid.
201. Ibid.
202. The element of purgation which it was noted above to be absent from the definition of the active life, is seen here.
203. Dives et Pauper, ff.16v - 17r.
204. Ibid., f.17v.
205. FRANCIS, W.N., op.cit., p.ix.
206. Ibid.
207. BVV was written for King Philip III of France, according to Colophons in the manuscripts of the French original. See FRANCIS, op.cit., p.xi for details.

208. There were at least nine versions between the Ayenbite of Inwit in 1340, and the Royal Book in 1486. See FRANCIS ibid., p.ix.
209. ibid., p.120.
210. Ibid.
211. Ayenbite of Inwit ed. R. Morris E.E.T.S. 23 (1886; revised P. Gradon 1965).
212. Ibid., p.22.
213. FRANCIS, op.cit., p.121.
214. Biographical information is from PANTIN, W.A. "Two Treatises of Uthred of Boldon on the Monastic Life" from Studies in Medieval History presented to F.M. Powicke, ed. by R.W. Hunt, W.A. Pantin and R.W. Southern (Oxford, 1948); and see also MARCETT, M.E., Uthred de Boldon, Friar William Jordan and Piers Plowman (New York, 1938).
215. Durham Cathedral Library, MS B.IV.34. f. 80r - f.96v.
216. f. 97r - f.115v.
The treatises survive in two MSS, the Durham MS and MS Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 103, pp.291-30.
217. See De substancialibus regule monachalis, f.80r. The MS of De substancialibus and De perfectione has a double system of folio numeration, of which one is more distinct and in a bolder hand, and the other is in a very light hand and is four folios ahead of the first (e.g. the first folio of the first treatise bears the numbers 76 and 80). In accordance with the system used by Pantin, all references in this thesis are to the lighter and higher numbers.
218. See ibid.
219. See ibid. f.85r.
220. The Durham MS and MS Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 103 (pp.291-310).
221. See Durham, f.97r.
222. See PANTIN, op.cit., p.382.
223. All Biblical quotations are from Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis ed. P. Hetzenauer (Ratisbon, 1922).
224. See De perfectione, f.105r.
225. See ibid., f.99r.
226. Ibid.
227. See ibid., f.101r.

228. See *ibid.*, 100v.
229. Scale of Perfection, British Museum, London. MS Harleian 6579. f.2r - 145r.
230. See *ibid.*
231. See *ibid.*, f.82v.
232. See *ibid.*, f.102r.
233. *Ibid.*, f.104r.
234. See *ibid.*, 102r.
235. The Cloud of Unknowing, ed. P. Hodgson, E.E.T.S. 218 (1944; revised reprints 1958 and 1973).
236. There are discussions of the audiences of the fourteenth-century English writers in PANTIN, W.A., The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Cambridge 1955), chapter XI.
237. In Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers, ed. C. Horstman, 2 vols. (Library of Early English Writers, London and New York 1895), Vol.I, p.1-49.
238. DEANESLEY, M. (ed.) The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole (Manchester, 1915).
239. ALLEN, H.C. Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, p.35.
240. See chapter on Hilton below.
241. Horstman, *op.cit.*, p.47.
242. *Ibid.*
243. See chapter on Hilton.
244. Horstman, *op.cit.*, p.48.
245. Translations from COMPER, F.M. The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life (London, 1914).
246. This is examined in detail by Professor Hodgson. See p.1 f.f. of her edition.
247. *Ibid.*, p.lxix f.f.
248. *Ibid.*, p.53.
249. *Ibid.*
250. See chapter on English writers, above.
251. *Ibid.*
252. I Corinthians, 12.12.
253. Cloud of Unknowing, p.60.

254. Ibid., p.59.
255. Ibid., p.2.
256. Ibid.
257. Ibid.
258. See chapter on Hilton below.
259. Ibid., p.lvi.
260. Ibid.
261. See Chapters 19, 21 and 23 of Cloud of Unknowing. Also Privy Counselling in HODGSON, op.cit., p.149.
262. Ibid. Chapter 18 where the Cloud author refers to these matters.
263. Ibid., p.lvi, where Professor Hodgson refers to this dispute.
264. For biographical information see MILOSH, J.E. The Scale of Perfection (Madison 1966), p.7. and UNDERHILL, E. The Scale of Perfection (London, 1923). A Modernized version.
265. For a select list of MSS see UNDERHILL, op.cit., pp.xlv-1.
266. For a list of MSS se HORSTMAN, op.cit. I, p.264-5.
267. Lincoln Cath.Library, MS Thornton, A 1.17 ed. in Horstman, op.cit.
268. British Museum, London. MS Royal 6E III 72v - 75v.
269. HILTON, W. Epistle on Mixed Life. This epistle is in the following manuscripts: Bodleian Library, Oxford MS Eng.poet. 2.1. f.353 f.f.
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All quotations and page references are from this edition of the Vernon MS.
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270. Ibid., p.264.
271. Ibid. ca.l. 267.
272. Ibid.
273. Ibid., ca.l. p.267.
274. Ibid.

275. Ibid.
276. e.g. John Cassian's monastic duties in relation to the poor, needy, etc.
277. Ibid.
278. Ibid., ca.ii, p.267.
279. Ibid., ca. x, p.275.
280. Ibid., ca.i, p.267.
281. Scale, ca.VIII, 5r - 5v.
282. Epistle on Mixed Life. ca.xx, p.291.
283. RUSSELL SMITH, J. "Walter Hilton" The Month XXII (1959), p.138.
284. Epistle on Mixed Life. ca.iv, p.268.
285. Ibid., ca.vii, p.271
286. Ibid., ca.ii, p.267; ca.iv, p.269.
287. Ibid., ca.v, p.269.
288. Ibid., ca.iv, p.274.
289. Ibid., ca.x, p.275.
290. Ibid., ca.x, p.276.
291. Printed in HORSTMAN, C., op.cit. Vol.I, pp.175-82.
292. MS. B.M. Royal 6 E III, f.72v - 75v.
293. The translation is from GARDNER, H.L. "Walter Hilton and the Mystical Tradition in England", Essays and Studies, XXII (1937), 10.
294. Ms.B.M. Royal 6 E. III f.123r - 128v.
295. All quotations and references are from British Museum, London MS Harleian 6579 entitled Scala Perfectionis.
296. See below.
297. Chapter numbers in Roman or Arabic numerals are as they appear in the MS. Chapter numbers which are in Roman numerals and are underlined are editorial, and are used where the MS does not give a number. They are in accordance with the numeration in UNDERHILL, E. The Scale of Perfection (1923).

298. B.M. Harley 6579. ca.lv, 37v.
299. The punctus elevatus is represented throughout by a semi-colon. Punctuation is given as in the MS, and contractions are expanded.
300. Ibid., ca. 41, 128v.
301. Cf. Cloud of Unknowing, ed.P. Hodgson, E.E.T.S. 218, p.22 l.8. Prayer is a "sodeyn steryng ... springing unto God as sparcle fro þe cole". Hodgson points to a common source in Benjamin Minor V.6 (see CU p.187. note to 22/8).
302. See ca. 43 133r.
303. See ca. 45 137r.
304. See ca. 45 138r.
305. Ibid.
306. Ibid.
307. See ca. XVII 11r.
308. See ca. lxi, 4lv.
309. See above, extract from Scale ca.VIII. 5r - 5v.
310. See BERNARD, In Cantica Canticorum, Sermo 62.
311. See RUSSELL-SMITH, J. "Walter Hilton", The Month XXII (1959), p.143.
312. At a later period, Cicely Duchess of York (the mother of Edward IV and Richard III) used to spend her days in religious occupation "during which time whereof she hath a reading of holy matter, either Hilton ..."
from A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household, Soc.of Antiq. (1790),37, cited in PANTIN, W.A., The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (1955), 254.
313. B.M. Add. 22283 f.15lv. Underhill claims (SP.p.xlviii) that this MS is contemporary with Hilton.
314. See RUSSELL-SMITH, J. ant.cit., p.143.
315. Ca.18 (see above).
316. Ibid., ca.40, 125r.
317. See ibid. ca.iv-v. 66r - 67r.
318. See ibid., ca. 27. 95v.

319. Cf. Epistle on Mixed Life and its advice to a temperal lorde.
320. WELLS, H.W. "The Construction of Piers Plowman", PMLA XLIV (1929) 123-40.
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322. All quotations and references are from LANGLAND, William. The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman, Parallel Text Edition ed. W.W. Skeat, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1886; reprinted and revised 1954). There is a recent edition of this poem by G. Kane and E.T. Donaldson, Piers Plowman: the B-Text (London, 1975). It is not used as the editorial changes are not significant for the present argument.
323. Ibid., B VII, 23 f.f.
324. Ibid., B VI, 1 f.f.
325. Ibid., C VIII, 299-308. The allusion is to the parable in Luke 14, 16-24.
326. Ibid., B VI, 146-8.
327. Ibid., B X, 452-75.
328. Ibid., B X, 332-4.
329. Ibid., C XVI-XVIII.
330. Ibid., C XIII, 1-31.
331. Ibid., C XIII, 32-6.
332. This treatise is printed in Horstman, C. Richard Rolle of Hampole I (1895), p.50 f.f.
333. RAW, B. "Piers and the Image of God in Man" in HUSSEY, S.S., Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches (London, 1969), pp.143-79.

334. Cf. the beliefs of Richard of S. Victor in De Quatuor Gradibus Violentae Christatis, which are analysed in an earlier chapter of this thesis
335. Ibid., B XI, 179-83. The metaphor concerns Christ always pursuing a man, in the apparel of the poor.
336. Printed in HORSTMAN, C., op.cit.

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