

**THE SPIRITUAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF
JOHN CASSIAN**

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THE SPIRITUAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF JOHN CASSIAN

PHD THESIS SUBMITTED BY JINHA KIM

This thesis is an investigation into the spiritual anthropology of John Cassian, who composed two monastic works, the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*. Although Cassian transmits the teachings of the Egyptian desert fathers living in the later fourth century, many polemical mind-sets, from his Latin contemporaries to modern critics, have not been able simply to accept his delivery with a spirit of respect and support. In his texts, the doctrine of free will and grace has been judged to be Semi-Pelagian through the viewpoint of Augustinian orthodoxy. Moreover, since Salvatore Marsili's comparative study in the 1930s, it has been accepted that Cassian's ascetic theology depended heavily on the writings of Evagrius Ponticus. Thus, the authenticity of his texts has been obscured for over fifteen hundred years in the West. Consequently, they have been regarded as second-class materials in the primitive desert monastic literature. This thesis re-examines the above settled convictions, and attempts to defend Cassian's repeated statements that he wrote what he had seen and heard in the desert. As the two assertions both relate to anthropological issues, the thesis investigates Cassian's spiritual anthropology; human created nature, the Fall, its results, salvation, perfection, free will and grace. Chapter I uses as the context Cassian's life and the monastic setting of Gaul that had an influence on his works. Chapter II explores a literary feature of his writings and identifies the authenticity of Cassian's texts in comparison with the desert monastic literature. Here, the thesis argues against the dominant assumption of his dependence on Evagrius' works and reveals that Cassian was not a transmitter of the Evagrian schemata. Chapter III focuses on the instructions of created human nature in Cassian's texts and establishes that they were derived from the Alexandrian and the desert theological tradition, not that of the Evagrian Origenist. Chapter IV deals with the Fall and its effect on human nature. In the process, the thesis verifies that *Conferences* XIII does not offer an alternative to the Augustinian teachings on grace, but reflects the doctrinal milieu within the Alexandrian theology, which was to be regarded as Semi-Pelagian in the eyes of later Augustinianism. Chapter V presents soteriology in Cassian's works, in which all related texts show the Eastern synergistic tendencies regarding grace and free will as cooperating harmoniously with each other for salvation. Overall, the thesis asserts that distinctive divergences and inconsistencies among the speakers in treating each theme serve to verify the authenticity of Cassian's Abbas.

The thesis concludes that Cassian was, indeed, the most notable transmitter of oral and lived Egyptian monastic theology to the West, as he claimed.

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

“He is next door to understanding who carefully recognizes what he ought to ask about, nor is he far from knowledge, who begins to understand how ignorant he is.” (Abba Isaac, *Conferences* X.9)

1.1 INTRODUCTORY MATTER

Johannes Cassianus, John Cassian by the English name, was charged by Castor, Bishop of Apt, to write “the customs of the monasteries which we have seen observed throughout Egypt and Palestine, as they were delivered to us by the Fathers.”¹ By request, he synthesised in the *Institutes* the monastic customs and rules which were observed throughout the monasteries in the whole of

¹ *Institutes* I, Preface. English translations of John Cassian have been taken from *NPNF, 2nd Series, vol. 11*, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, 1894.

Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Cappadocia and Egypt.² Yet, his presentation focused mainly on Egyptian custom because of its superiority to others.³ In the strict sense, Cassian always separately elucidated each custom,⁴ and synthesis was expressed only once in relation to the Egyptian training of the novice when he integrated the rule of the Egyptians with that of the Tabenna (Pachomian monastery).⁵ Afterwards, Castor demanded again to write in the same style the conferences of the Egyptian anchorites, who dwelt in the desert of Scete.⁶ This request led to the appearance of *Conferences*, in which Cassian said, “we may explain them as beautifully and as exactly as we received them from them.”⁷

This is the process coming out the monastic works of the fifth century Latin author what I will present in this study. After a lapse of many hundred years, today there is increasing interest in Cassian’s works. It reflects the recognition of the timeliness of his works, their enrichment for modern readers and their contemporary relevance. As the bibliography reveals, in the last dozen years, many books and papers on Cassian, including complete retranslations of *Institutes* and *Conferences* in English, have been written, and they deal with various themes from terminological, literary critical, ascetic, monastic, theological, to dogmatic environmental points of view. After the publication of *John Cassian* by Owen Chadwick a half century ago, the most comprehensive and systematic study of Cassian’s monastic theology was undertaken by Columba Stewart, whose work was published in 1998.⁸ His aim was to provide an analysis of the most central and

² Cf. *ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* II.6; IV.1,17; *Conferences* XVII.2,5.

⁴ *Institutes* III.1,3; IV.1, 17, 19.

⁵ *Ibid.* IV.1

⁶ *Conferences* I, Preface.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 1998.

distinctive issues in Cassian's works, in his interest in monastic life and spirituality. Special reference will be made to *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, written recently by Steven Driver. The author suggests that there was a hidden attempt by Cassian to recreate a common monastic experience through formative reading, thus transforming the way in which the reader interacted with the text.

Prior to Driver's work, some studies were written from the dogmatic point of view of Cassian's semi-Pelagianism, and gave close scrutiny to his theological position on grace and free will. A few, such as Robert Floyd Rea, Lauren Pristas and Rebecca Harden Weaver,⁹ attempted to throw off the yoke that has burdened Cassian with the reputation as the leading spokesman of the semi-Pelagian party. The good fruits of these studies have attained so much that one might question the need for further study of Cassian.

Out of the hundreds of years of studies and observations, we find two common themes. Firstly, some of his conferences were suspected of being a submission of his own anti-Augustinian doctrine rather than the teachings of the Egyptian Abbas. Though he claims the *Conferences* to be the very discourses of the desert fathers, Cassian's authenticity has been challenged. The first critics were a certain Hilary, and Prosper of Aquitaine, who were fascinated by Augustine. In 428 or 429, two laymen dispatched letters to the "faith's great patron" with a report of the new form of heresy storing the errors of Pelagianism in Marseilles and elsewhere in

⁹ Robert Floyd Rea, "Grace and Free Will in Jonh Cassian," Ph D diss., Saint Louis University, 1990; Lauren Pristas, "The Theological Anthropology of John Cassian," Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 1993; Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*, 1996.

Southern Gaul.¹⁰ Augustine's immediate answer to these appeals was given to them with the two treatises under the titles of *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* and *De Dono Perseverantiae*. In about 433, in his *De Gratia Dei et libero arbitrio; liber contra collatorem*, Prosper attacked the "Collator" who, in his *Conferences*, had put forward a sufficiently dangerous challenge of Augustine's teaching of grace.¹¹ Though he never uses Cassian's name, it makes clear that all criticisms point to him. The diagnosis of this vigorous controversialist has been sporadically reiterated until rather recently. Owen Chadwick argues, "Hence he was strong against St Augustine's doctrines of predestination and irresistible grace, and devoted one of the *Conferences* (XIII) to confute Augustine and explain what he took to be the proper doctrine of grace and free will; so gained the unfair semi-Pelagian."¹² Most recently, going a step further, Mark Sheridan asserts, "Notwithstanding his insistence on the importance of experience, he was highly literate, and many texts inflected his thinking, including some philosophical, scriptural and contemporary theological writings, especially some by Jerome and Augustine, with which he disagreed."¹³ Thus, Cassian was even presented as a remarkable theorist who had originality and depth rather than as a simple reporter.¹⁴

¹⁰ Proser's letter is preserved among Augustine's own letter as *Ep.* 225, Hilary's letter does as *Ep.* 226.

¹¹ Cf. Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, 121-31. The author comments that "Prosper, presumably through misunderstanding, argued against a Cassian whom he himself had constructed."

¹² Owen Chadwick, "John Cassian," in *The Study of Spirituality*, p. 147. In the introduction of his translation on *The Conferences*, Boniface Ramsey notes on *Conferences* XIII that "there is no doubt that this conference is an intentional reply to Augustine rather than simply a fortuitous composition." (pp. 10-11)

¹³ Mark Sheridan, "Job and Paul: Philosophy and Exegesis in Cassian's Sixth Conference," *Studia Monastica* 42(2000): 271.

¹⁴ Jean-Claude Guy, "Jean Cassien, historien du monachisme égyptien?" *Studia Patristica*, 8 (1966): 372.

Secondly, common among historians and patrologists is the notion that, as a disciple of Evagrius Ponticus, who adopted Origen's speculative cosmological theology, Cassian appropriated the teachings of the representative of Origenists rather than those of the desert Abbas he met. Even though their theological frameworks and the styles of representation differ fundamentally, modern scholarship persistently uses the word "dependency" to define their relationship, particularly after Salvatore Marsili published a comparative study of the textual relationship between the two.¹⁵ The *Institutes* are often regarded as an expansion of Evagrius' teaching on the vicia and monastic issues, while the ascetic theology of the *Conferences* is shaped and formed on the basis of Evagrian practice.

However, I have been forced to challenge these views, after careful readings of Evagrius' teachings, the contemporary sources of the desert fathers, and the Alexandrian theological tradition in the light of Cassian's works, and suggest that the study needs to, again, be undertaken from scratch. After the two great barriers to Cassian's authenticity, mentioned above, were slowly removed, I came to believe in Cassian's statement that the twenty-four conferences were reproductions of actual dialogues of the fifteen Abbas, Germanus and Cassian himself. If this hypothesis can be verified through this study, it will represent a decisive change of direction in the inquiry of Cassian's works. To accumulate sought-after evidence, we should clarify the dissimilarities among the discourses of Abbas in his works that have not yet been sufficiently considered by other scholars. On the other hand, it is possible to discern among the various different Abbas, whose thought were rooted in a certain desert monastic milieu, a common essence that can be captured in a concept. This work requires a systematic observation of the conferences under certain theological headings.

¹⁵ Salvatore Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico, dottrina sulla carità e contemplazione*, 1936.

Hence, my investigation will be in the pursuit of the anthropological path which desires to know how the monks really understood the human state and salvation.

What the main purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is twofold that: (1) I will defend the authenticity of Cassian's texts against above two old presumptions that firstly, Cassian's teachings are a modification and expansion of Evagrius'; secondly *Conferences XIII* was written in opposition to Augustine. Through an examination of the terminologies, the literary and historical context of his texts, I will show that Cassian's texts were faithful to the desert tradition that reflects the Alexandrian theological milieu. It should be noted that R. F. Rea, recently, has already proposed Cassian's orthodoxy as being harboured in the tradition of the Eastern Church and of the pre-Augustinian Western Church; yet he has not investigated sufficiently his teachings in comparison with the Alexandrian theological tradition, and the contemporary tradition of the desert fathers.

Furthermore, if Cassian's conferences are the reports from actual dialogues, there should be naturally a diversity of opinion as to the same matter among the fifteen Cassian's Abbas. Since the two old assertions relate in common to the anthropological issues, we investigate the spiritual anthropology in Cassian's works for disclosure of the differences of opinion; human created nature, fall, its results, salvation, perfection, free will and grace. Based on the investigations, I will evaluate whether Cassian was the most notable and discerning transmitter of oral and lived Egyptian monastic theology to the West, as he claimed.

(2) As we will expound precisely what Cassian's works teach on anthropological issues, we hope that his rich materials provided lead us to build up a well-articulated logical structure of the desert anthropology, that the *Apophthegmata* is not able to offer. Since the Cassian's elders has spoken definitively about the nature, purpose, and destiny of ascetic humanity, those who seek to come to a fuller understanding of what it means to be a monk, or an ascetic will have a new perspective and assistance.

There are several ways of treating Cassian's works, but in connection with the analysis of his texts, two approaches have been adopted traditionally. One is the way of synthesizing and systematizing his teachings under particular thematic issues. Whereas this has the advantage of ease in understanding, the contents of his works could possibly become refracted through the expositor's mind. Pristas disregards the reliability of the synthetic approach since it "is unable to consider the doctrinal context of Cassian's original discussions and their cumulative effect."¹⁶ Driver, too, cautions us about the risk of "introducing "systems" of their own, creating from its seemingly disjointed parts a theological structure that Cassian himself would not have recognized."¹⁷

Another approach is to analyze the literary character and structure in strict order, as Pristas did, and so let Cassian speak for himself. The advantage is that the texts themselves provide support. On the other hand, the disadvantage is not having a broad and coherent prospect of particular themes that are treated repeatedly returned to.

The two principal approaches each have advantages: the studies are instructive and well advanced. However, the results are less satisfying for one who approaches Cassian with a conviction of his authenticity. Besides, two methods are inappropriate for this study, which demands the assembling of all data relative to the anthropological issues, and which seeks independently the profound meaning conferred upon the data, according to each speaker.

¹⁶ Lauren Pristas, "The Theological Anthropology of John Cassian," 134-5.

¹⁷ Steven D. Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, 2002, p. 3.

For this reason, a good method should be chosen, which systematically arranges each Abbas' teachings related to the anthropological themes and, at the same time, attentively considers the context within the texts. It is a third way that combines the previous two approaches, thus taking advantage of the benefits of both methods.

This study is comprised of six chapters. By way of introduction, Chapter I presents a narrative of his life and the monastic setting of Gaul, while Chapter II covers a literary analysis of his writings with the literary context. The initial task of this chapter will be to identify the connection between the desert monastic literature and Cassian's works, the literary dependence between Evagrius' works and Cassian's, and the relationship between *Conferences XIII* and the other conferences. The first two chapters of the discussion will prepare the way for the remainder, which will deal with anthropological matters in Cassian's works. Chapter III investigates the instructions on created human nature before the Fall. I will analyse Cassian's texts in the light of the Alexandrian theological tradition, which is fundamental to the understanding of the desert doctrines. Chapter IV examines the Fall and human nature in the fallen state. This examination is important because it has a marked effect upon one's view of free will and God's grace. In the process, treating *Conferences XIII*, I will assess whether Cassian offers an alternative to the Augustinian teachings on grace. Chapter V demonstrates the doctrine of salvation, which is the key to understanding the doctrinal preoccupations of Cassian's Abbas. This chapter clarifies the meaning, role and use of grace and free will in the ascetic practices. The final part of the dissertation summarises the main conclusions on the anthropology in Cassian's works and suggests areas for further research.

1.2 THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CASSIAN

John Cassian was “one of the two great lights of the Western Church, with St. Augustine.”¹⁸ While the latter has been named ‘the Doctor of the Church as well as the Doctor of Grace,’¹⁹ the former has been called “in the high Middle Ages the chief ‘doctor’ of the monks,”²⁰ as well as “the principal representative of anti-Augustinian doctrine,”²¹ or *Princeps Semipelagianorum*. Although Cassian’s light dwindled to some degree in brilliance for opposing the doctrine of grace that another light illuminated, Cassian played a vital part in the development of monasticism and the formation of spirituality in the West. This effect has been attributed to the canonization of his works by St. Benedict, whose Rule has held an unrivaled place in western monasticism. He himself stated that his Rule was a code for beginners as a minimum standard of an evangelical life, and advised that his readers should supplement the Rule with the teaching of Cassian.²² In the majority of the medieval monasteries where Benedictine Rule was kept, his *Institutes* and *Conferences* served as public reading, and then continued to have a great influence on the readers. On the other hand, in the East as well in the West, the Greek versions of Cassian’s works were circulated within a century after his death. A high valuation on him as a monastic authority appeared in the *Apophthegmata* and *Philokalia*, in which Cassian is the only Latin to be included among the desert fathers and the monumental monastic writers.²³ These two

¹⁸ Marrie-Anne Vannier, *Traité de L’Incarnation Contre Nestorius*, p. 7. Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. IV, p. 521.

¹⁹ Cf. Eugène Portalié, “Augustine of Hippo,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. II: 84-104.

²⁰ Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 158.

²¹ Cappuyns, *DHGE*, 11:1354.

²² Dom D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 1949, 10-1. Cf. St. Benedict, *Regula* lxxiii, 21-2.

²³ Cf. Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 157; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 25

representative pieces of ascetic literature that received full attention in the East have allowed his works to be widely read.

Who is John Cassian? It is difficult to understand a thinker without knowing something of his biography. Through the knowledge of the religious events of his own times, many attempted to unearth his personal history, but they were handicapped by the lack of data. Many matters remain supposition. This is because not only did Cassian record little about himself, but neither did his disciples, numbering up to 5,000',²⁴ unlike the disciples of other contemporary great churchmen. *The Life of St. Augustine*, for example, was written by his disciple, Possidius, Bishop of Calama. *A Discourse on the Life of St. Honoratus* was written by his disciple, Hilary, Bishop of Arles. This manner of not proposing biography seems to have originated in the desert monastic tradition to which Cassian belonged, although their fathers left an indelible mark on all aspects of subsequent Christian spirituality. Regarding the *Life of Antony*, by Athanasius, the biographer was an outside admirer, not personal disciple. In the case of the anonymous *Life of Pachomius*, which revealed the intense, almost cultic veneration of its founder, it was necessary to infuse new forces into their order due to a crisis after his death.

Thus, in an attempt to reconstitute Cassian's biography, some aspects have to be supplied from contemporary testimonies or later materials which highlighted characteristics of Cassian, such as the *Dialogue on the Life of Saint John Chrysostom* of Palladius, composed in late 407 or early 408, the Letter 19 of Pope

²⁴ Chadwick, *ibid.* p. 159. Quoted from *Acta SS.* July, v, p. 460.

Innocent 1, and the brief biographical sketch of Gennadius of Marseilles, written between 467 and 477, forty years after his death.²⁵

1.2.1 Cassian's Early Life

Gennadius informs us that Cassian's birth-place is *natione scythia*, in the Scythian people.²⁶ There has been an unresolved debate about whether this phrase refers to Scete, Cassian's second home, or Scythia Minor, known today as Dobrudja, a part of modern-day Romania, or other areas.²⁷ The leading nominees are southern Gaul and Scythia Minor, preferred by most scholars today.²⁸ There are two textual clues that could help to settle the dispute. Firstly, in the preface of the *Institutes*, Cassian alludes to his identity in Gaul as a foreign helper invited by Bishop Castor, who was planning to build a monastery. Such an invitation was in keeping with that received from Hiram, the king of Tyre, who was called to advise Solomon on the building of the Temple. Secondly, Abba Abraham mentioned a weather report on the regions of his listeners, "which, as the report says, are frozen, and bound by the cold of excessive unbelief."²⁹ Besides these, two fainter hints support Scythia Minor. Cassian was perfectly bilingual in Greek and Latin. In the Roman province of Scythia Minor of his era, "Latin was spoken but the urban population was

²⁵ Gennadius of Marseilles, *De viris inlustribus*, ed. Ernest Cushing Richardson, TU 14, pt. 1, 1896. Marcu Bănesu notes that Gennadius was a monk educated in the monastic school of Cassian. Cf. Theodore Damian, "Some Critical Considerations and New Arguments Reviewing the Problem of St. John Cassian's Birthplace," *The Patristic and Byzantine Review* 9 (1990): 163.

²⁶ Gennadius, *ibid.* 62.

²⁷ Cf. Damian, "Some Critical Considerations," 149-170; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 4-6; Robert Floyd, *Grace and Free will in John Cassian*, pp. 3-7.

²⁸ Cf. Vannier, *Traité de L'Incarnation*, pp. 23-7. Damian, *ibid.* 165.

²⁹ *Conferences* XXIV.8

almost equally at home with Greek.” In addition, his later ecclesiastical career in Constantinople and Rome was weighted toward the Greek East.

There is very little known about his birth date, childhood and home background. As is frequently the case for most Fathers, we do not know the date of birth of Cassian. It is estimated to be around 360 to 365, if John Chrysostom ordained Cassian a deacon at the usual age,³⁰ and unless Cassian began his monastic life in Bethlehem as a teenager. Of his family, he only once mentions a sister.³¹ He was trained in rhetoric, which suggests that Cassian came from a relatively well-off family, and benefited from a complete education in a classical latinized environment. Later, Cassian expresses a grievance against his knowledge of literature, which served as a hindrance to his contemplative life.³²

1.2.2 Cassian’s Monastic Life in Bethlehem and the Nile Delta

As the external references hardly deal with his monastic life in Bethlehem and Egypt, that period of his life should be studied mainly on the basis of what Cassian

³⁰ Volz notes that Nicea Canon sets the boundaries for candidates for ordination who must be males of proven virtue not less than thirty years old. Cf. Carl A. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church*, p. 38; Council of Nicea, *The Seven Councils*, 8ff.

³¹ *Institutes* XI.18

³² *Conferences* XIV.12: “A special hindrance to salvation is added by that knowledge of literature which I seem already to have in some slight measure attained, in which the efforts of my tutor, or my attention to continual reading have so weakened me that now my mind is filled with those songs of the poets so that even at the hour of prayer it is thinking about those trifling fables, and the stories of battles with which from its earliest infancy it was stored by its childish lessons: and when singing Psalms or asking forgiveness of sins either some wanton recollection of the poems intrudes itself or the images of heroes fighting presents itself before the eyes, and an imagination of such phantoms is always tricking me and does not suffer my soul to aspire to an insight into things above, so that this cannot be got rid of by my daily lamentations.”

wrote. However, throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, scholars repudiated the historical value of Cassian's *Institutes* and *Conferences*. Weingarten, Guy notes, substantially reduced to pure myth the historic information about Egyptian monasticism provided by Cassian.³³ Later, his authority was restored to some degree by enormous century-long investigations into early monasticism. Yet, Veilleux again claims that Cassian's representation of Egyptian monastic life in the fourth-century, which has often been valued uncritically as an authoritative source, is an unreliable guide.³⁴ I will deal with the polemic of this issue in the following chapter. In the light of such discredit, most scholars who have studied Cassian's life have made less use of his works than they might have, even though they can provide valuable evidence about his life. Apart from the *Institutes* and *Conferences*, there is no way of gaining an account of his monastic itinerary in Bethlehem and Egypt. I attempt to write it by using such accounts of his journey and his Abbas' institutions.

In *Egeria's Journey*, written by a mysterious Gallican lady known as Etheria or Egeria, we see with numerous pilgrims to the holy Land in the late fourth century.³⁵ Driven to seek Eastern monastic practices, Cassian decides to leave for Palestine with his friend Germanus, who is so old that one can judge with the naked eye.³⁶ He later explains their relationship in the following way: "we were united in a tie of spiritual and not carnal brotherhood, and that from the first commencement of our renunciation of the world we had always been joined

³³ Guy, "Jean Cassien," 363. Cf. Hermann Weingarten, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums im nachconstantinischen Zeitalter*, 1877, p. 67.

³⁴ Armand Veilleux, *La liturgie dans le cénobitisme pachômien au quatrième siècle*, 1968, pp. 282-283.

³⁵ *Itinerarium Etheriae*. English version; *Egeria's travels to the Holy Land*, trans., John Wilkinson, 1981.

³⁶ Cf. *Conferences* XIV.9. Neseros makes Cassian beware of his youthfulness.

together in an unbroken bond as well in our travels.”³⁷ They first went to a monastery in Bethlehem, close to the cave of the Nativity.³⁸

The experience there was summarized as a time, “At the time we were living in a monastery in Syria, when there were certain developments after the first instruction in the faith, and we had begun to long for some greater grace of perfection.”³⁹ The extent of their progress was observed by Abba Pinufius, who lived with them in the same cell: “I am indeed delighted at the very plentiful fruits of your humility, which indeed I saw with no indifferent concern, when I was formerly received in the habitation of that cell of yours.”⁴⁰ That Cassian and Germanus acquired the virtue of humility indicates their completion of some training beyond the rudimentary stage, as Pinufius regards humility as just below the highest of all virtues, apostolic love.⁴¹ In Bethlehem they already possessed experience and a capacity for interacting between speakers and listeners on a high level of monastic teachings.

Their new thirst for perfection was decisively evoked by living with a perfect example, a runaway Egyptian Abba, Pinufius.⁴² Cassian illustrates why the famous abbot escaped twice from his administering monastery: “when he saw that for this reason he could not practise that humility which he longed for with all the ardour

³⁷ *Conferences* XVI.1. In the Preface of *Institutes*, Cassian notes that “from our earliest youth we lived among them.” Cf. *Conferences* XVII.7.

³⁸ *Institutes* III.4; IV.31; *Conferences* XI.5; XIX.1. This monastery is not the monastery of Jerome and Paula founded close to the cave of the Nativity in 386. To detect what was their coenobium is difficult to us.

³⁹ *Conferences* XI.1. Understanding Bethlehem as “the province of Palestine in Syria” (*Conferences* XX.1), Cassian makes no distinction between the monastery of Syria (*Conferences* XI.1; XIX.1) and the monastery of Bethlehem (*Institutes* III.4; IV.31).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* XX.4

⁴¹ Cf. *Institutes* IV.30, 39, 43.

⁴² *Conferences* XX.1, 2.

of his disposition, and had no opportunity of exercising the virtue of subjection which he desired, he fled secretly from the Coenobium.”⁴³ This case makes Cassian and Germanus believe that something better was in Egypt. The present monastery was insufficient to satisfy their eager desire for perfection. In the presence of all the brothers, they obtained permission to set off to the Egyptian desert, bound by the promise to return.⁴⁴

Cassian recollects the original object of the journey to Egypt: “we determined straightway to seek Egypt and penetrating even to the remotest desert of Thebaid, to visit very many of the saints, whose glory and fame had spread abroad everywhere, with the wish, if not to emulate them, at any rate to know them.”⁴⁵ He gathered some information on Egyptian monasticism. Their destination was the desert of Thebaid, not Skete. Where was the remotest desert of Thebaid? In *Institutes* IV, Cassian indicates that the furthest parts of Thebaid is Tabenna (Tabennisi).⁴⁶ A French scholar accurately let us know about Thebaid:

In the strict sense of the term, Thebaid was the region around Thebes in Upper Egypt (where the first Pachomian monasteries were established) but, in fact, all the fourth-century writers and the travellers who followed them gave the name Thebaid to the secluded districts bordering the Nile from Memphis to Syene, the whole of Middle and Upper Egypt.⁴⁷

⁴³ *Institutes* IV.30. Cf. *Conferences* XX.1.

⁴⁴ *Conferences* XVII.5

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* XI.1

⁴⁶ *Institutes* IV.30

⁴⁷ Jacques Lacarrière, *Men Possessed by God: the story of the desert monks of ancient Christendom*, trans., Roy Monkcom, 1964, p. 99.

This observation is consistent with geographical notes of *The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, in which the Thebaid district includes Lycopolis, Oxyrhynchus, Hermopolis, Antinoe, Heracleopolis and Pispir.⁴⁸ Cassian also says that Lyco (Lycopolis) is a town in Thebaid.⁴⁹ Whereas the anonymous seven monks of *The Historia Monachorum* start the exploration from Lycopolis in central Egypt toward Lower Egypt, downstream of the River Nile, Cassian and Germanus intend to go far away to Tabenna, nearly two hundred miles upriver from Lycopolis. Yet, we have no travelogue of his visit to Thebaid, only to the monasteries and anchorites' cells in Lower Egypt, such as in Panephrisis and Diolcos in the Nile Delta, in Scete, and at Kellia.

After arriving at the port of Thennesus from Palestine, remarkably little was written about the physical details of travel. Cassian and Germanus immediately and unexpectedly met a former anchorite, Bishop Archebius of Panephrisis. He guides them to visit three anchorites, Chaeremon, Nesteros and Joseph, living in his bishopric.⁵⁰ Whom they should visit was the key of their itinerary. The interview with the monastic champions begins with the recommendation of an ecclesiastical authority.

We can trace the course and impression of their initial itinerary from scatterings in *Conferences XI-XVII*, which records their encounter with three Abbots in chronological order. As Bishop Archebius promised that "from them you can learn not so much by their words as by the actual example of their holy life... if when you are seeking that pearl of the Gospel which I have not, I at least provide where you

⁴⁸ *The Historia Monachorum*, On John of Lycopolis 1, 2; On Oxyrhynchus 1; On Elias 1; On Apollo 1; On Paphnutius 1; On Pityrion 1.

⁴⁹ *Institutes IV.13*. Cf. *The Historia Monachorum*, On John of Lycopolis 1.

⁵⁰ *Conferences XI.3*

can conveniently procure it,"⁵¹ the first two discourses of Abba Chaeremon engender "the force of which had inspired us with the utmost longing for this chastity."⁵² Chaeremon's general teaching of perfection as a monk's goal, presented in *Conferences* XI, as Pristas observes, is particularly applied to perfect chastity, written in *Conferences* XII.⁵³ In the following days, the discussion of grace and free will, presented in *Conferences* XIII, is an answer to Germanus' question raised by Chaeremon's assertion in the last part of *Conferences* XII, namely, that this perfect chastity is a work of divine grace, not of human labour. At the end of the Abba's final teaching, Cassian expresses their impressions: "Strengthened by this food, the blessed Chaeremon prevented us from feeling the toil of so difficult a journey."⁵⁴ With this fervent spirit awakened in them, they take their leave of Chaeremon and come to Abba Nesteros.

Cassian and Germanus ask him about the meaning of the Scripture, then Nesteros deals with the twofold stages of spiritual knowledge: the practical and contemplative aspect, the four modes of Biblical interpretations: the historical, allegorical, anagogical and tropological sense, and the way of gaining the knowledge. The Abba finally asserts that the hidden mysteries of spiritual knowledge are "gained by no learning of man's, nor condition of this world, only by purity of soul, by means of the illumination of the Holy Ghost."⁵⁵ Moreover, on hearing Nesteros' representation on wandering thoughts, Cassian shows his personal reaction: "I was at first moved by a secret emotion, and then groaned

⁵¹ *Ibid.* XI.2

⁵² *Ibid.* XIII.1

⁵³ Pristas, "The Theological Anthropology of John Cassian," p. 95-6. Cf. Adalbert de Vogüé, "Pour comprendre Cassien. Un survol des conférences," *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 39 (1977): 260-1.

⁵⁴ *Conferences* XIII.18

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* XIV.9

deeply and said, All these things which you have set forth so fully have affected me with still greater despair than that which I had previously endured.”⁵⁶ He distinguishes between his own impression and that of Germanus. Cassian discloses the hidden inner thought of the heroes of pagan mythology learned in his boyhood, which imposed distractions during psalmody. Cassian allows the remaining space for Nesteros’ teaching on the hindrance to possession of the true knowledge.

At this point, the readers of *Conferences* are dubious about his memory of his own inner feelings and of his questions of thirty years prior to the actual time of writing. It is highly improbable that he could remember such things. Not only the interaction, but also his cohesive description of the initial itinerary and the discourses that the desert fathers told them, as we will see throughout, raise questions as to whether Cassian has remarkable writing skills, or stenographic records of the oral discourses that the Abbas told him. There is debate as to whether the *Conferences* is Cassian’s invented preaching, as Weingarten claims, or whether it is that of the Egyptian Abbas reported by Cassian, or the middle position between the both extremes, as Chadwick proposes.⁵⁷ We have no firm evidence to decide this. However, one clue comes from a comparison of the individuality of the three Abbas’ discourses.

While Chaeremon, in his three long discourses, once mentions in passing the name of another monk, Serenus (XII.7), as an example of perfect chastity, Nesteros, in the shorter space of his two conferences, mentions eight times the names of six Abbas: Antony (XVI.4), John of Thumuis (XVI.4), John (XVI.7),

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* XIV.12

⁵⁷ For the argument, see Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 18-22; Weingarten, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums*, p. 62.

Macarius (XVI.4; XV.3, 12), Abraham (XV.4), and Paphnutius (XV.10). Nearly half of Nesteros' second conferences, which deals with spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of healing, is filled with accounts of holy fathers. On the other hand, the third Abba, Joseph, mentions Piamun (XVII.24) once in his two discourses. In his first conferences dealing with the theories of monastic friendship, Joseph, as one who is described as "carefully trained in the eloquence of Greece",⁵⁸ shows the influence of traditional Greek thought. Caroline White says, "The apparent references to the theories of friendship is formulated by, for example, Cicero and Sallust, whose works Cassian may have studied when he moved to the West and became familiar with Latin."⁵⁹ Moreover, Cassian indicates that Joseph conversed with them in Greek.⁶⁰ The first two Abbots spoke neither Greek nor Latin, but Coptic, the demotic form of the traditional Egyptian language, so that they employed interpreters.⁶¹ The author of *The Historia Monachorum* too refers to the three multilingual monks in the large Apollo's coenobium, who know perfectly Greek, Latin and Coptic.⁶² From this case forth, Cassian never mentions the matter of interpretation. It could be proposed that Cassian learns Coptic, as we think that he stayed for more than fifteen years in the desert.⁶³

As a result of the above considerations on the points of individual differentia, what is almost certain is that they indicate either the existence of his sources written literally from the dialogue, or the literary creativity of Cassian fabricating the

⁵⁸ *Conferences* XVI.1

⁵⁹ Caroline White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 1992, p. 175. On the view of friendship and its sources, cf. *ibid.* p. 174-84; A. Fiske, "Cassian and monastic friendship," *The American Benedictine Review* 12 (1961): 10-205; David Konstan, "Problems in the History of Christian Friendship," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* (1996): 104-6.

⁶⁰ *Conferences* XVI.1

⁶¹ *Ibid.* XVI.1

⁶² *The Historia Monachorum*, On Apollo 62.

⁶³ Cappuyns presumes that Cassian had some limited knowledge of Coptic. Cf. DHGE, 11:1337.

characters in his works. In related to the former possibility, it should be noted that in Cassian's monastic abode in Egypt, he is able to correspond with his brothers in Bethlehem,⁶⁴ and even to publish a book.⁶⁵ In addition, we need to remember that Origen's extemporaneous delivery was recorded by shorthand reporters listening to him, providing the basis for the later publication and translations into Latin.⁶⁶ This method continued into the era of Cassian, as we see in the preaching of Augustine and John Chrysostom.

Turning to Joseph's conferences again, Cassian and Germanus are disturbed by his discourse on friendship, since they had vowed to the brothers in their coenobium in Bethlehem that they would return after a short journey to Egypt. Their planned itinerary already began to waver after seeing the perfection of Egyptian monastic heroes. They were convinced that to return in order to keep the promise would mean to "suffer grievous loss from the mediocrity of the manner of life there."⁶⁷ They do not want to fall into retrogression. Joseph's discourse, presented in *Conferences XVII*, solves their dilemma and justifies the breaking of the promise because chosen means would lead to the original intention. At the end of this conference, Cassian claims that in spite of their very frequent letters to the brothers in Bethlehem, their friendship was revived by their visit seven years later.⁶⁸

Accordingly, their next step should be to find where they can settle down to monastic life in Egypt. At this moment, most scholars make an error, overlook, or

⁶⁴ *Conferences XVII.30*

⁶⁵ *Institutes V.39*

⁶⁶ Robert W. Smith, *The Art of Rhetoric in Alexandria: Its Theory and Practice in the Ancient World*, 1974, p. 90.

⁶⁷ *Conferences XVII.10*

⁶⁸ *Ibid. XVII.30*

are equivocal with regard to Cassian's itinerary. For example, Stewart notes that after visits to three Abbots, and before leaving Panephris for Diolcos, "Near Panephris, Cassian and Germanus visit their old friend Pinufius."⁶⁹ If he had accurately observed the last chapter of *Conferences XX*, he would not have made this false assertion. When Cassian and Germanus were inspired by Pinufius' touching speech, and pressed to stay in his coenobium, Cassian notes the result that "when he could not retain us, as we were incited by the fame of the desert of Scete, he sent us on our way."⁷⁰ They leave Pinufius' coenobium for the desert of Scete. Moreover, we discover their first settlement in a different place before going to Scete.

When Cassian and Germanus visit an anchorite of Diolcos, Piamun, the Abba criticizes those "who have betaken themselves to the solitary life without a well-matured purpose and without being thoroughly trained in the coenobium."⁷¹ Germanus willingly admits that his words reveal their present self: "who had received but little instruction in the system of the coenobium when we began to aspire to dwell in solitude before we had got rid of our faults."⁷² He then asks Piamun, "How then can we now while we are living alone gain perfection in long-suffering and patience?"⁷³ Here, we realize that before a visit to Piamun, Cassian and Germanus has already begun anchoritic life. The location of the place and their reasons for choosing it are presented in *Institutes V*:

⁶⁹ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 9.

⁷⁰ *Conferences XX.12*

⁷¹ *Ibid. XIX.10*

⁷² *Ibid. XIX.11*

⁷³ *Ibid. XIX.11 Cf. 13*

When we had come, while still beginners, from the monasteries of Palestine, to a city of Egypt called Diolcos, and were contemplating a large number of monks bound by the discipline of the Coenobium, and trained in that excellent system of monasteries, which is also the earliest, we were also eager to see with all wisdom of heart another system as well which is still better, viz.: that of the anchorites, as we were incited thereto by the praises of it by everybody... we eagerly hastened, and were beyond measure astonished at their labours which they endure in the contemplation of the virtues and their love of solitude.⁷⁴

Cassian proceeds by saying that their first anchoritic settlement was provided by Archebius, the most famous anchorite of the area, especially renowned for the act of charity in which he offers his cell and furniture to newcomers.⁷⁵ Thus, according to the above observation, when Cassian and Germanus started anchoritic life in Diolcos, they soon visited Abba Piamun and a cenobite, Abba John, in the same desert. A journey toward spiritual Abbas was a firm pattern of spiritual direction in the desert tradition.⁷⁶ How could they choose the next advisors among so many anchorites in Diolcos? As the above three Abbas were introduced by Bishop Archebius, Piamun's virtues were known to them in the previous discourse of

⁷⁴ *Institutes* V.36

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* V.37. For Archebius, cf. *Conferences* VII.26.

⁷⁶ When Antony started the life of a hermit, Athanasius notes a custom: "If he heard of a good man anywhere, he went forth and sought him, nor turned back to his own place until he had seen him; and he returned, having got from the good man as it were supplies for his journey in the way of virtue." (*Vita Antoni*, 3) This became a pattern of spiritual direction in the desert tradition. Monks constantly went on a journey toward spiritual fathers with various matters, such as their spiritual infirmity, an inquiry of ascetical life and spiritual progress, a question of the Scriptures, doubts about sources of the visions seen, and the way of dwelling with brethren, et cetera. The frequency of meetings with the Abbas varied in the *Apophthegmata*, such as once a year (Ares, 1), twice a month (Paphnutius, 3), every day for four months (Macarius of Alexandria, 3), many times in the same day (John the Dwarf, 18), and some irregular cases. Even after the monks became Fathers, old men continued the journey seeking the word and virtues, having heard about others, for example, three Fathers visited Anthony every year (Anthony the Great, 27).

Joseph (*Conferences* XVII.24), and John also by Nesteros (*Conferences* XIV.7).⁷⁷ This pattern continues in *Conferences*. Before Cassian and Germanus settled down in the anchoritic community under the leadership of Paphnutius, which was one of four in Scete, they had accumulated good reports about him and the Scetian monks (*Conferences* XV.10, XVIII.15, XIX.9).

In turn, at the end of Piamun's conference dealing with the four types of monks, and the twin virtue of humility and patience presented in *Conferences* XVIII, Cassian mentions that the anchorite was the first teacher for their new way of life:

By this discourse the blessed Piamun excited still more keenly our desire in which we had begun to be promoted from the infant school of the coenobium to the second standard of the anchorites' life. For it was under his instruction that we made our first start in solitary living, the knowledge of which we afterwards followed up more thoroughly in Scete.⁷⁸

The first director, Piamun, at the beginning of his discourse, commands that Cassian and Germanus must abandon all those teachings that they had previously learned and be shaped anew by the teachings of new teachers. After introductory remarks, the Abba first teaches "how or whence the system and beginning of our order took its rise."⁷⁹ In comparison with the previous three Abbas, Piamun had a different sense and approach to Cassian and Germanus, because they were new starters, not simple visitors. From his point of view, they were new people who had

⁷⁷ In *Conferences* XIV.7, John advised the monks that "as he knew that many things which are rightly done by some involved others who imitate them in great danger, and that that cannot be tried by all, which the Lord bestowed upon a few by a special gift." That the advice is repeated in his conference (XIX.8), indicates that both are the same.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* XVIII.16

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* XVIII.4

to adapt to the mode of life in a 'Second Holy Land', where was situated the idealized example of the first Christian community referred in Acts 2:34-35,45; 4:32.⁸⁰ This was the home of the descendant of John the Baptist, Elijah, Elisha and Paul.⁸¹ At this point, it is possible to identify the first book of the third set (*Conferences XVIII-XXIV*). This has never been recognised before as a beginning lesson in the way that *Conferences I*, the first book of the first set (*Conferences I-X*), and *Conferences XI*, the first book of the second set (*Conferences XI-XVII*) have been recognised. While *Conferences XI* is good for the initial direction of their spiritual itinerary seeking the truth of perfection in Panephysis, *Conferences XVIII* is an opening address for a new anchoritic life in Diolcos, and *Conferences I* relates to a second start at a higher level in Scete. Such systematic formation sweeps away criticism which suggests the disorganized character of *Conferences*.

Next, after consulting Piamun, Cassian and Germanus take the opportunity to visit the coenobium of Abba Paul for the anniversary of the death of a former Abbot. Actually, a target figure was Abba John, who mysteriously left the hermitage, in spite of his fame as an anchorite, and submitted himself to that coenobium with the utmost humility. Through the instruction of John, they expect to learn the negative aspects that they must be cautious of in anchoritic life. In *Conference XIX*, based on his experience of both the anchoritic and the cenobitical lives, John treats of the goals and advantages of the two forms, and asserts that the heights of contemplation can only be reached through solitary life, but because of the dangers of an independent existence, it is safer to pursue perfection under the supervision and support of the coenobium. However, rather than changing the present manner of life, Germanus asks for practical advice on how the anchorites

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* XVIII.5

⁸¹ *Ibid.* XVIII.6

regard the attainment of the ideal perfection for them; that is, how they attain unity with Christ. John then teaches the way to root out vices.

After delivery of John's teaching, Cassian falls silent with regard to events in the desert of Diolcos. We do not know how long they actually lived there. At the end of the sojourn in Diolcos, Cassian and Germanus seek out Abba Pinufius "with the utmost eagerness and devotion"⁸² near Panephysis. As represented in *Institutes* V.30-43 and *Conference XX*, the Abba provides vignettes that illuminate the entire progressive route from novice to perfect being. Their response is a whole hearted repentance of sins. What Pinufius preached leads to the following discussion on repentance, reparation, fruits of repentance and assurance of forgiveness. Then, the Abba urges his old cellmates to stay in his coenobium. Yet Cassian and Germanus have already made up their minds to move to Scete.⁸³ They would pick up valuable information about Scetian monasticism, which influences their change of abode. It leads them to believe that Scete is replete with superior teachers.

As a change of scene is noted from the Nile Delta to Scete, the following final four Books have no geographical references, or chronological narrative connected to the preceding. Two speakers, Abba Theonas of *Conferences XXI-XXIII* and Abraham of *Conferences XXIV* are otherwise unknown. While the former is perhaps the same person as the master of Abba Moses in *Conferences II.11*, the latter seems to be the same Abba who performed a healing miracle in *Conferences XV.4, 5*. However, Cassian never provides any report on either of them that could identify their present settlements, or backgrounds in the desert, even though

⁸² *Ibid.* XX.2

⁸³ *Ibid.* XX.12. Graham E. Gould observed that in the desert there was a principle of being free to move on as they pleased and pursuing the monastic life wherever they wanted to, or, if they preferred, in no particular place at all. Cf. his article: "Moving on and Staying put in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*," *Studia Patristica*, 20 (1989): 231.

Abraham once draws a parallel between his dwelling place and Scete.⁸⁴ Therefore, it can only be asserted with certainty that Cassian arranged the Books of *Conference XI-XX* in chronological order during his residence in the Nile Delta.

1.2.3 Cassian's Monastic Life in Scete

According to Abba Nesteros, Macarius the Great was the first hermit and founder of the monastic settlement at the desert of Scete.⁸⁵ The anonymous author of *The Historia Monachorum* draws a brief sketch of this place based upon hearsay knowledge: "All the monks there have attained perfection. Indeed, no one beset with imperfections could stay in that place, since it is rugged and inhospitable, lacking all the necessities of life."⁸⁶ Cassian repeatedly states that he takes pride in his new settlement and the inhabitants: the desert of Scete "where are the most excellent monastic fathers and where all perfection flourishes,"⁸⁷ and where the Scetian monks are a "choir of saints who shine like brilliant stars in the night of this world,"⁸⁸ and "who excelled all who were in the monasteries of Egypt."⁸⁹

The mode of monastic life in Scete is defined as the semi-eremical way, in which several monks lived in separate cells, grouped together at a distance from one another and pursuing a mainly solitary existence, coming together at weekends to

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* XXIV.4

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* XV.3. For information on the location of the desert of Scete, see Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *The monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrûn*, II, 1932, pp. 17-42.

⁸⁶ *The Historia Monachorum*, On Macarius of Alexandria.

⁸⁷ *Conferences* I.1

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* III.1

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* X.2

celebrate the Eucharist.⁹⁰ The *Apophthegmata* reports to its governing body that the inhabitants of Scete once assembled together to discuss abstrusity in the Scriptures, like Melchisedech.⁹¹ A council of the Fathers was sometimes called to treat a brother who had committed a fault, or to test a brother for contempt, as in the case of Moses.⁹² Cassian describes that there were four churches in Scete that were presided over by four presbyters, including Abba Paphnutius.⁹³ When, in 399, the Festal letter of Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, condemned the Anthropomorphite heresy, a quarrel was stirred up among the all desert monks, even among the four churches in Scete. Paphnutius convenes his congregation to get a theological lecture from a Cappadocian deacon, Photinus, on the image and likeness of God.⁹⁴

One does not know when Cassian and Germanus joined Paphnutius' assembly, and how much time Cassian spent there. As mentioned above, except for a brief return to Bethlehem after seven years' absence, Cassian and Germanus were established for several years around Abba Paphnutius, feeling proud of the advanced Scetian monastic theology. As he speaks highly of the Scetians, the discourses of seven Scetian Abbas, which Cassian conveys in *Conferences* I to X, are far superior to those already heard on the Nile Delta by Cassian and Germanus. For example, at the end of Paphnutius's discourse on the three progressive renunciations, Cassian compares his idea with another's, that of Pinufius': "since after we had learnt some few things about the second renunciation, we should find out that we had not before this even heard a word of the third stage, in which all

⁹⁰ *Conferences* III.1; and cf. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Mark, disciple of Abba Sylvanus 1, Sylvanus.

⁹¹ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Copres 3.

⁹² *Ibid.* Moses 2, 3, 5; Pior 3

⁹³ *Conferences* X.2

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* X.2, 3.

perfection is comprised, and which in many ways far exceeds these lower ones.”⁹⁵ Not only that, but also his theory on grace and free will was sounder than that of Abba Chaeremon presented in *Conferences* XIII. Abba Moses’ teachings on the elaborate division of the present goals and final end of monastic life, a series of expositions of Abba Daniel, Serapion and Serenus on spiritual combat between spirit and flesh, and the eight principal evil thoughts and demons all appeal to Cassian and Germanus. More over, the delivery of Abba Isaac on the stillness of prayer requiring no thoughts, no words and no imaginings, and the unceasing prayer using a single short phrase, et cetera, gives two young seekers of the truth of perfection a constant source of fresh inspirations.

Not all kinds of knowledge that Cassian learned were displayed, as one recalls what Paphnutius used to say, “During the whole lifetime of the old men, I used to go to see them twice a month, although it was a distance of twelve miles.”⁹⁶ Cassian also would consult a lot of the desert authorities, but hand down only parts of them.

In assessment of the relationship between Cassian and Germanus and the Scetian Abbots in *Conferences*, we can hardly confirm a special personal apprenticeship which demanded obedience in the form of training, or disciplines and rebukes when necessary, as we frequently see in the *Apophthegmata*.⁹⁷ Cassian’s descriptions suggest that they were visitors who consulted the Abbots on one occasion or another. However, in *Institutes* we learn of two cases in which Cassian discloses his thoughts to the Abbots, and entrusts himself to their care and personal

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* III.22. Cf. Book X.14.

⁹⁶ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Paphnutius 3.

⁹⁷ For the relationship between the desert fathers and disciple, see Graham Gould, “Chapter 2 The Abba and his Disciple,” in *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*, 1993, pp. 26-87.

scolding. The Abbas are depicted as Cassian's tutors who very closely supervise a beginner in anchorite living. The first case is as follows: when Abba Theodore comes unexpectedly to Cassian's cell in the middle of the night, he rebukes Cassian for a lack of effort in prayer.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Cassian benefits from Theodore's example and virtues. The Abba, who knows hardly any Greek, receives the spiritual gift of interpreting the Scriptures without resort to reading commentaries, or secular learning, but rather by means of purity of heart, and resolves the difficult question by unceasing prayer.⁹⁹ Cassian fully adopts his way and urges his readers "to keep all the efforts of his mind and intentions of his heart set on purifying himself from carnal vices: for when these are driven out, at once the eyes of the heart, as if the veil of the passions were removed, will begin as it were naturally to gaze on the mysteries of Scripture."¹⁰⁰ Although nothing further is known for certain of this Theodore, he is not the speaker of the *Conferences VI* in Kellia, since several points of his discourse definitely reveal his reading of Origen's works, and Cassian notes Kellia as being eighty miles away from Scete. As Palladius mentions that Paphnutius had charisma, consistent with Cassian's description of Theodore,¹⁰¹ he might be a Scetian in Paphnutius' circle.

The second is related to accidie, which the monks faced in daily life. Once, when Cassian had been terribly troubled by an attack of accidie, he was freed from it by running away to Abba Paul. When, on the following day, Cassian reported his way to Abba Moses, he pointed out his mistake, and showed him how to cure accidie: "when you join battle with it you make up your mind not to dispel its attacks and

⁹⁸ *Institutes* V.35

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* V.33

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* V.34

¹⁰¹ *The Lausiatic History* 47. Palladius said that "He had the gift of divine knowledge of Sacred Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, explaining them without ever having read the writings."

heats for the moment by deserting your cell, or by the inactivity of sleep, but learn to triumph over it by endurance and conflict.”¹⁰² Describing here Moses as “the chief of all the saints”, Cassian refers to the same Abba of *Conferences* I-II, whom he praises highly as one “who was eminent amid those splendid flowers”.¹⁰³

On the basis of the above two accounts, it can be said that Cassian did not live with a particular paternal Abba in a cell, unlike Evagrius and his disciple Palladius in Kellia,¹⁰⁴ but was supervised by a few Abbas in very close proximity.

We turn now to consider Cassian’s last stay in Scete that is hinted at in the last book of the first set of *Conferences*. In the ten conferences, the only discourse that indicates when this took place is Book X, by Abba Isaac, since Cassian inserts a story of the Anthropomorphite controversy in the introductory parts. *Conferences* X, thus, delivers the last desert lesson which Cassian and Germanus learned. If the controversy had not forced them to leave the second home, they would have gladly passed the rest of their lives there.¹⁰⁵ Cassian hardly speaks on the details of the outbreak, development and outcome of the controversy, yet alludes to that incident in the Book. Cassian’s representation helps us to recognize not only his works as a valuable source of historical information, but also the theological position of Paphnutius’ assembly that he belonged to.

Around the end of the fourth century, the explanation of the image of God threw the desert monks into confusion, which was confounded by the disagreement on this matter among the greatest elders. In the *Apophthegmata*, when one of the desert fathers, Abba Sopatros, was asked for a commandment, he said the

¹⁰² *Institutes* X.25

¹⁰³ *Conferences* I.1

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *The Lausiatic History* 18, 23. Palladius had spent nine years under the tutelage of Evagrius.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted from Vannier, *Traité de L’Incarnation*, p.17.

following: 'Do not get involved in discussions about the image. Although this is not heresy, there is too much ignorance and liking for dispute between the two parties in this matter. It is impossible for a creature to understand the truth of it.'¹⁰⁶ Sopatros' advice clearly refers to the monk's discussions on the image of God, the interpretation of which was a burning issue in the desert, yielding more heat than light. This was a great problem in the desert toward the end of the fourth century, when the elders took different stands.¹⁰⁷ One party, supported by the vast majority of the monks, called the anthropomorphites, who had a tendency to take Scripture literally, believed that God had a human form— a male, of course — so that man had a measurable and visible form of God. Their belief is easily inferred from Genesis 1:26-7, and numerous passages which suggest that God has physical features, such as hands or feet, and the like.¹⁰⁸ Socrates, the historian, says:

The question had been started a little before, whether God is a corporeal existence, and has the form of man; or whether he is incorporeal, and without human or, generally speaking, any other bodily shape? From this question arose strifes and contentions among a very great number of persons, some favoring one opinion on the subject, and others patronizing the opposite. Very many of the more simple ascetics asserted that God is corporeal, and has a human figure: but most others condemn their judgment, and contended that God is incorporeal, and free of all form whatever.¹⁰⁹

Another party thought that God was spirit; that is, He was not composed of matter and does not possess a physical nature, and is not limited to a particular

¹⁰⁶ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Sopatros, p. 189.

¹⁰⁷ Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning To Read the Fathers*, 1986, p. 159.

¹⁰⁸ Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, 1994, pp. 100-2.

¹⁰⁹ Socrates Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History* 6:7

geographical or spatial location. Reflecting some issues of general concern in the desert, Cassian took up the Anthropomorphite heresy in two places in his writings. In Book VIII of *Institutes*, devoted to a discussion on anger, Cassian recorded his carefully crafted response to anthropomorphism:

And so as without horrible profanity these things cannot be understood literally of Him who is declared by the authority of Holy Scripture to be invisible, ineffable, incomprehensible, inestimable, simple, and uncompounded, so neither can the passion of anger and wrath be attributed to that unchangeable nature without fearful blasphemy.¹¹⁰

In *Conferences* X.2-5, displaying Cassian's Origenist sympathies, Abba Isaac is criticized for the cause of the anthropomorphism: "It was thus that, as a result of this detestable interpretation, the so-called anthropomorphite heresy arose, which insists with obstinate perversity that the immeasurable and simple substance of the Godhead possesses our contours and a human shape."¹¹¹ Isaac continued to report that the anthropomorphites were more simple and uneducated, and refused to adopt a spiritual approach to interpret the Scriptures. As Cassian reports on the event, the dispute between both sides had begun to surface by the Paschal encyclical of 399 A.D. in which bishop Theophilus argued against the heresy of anthropomorphites. He mentions that the Divine Being is wholly incorporeal, and it is unworthy to think of Godhead with bodily aspects. Cassian speaks of the bad effect this letter had on the simple monks in the three churches in Scete, who refused to read it in their meetings.¹¹² According to Socrates and other contemporary historians, the anthropomorphites answered the letter by

¹¹⁰ *Institutes* VIII.4

¹¹¹ *Conferences* X.5

¹¹² *Ibid.*X.1-6

descending in force from Scete to Alexandria.¹¹³ When thousands of monks accused him of impiety, and threatened to put him to death, Theophilus said to them, "When I look upon you, it is as if I behold the face of God." This wise reply sufficiently mollified the monks, for he uttered "God's face." They required that: "Wherefore, then if you really hold orthodox doctrines, do you not anathematize the books of Origen; since those who read them are led into such opinions? If you will not do this, expect to be treated by us as an impious person, and the enemy of God." The disputes on anthropomorphism here combined with the great name, Origen. The riots spotted the readers of Origen as the offenders. In the following year, allying himself with the anthropomorphites, Theophilus had a campaign against the Origenists well under way, particularly against Isidore and the Tall Brothers of Nitria. Even if Theophilus was motivated by political, theological, and personal reasons, he publicly attacked them on theological grounds alone by condemning their venerable Origen.¹¹⁴ I do not want to discuss the details of the related events concerning the conflicts between the anthropomorphites and the anti-anthropomorphites in the desert, but what I want to clarify is that these disputes involved the writings of Origen. The indication of the anthropomorphites and Theophilus was accurate. Just as Bishop St. Peter clearly opposed Origen's allegorical interpretation of Gen. 3:21 at the beginning of the fourth century, at the end of it, the anthropomorphites spurned the allegorical spiritualization of Gen. 1:26. With regard to these anthropomorphites, there are great gaps in our knowledge, as we depend almost exclusively on the anti-anthropomorphic sources. Since these hostile sources never reflected the thought of the anthropomorphites, one can only say that they fiercely rejected Origen, and then were named anti-

¹¹³ For the events as described by Socrates and other contemporary historians see Evelyn-White, *ibid.* chap. 8, Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, chap. 2, 1992.

¹¹⁴ For a full account of Theophilus related to the Origenists, Palladius, see *Dialogue* 7.1-60; Socrates, *ibid.* 6.7, 9, 10, 12-14.

Origenists. In fact, the term Origenist is an epithet of Theophilus, but can the anti-anthropomorphites be described simply as Origenists? According to Jerome's Letter 51, Epiphanius accused Evagrius of spreading the Origenist heresy, which had been described as a radical cosmology. Cassian does not say the names, Origen and Evagrius, whose names were handed down as suspects for heresy. This silence could be a reflection of a theological milieu that seriously affected the reaction of some of the Alexandrian bishops, the Pacomian communities and other desert monks and ecclesiastics against Origen's teaching. Furthermore, Cassian shows no trace of the specific doctrines of Origen, regarded as heretical by anti-Origenists, nor of the representative Evagrian metaphysical schema that underlay his every ascetical treatise, and that formed a foundation for all spiritual activity. For this reason, even though the discourses of Scetian Abbas in *Conferences* show much evidence of Origen's influence, these fail to belong to such a category.

Before Isaac criticizes the anthropomorphites, Cassian disposes his readers to support his party by referring to all the heads of the Eastern churches to the teaching of a deacon named Photinus, who came along from the region of Cappadocia. Paphnutius "inquired as to how the Catholic churches throughout the East interpreted what is said in Genesis: 'Let us make man according to our image and likeness'." Photinus then explained that "the image and likeness of God was treated by all the heads of the churches not according to the lowly sound of the letter, but in a spiritual way, and he proved this with a long discourse and many examples from Scripture."¹¹⁵ Cassian did not deliver Photinus' discourse because he was faithful to his real purpose of dealing with the controversy concerned with teaching the doctrine of imageless prayer, "which will not only not connect with its prayers any figure of the Godhead or bodily lineaments (which it is a sin even to

¹¹⁵ *Conferences* X.3

speak of), but will not even allow in itself even the memory of a name, or the appearance of an action, or an outline of any character.”¹¹⁶ Needless to say, he warns against the folly of picturing the image of a God with human form.

The above considerations indicate that the monks of Cassian’s community were the anti-anthropomorphites who were indebted to the Alexandrian theological tradition epitomized by Origen, but Cassian never provides sufficient grounds in any of his works for judging their theological position as the Origenists, as it were accurately, the Evagrian Origenists of Nitria and Kellia.

Since Cassian does not convey to us the later development of the controversy, nor any insight into his life from 399 to about 403, until Paladius mentions the name, Cassian, in relation to the exile of John Chrysostom in his *Dialogue* III. His life is left to plausible conjecture. Some have proposed that Cassian probably left Egypt at the outbreak of the controversy, or he might have been one of the non-Egyptians slandered as Origenists, when Theophilus, having agitated the anthropomorphites, evicted three hundred opponent monks from Egypt in 400. He then fled with them, first to Palestine and later to Constantinople. Unfortunately, the sequence of events upon leaving Scete cannot be known for certain. What is sure is that in the end, Cassian became ordained as a deacon, Germanus a priest, and earned the trust of John Chrysostom.¹¹⁷

1.2.4 Cassian’s Activities in Constantinople and Rome

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*X.5

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Incarnation of the Lord* VII. 31; Paladius, *Dialogue on the Life of Saint John Chrysostom*, 3.

As they had been trained under the best ascetics of their era in the desert, Cassian and Germanus now worked under the highest ecclesiastical authority, Archbishop John Chrysostom. A short while later, they established a firm relationship with the patriarch. Cassian recollects Chrysostom in the last two chapters of his *De incarnatione domini contra Nestorium Lidri*, in which he regards himself as a disciple of the archbishop.¹¹⁸ In those passages, with an emotional retrospection on the old days in the city of Constantinople, he pronounces a very short exaggerated eulogy for the late Chrysostom: “As for John the glory of the Episcopate of Constantinople, whose holy life obtained the reward of martyrdom without any show of Gentile persecution.”¹¹⁹ Accused of numerous charges by Theophilus of Alexandria and his partisans, Chrysostom was deported from the city in 404 and later died in exile in 407.¹²⁰ Palladius testifies to the new ministration of Cassian and Germanus in the Church during these clamorous times. Since Chrysostom had been accused at the Synod of the Oak (403) of appropriating church property, “the guardians of the cathedral treasury, Germanus and the deacon Cassian had prepared and were able to submit an authenticated inventory of all the gold, silver and precious objects it contained.”¹²¹ Later, there was a more important role for them to play in supporting Chrysostom. After Chrysostom’s downfall, his supporters sent special envoys to Rome to intercede on his behalf with Innocent I in Rome. Cassian and Germanus were certainly chosen for this mission, probably because of their knowledge of Latin. They brought a letter from all clergy loyal to Chrysostom, in which they described the violence and the tyranny that their Church had undergone in relation to

¹¹⁸ *Incarnation of the Lord* VII. 31

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* VII. 30

¹²⁰ For an account of this affair, see Paladius, *Dialogue*, 9.139-229; J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: the story of John Chrysostom - ascetic, preacher, bishop*, 1995, pp. 228-249 and 272-285.

¹²¹ Paladius, *Dialogue* III.

Chrysostom's deposition and exile, and argued that it was due to a plot.¹²² From this occasion on, no other data on the activities of Cassian are available until the first appearance of Cassian's *Institutes*, written after his arrival in Gaul, sometime after 415 and before 419.¹²³ Thus, there are several possibilities with regard to Cassian's location between 405-415, including Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Bethlehem. In two letters of Innocent 1 to Alexander, bishop of Antioch (413-21), there is a reference to 'our fellow presbyter' by the name of Cassian, who worked for the pope as an envoy to treat the schism of Antioch resulting from the Chrysostom affair, but it is not certain that this was John Cassian.¹²⁴ Rousseau notes, "Even after 415, his career is marked out and dated merely by his literary products, which tell us virtually nothing about his other activities."¹²⁵ Why and when he went to Marseilles cannot be explained.

1.2.5 Cassian's Life in Marseilles

In Gaul, what Cassian did was definitely to have lived in two kinds of monastic missions. First, a reference in Gennadius and subsequent tradition state that Cassian became a priest, settled in Marseilles, and founded two monasteries, one for men, under the title of Saint Victor, over the tomb of St. Victor, a martyr of the last Christian persecution under Maximian, and the other for women under the title of Saint Savior.¹²⁶ To establish two monasteries, Vannier notes, Cassian had to

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ See the several theories for his itinerary and activities in the period, Rea, "Grace and Free Will," 15-20. Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, 1978, pp. 169-176.

¹²⁴ Innocent, *Epp.* 19, 20.

¹²⁵ Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority*. p. 170.

¹²⁶ Gennadius, *De viris inlustribus*, 62.

have a social status, sufficient relationships and certain good and influential friends.¹²⁷ In the five prefaces of his three books, those with whom Cassian associated are displayed. Second, his other chief activity was to write two monastic books, *De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis libri XII*, which were intended to guide beginners. This could not have been before 417-8, according to M. Olphe-Galliard,¹²⁸ and the three series of *Collationes XXIV*, probably from 425-429, consisted of twenty four interviews with the Egyptian desert fathers. Cassian himself delineates the relation between the two works, as follows: "these books (*Institutes*)... are mainly taken up with what belongs to the outer man and the customs of the Coenobia, yet those (*Conferences*) will rather be concerned with the training of the inner man and the perfection of the heart, and the life and doctrine of the Anchorites."¹²⁹ As Cappuyns notes,¹³⁰ Cassian regarded the latter as the indispensable complement of the former. After publication of the books, Cassian accounts for a motive of his writing: "For even in those trifling works, in which of our small ability we offered some small offering to the Lord, I would never have attempted to do or apply myself to anything unless I had been led to it by Episcopal command."¹³¹ Two works came out at the request of Gallic ecclesiastical and monastic authorities. The *Institutes* and the first set of *Conferences* (I-X) are Cassian's response to the request of Castor, who was bishop of Apt, north of Marseilles. Because of Castor's death in 425 or 426, the first set was dedicated to Leontius, his brother and the Bishop of Fréjus, and an anchorite Helladius, later raised to the Bishop of Arles. Complying with more requests, the

¹²⁷ Vannier, *Traité de L'Incarnation*, p. 24.

¹²⁸ Olphe-Galliard, M. "Cassien (Jean)", in *DSP*. 2:217. According to M. Cappuyns, "nous ne pouvons quere reculer au-delà de 424-425." In "Cassien," *DHGE*. 1329. Stewart with Chadwick proposes it was written in the middle 420s. See Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 16. Chadwick, *John Cassian*, pp. 38-9.

¹²⁹ *Institutes* II.9

¹³⁰ Cappuyns, *DHGE*, 1329-30.

¹³¹ In the preface of *The Incarnation of the Lord*.

second set of *Conferences* (XI-XVII) was dedicated to Honoratus, the founder of Lérins and made the Bishop of Arles in 428, and Eucherius, monk of Lérins, who later became the Bishop of Lyons. Cassian dedicates the third set of *Conferences* (XVIII-XXVI) to the four monks living on the Stoechadic islands near Marseilles: three unknowns, Jovinianus, Minervius, Leontius, and Theodore, abbot of a coenobium there, later to become bishop of Fréjus, succeeding Leontius. In the three prefaces dedicated to each different person, Cassian shows a broad network among local bishops and monks centering on Gaulian monasticism, as there was no need to introduce each other when referring to all the names of the dedicatees. While the Gaulians threw their full support behind Cassian, who was recognized as an authority on monasticism, Cassian largely contributed to the monastic boom at Southern Gaul, including Lérins.

After bringing *Conferences* to completion, Cassian “almost determined on taking refuge in silence,”¹³² but Leo, archdeacon of Rome and afterwards Pope Leo the Great (440~61), encouraged him to carry out the last mission, bringing him out of his silence. That was a request to write an anti-Nestorian treatise, *De Incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*, completed in 429-30. This indicates that two of Cassian’s works were held in high esteem by his contemporaries in the West, and that he was qualified to defend the orthodox doctrine. In the eyes of Roman ecclesiastical authorities, Cassian seemed the most appropriate dialectician to illuminate in Latin this delicate dogmatic controversy, since not only was he an authority of the Latin Church as the abbot of Saint Victor, but he had also spent a part of his life as a cleric in the Church of Constantinople. It was written in haste, and appears not to have been of equal value to his monastic works.

¹³² *ibid.*

We have no further reference to Cassian until Gennadius' notice of his death in Marseilles in the reigns of Theodosius and Valentinian. The commonly accepted date is 435.

1.3 SOUTHERN GALLIC MONASTICISM BEFORE CASSIAN'S ARRIVAL

The aim of this section is to demonstrate some relevant aspects of the monastic context before Cassian arrived in Gaul. This investigation into the monastic setting of Gaul will lead us to know whether the context had an influence on his works. Besides, it is necessary to survey of the connection between Egyptian monks and the Gauls, because it is related with the Gallic theological position. Though the understanding of historical context contributes to our grasp of the literary structure and contents of his works, major Cassian scholars leave us barren with regard to information on the matter.¹³³

Southern Gaul witnessed the new beginning of a movement from the first decade of the fifth century. Monasteries were flourishing on the Mediterranean coast, especially Lérins, and in the Rhône valley. This was largely a direct result of the turmoil caused by the barbarian invasions. From 406 to 418 Gaul was ravaged by a series of raids and gripped by a frenzy of destructive Vandals and Visigoths.¹³⁴

¹³³ Cf. Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 32-36; Rea, "Grace and Free Will," p. 20-3; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 15-19; Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, 73-8.

¹³⁴ In 406 Vandals and Visigoths devastated Aquitaine, and by 411 had settled. Prosper remembered the dynastic crisis in the years 406-417 as years of civil war. Cf. Thomas S. Holmes, *The Origin & Development of the Christian Church in Gaul during the First Six Centuries of the Christian Era*, 1911, p. 280; Steven Muhlberger, *The Fifth-Century Chroniclers : Prosper, Hydatius, and the Gallic Chronicler of 452*, 1990, pp. 30-31.

Jerome narrates vividly the invasion by the Vandals and their associates in the advance after 406 and its aftermath and depicts it as a complete disaster. Gaul's cities were besieged and captured, their populations killed or ravaged by famine.¹³⁵ Later, Orentius, bishop of Auch of Gaul again colourfully describes the atrocities and destruction which accompanied the advance of barbarians in the great invasion of 417.¹³⁶ During this turmoil, for over a decade, there was a special place for monasticism where the Roman Empire was still alive in Gaul. Marseilles was successfully defended against Atawulf, the Visigothic king in 413, whereas neighbouring Narbonne and Toulouse were seized.¹³⁷ According to Prosper, Marseilles was fortunately kept safe against barbarians and usurpers before the 440s.¹³⁸ Around this area, following Martin of Tours, who was the brightest beacon of the initial Gallic monasticism,¹³⁹ the second expansive phase began in the double island of Lérins, off the coast of southern Gaul, and afterwards, three Stoechadian islands on the coast opposite Marseilles. Except Cassian's brief mention on the latter in his dedication,¹⁴⁰ there are no monastic sources that allow

¹³⁵ *Letter 123*. 16. "Savage tribes in countless numbers have overrun all parts of Gaul. The whole country between the Alps and the Pyrenees, between the Rhine and the Ocean, has been laid waste by hordes of Quadi, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alans, Gepids, Herules, Saxons, Burgundians, Allemanni and-alas! for the commonweal!-even Pannonians. For Assur also is joined with them. The once noble city of Moguntiacum has been captured and destroyed. In its church many thousands have been massacred. The people of Vangium after standing a long siege have been extirpated. The powerful city of Rheims, the Ambiani, the Altrebatae, the Belgians on the skirts of the world, Tournay, Spire, and Strasburg have fallen to Germany: while the provinces of Aquitaine and of the Nine Nations, of Lyons and of Narbonne are with the exception of a few cities one universal scene of desolation. And those which the sword spares without, famine ravages within."

¹³⁶ Orentius describes that "See with what suddenness death weighed on the entire world, how the violence of war has struck the people. ...Many perished the victims of lies, many of perjury, many were denounced by their fellow-citizens. Ambushes did much evil and so too did popular violence. Whoever was not subdued by force was subdued by famine...In the towns, the estates, the countryside, at the crossroads, in all the districts, here and there along all the roads were death, suffering, destruction, arson and mourning. All Gaul was reduced to smoke on a single pyre." Quoted from Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400-1500*, trans., Julia Barrow, 1988, p.16.

¹³⁷ John Drinkwater, *Fifth-century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* 1992, pp. 21, 54.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 32.

¹³⁹ Cf. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Conferences XVIII*, Preface 3.

us to know more about the Stoechadian monasticism, so that we make a survey focusing mainly Lérins.

While there was heavy immigration into this region, Lérins served indeed as a refuge for the northern peoples, especially aristocrats, and so the number of monks swelled rapidly. During the first half of the fifth century, most of the great bishops of southern Gaul received their early instruction under Honoratus at Lérins. It became a 'seed-bed' for bishops in Gaul. This indicates the relative decline of the previous 'seed-bed', namely, Martinian monasticism in central and northern Gaul, whose expansion appeared weak, most probably attributable, in part, to the barbarian invasions.

We can trace early Lerinian monasticism through two of its texts, *A Discourse of the Life of St Honoratus* and the *Règle des Quatre Pères*. The former, by Hilary of Arles, addressed to the people and monks of Arles in the conventional mould of the panegyric, or eulogy, has no intention to give the full image of monastic life at Lérins. Through its sporadic statements on the subject, the biographer offers us some hints on the general character of Lerinian monasticism. Honoratus, a Belgian Gaul, undertook a trip with his brother, Venatius, under the supervision of an anchorite, Caprasius, to Syria, Egypt, and Greece.¹⁴¹ After the death of Venatius in Greece, Honoratus returned eventually to Gaul, and became a hermit in the mountains near Fréjus. Induced by Leontius, bishop of Fréjus and his brother Castor, bishop of Apt, who both later requested Cassian's works, he established a monastery on the Lerinian islands near Fréjus between 405 and 410.¹⁴² Hilary gives us information about his arrival in Lérins, which was described as a terrible

¹⁴¹ *A Discourse on the Life of St. Honoratus* 9.1; 10.3; 12.1; 15.1.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 15-17.

wilderness and the unknown place of exile.¹⁴³ Honoratus soon erected a church and some buildings for the monks. This leads us to ask what kind of monastic mode was conducted at Lérins? Kasper suggests that monastic life on Lérins began by being fundamentally eremitic and it remained so for a long time, while it evolved little by little into cenobitism.¹⁴⁴ He was convinced that, starting in the time of Honoratus, this slow evolution was accomplished under the abbot Faustus. Institutions and community regulations were substituted by the individual fervour of the first decades. On the other hand, De Vogüé argues that there is no clear evidence for the opinion that hermits lived at the beginning in isolated cells beside the Lerinian community.¹⁴⁵ Based on Cassian's address to Honoratus as an abbot of a large cenobitic monastery,¹⁴⁶ he asserted that we can and have to look upon the insular monastery as a fully cenobitic type in its first decades.¹⁴⁷ Recently, along with Vogüé who points to the arrival of Honoratus with a little group of followers, Terrade concluded that cenobitism seems to have been the first form of monasticism in Lérins.¹⁴⁸ With Cassian's external witness, one finds more contemporary evidence of cenobitism under Honoratus. Hilary provides three statements of the monks' discipline and manual work and the unity of community that allude to cenobitism:

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 16, 2.

¹⁴⁴ See Vogüé's criticisms of Kasper's work in "Les débuts de la vie monastique à Lérins. Remarques sur un livre récent," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 78 (1993): 5-53, at 6-7; cf. Clemens M. . Kasper, *Theologie und Askese: die Spiritualität des Inselmonchtums von Lérins im 5. Jahrhundert*, 1991, p. 160.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 21.

¹⁴⁶ *Conferences XI*, Preface 2.

¹⁴⁷ Vogüé, "Les débuts de la vie monastique à Lérins," 19-21.

¹⁴⁸ Laurent Terrade, "Hilarius of Arles' Life of St Honoratus," The Ecole Initiative (<http://cedar.evansville.edu/~ecoleweb/articles/honoratus.html>), 1997; quoted from M. Labrousse, *Saint Honorat fondateur de Lérins et évêque d'Arles*, 1995, pp. 30-2.

With one he would deal privately, with another in front of everybody...With kindly planning, moreover, he would contrive that no one was burdened by excessive labour and no one grew slothful with too much inaction...Thus it came about that the whole community, assembled around him from all parts of the earth by a desire for the service of God, and differing as much in habits as in language, loved him with one accord.¹⁴⁹

However, the same text provides a different clue: “Honoratus will reap a greater harvest from each of those on whom he took pity than any single one of them will reap for himself ; for the spiritual health imparted to all these separate persons erected a single edifice of glory for him.”¹⁵⁰ Although the meaning of this sentence is somewhat uncertain, it can be interpreted as meaning that the members of Lérins lived separately. One can also tell the meaning of ‘separate’ from its context in the passage, since Hilary was referring to Honoratus’ fruits in dealing with the progress of each person. Furthermore, there is decisive evidence for the existence of cells for at least the oldest monks so that the eremitic ideal was not entirely lost. Eucherius of Lyons, to whom Cassian dedicated the second set of *Conferences*, entered this community during its early years under Honoratus, made reference in the *De laude eremi* to the presence of “holy old men in separate cells who introduced the fathers of Egypt to us Gauls.”¹⁵¹ His testimony therefore helps to erode the three scholars’ assumptions about the first form of monasticism. From the above eremitic expressions, the influence of other cenobitic milieus, like the Basilian, Augustinian, and Pachomian, seems not to have marked the first Lérins. All information, thus, indicates that Lerinian monasticism is not eremitism, nor

¹⁴⁹ *A Discourse on the Life of St. Honoratus* 17-9.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 17. “*Metit enim in singulis plus quam sibi singuli: singulorum enim salus unam illi gloriam instruit.*”

¹⁵¹ Eucherius of Lyons, *De laude eremi* 42: “*Haec nunc habet sanctos senes illos, qui divisis cellulis Aegyptios Patres Gallis nostris intulerunt.*” (PL 50: 714).

cenobitism, but a coexistence, from the beginning, of both forms.¹⁵² This synthetic form also agrees with the witness of Cassian to the monastic modes in the Stoechadian islands, where inhabited “all to seek the common life of the coenobia, but even to thirst eagerly for the sublime life of the anchorite.”¹⁵³ Cassian proceeds to give the following details:

Those Conferences of the best of the fathers are arranged with such care, and so carefully considered in all respects, that they are suited to both modes of life whereby you have made not only the countries of the West, but even the isles to flourish with great crowds of brethren; i.e., I mean that not only those who still remain in congregations with praiseworthy subjection to rule, but those also who retire to no great distance from your monasteries, and try to carry out the rule of anchorites, may be more fully instructed, according as the nature of the place and the character of their condition may require.¹⁵⁴

Cassian’s description on the twinning of the two modes offers us not only a glimpse of southern Gallic monasticism, but also a reason why he inserts two cenobitic Abbas’ conferences (Book XVIII, XIX) in the third set of *Conferences*. Defining his first works as follows: “the *Institutes* of the coenobia which we wrote

¹⁵² According to an account of Severus Sulpicius in *Dialogues* 1.10, Postumianus had found this mode already in Egypt: “Not far from the desert, and close to the Nile, there are numerous monasteries. For the most part, the monks there dwell together in companies of a hundred...If it so happens that any of them form in their minds a lofty ideal of virtue, so as to wish to betake themselves to the desert to live a solitary life, they do not venture to act on this desire except with the permission of the Abbot...To those who betake themselves to the desert, bread or some other kind of food is furnished by the command of that Abbot.” Some anchorites lived near a community where they had previously trained and whose abbot, after having authorised their passage to the solitary life, continued to attend to them. Derwas J. Chitty described the similar mode in Nitria that “There was early a tendency for monks, after a period of training in cenobitic ways in Nitria, to pass on to the anchoritic life in the Cells. This is in marked contrast with the ideal of Pachomius, or of Basil, for whom the coenobium is a lifelong vocation.” (*The Desert a City*, 1966, p. 32)

¹⁵³ *Conferences* XVIII, Preface 3.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

to the best of our ability in twelve books... the ten *Conferences* of the fathers (anchorites) living in the desert of Scete,"¹⁵⁵ Cassian was always conscious of the context in which he wrote, and accommodated the need for separate instructions and different objects according to each mode.

Along with the above question about the type of monastic life at Lérins and the Stoechadian, it is necessary also to consider their rules, since one cannot speak of cenobitism without rules, which is a precise manner of monastic life, whose character differs absolutely from that of eremitism.

As Cassian indicates that abbot Theodore of the Stoechadian coenobium "founded that holy and splendid monastic rule in the province of Gaul,"¹⁵⁶ there must be a Rule for the common life when Cassian defines Lérins as an 'enormous' cenobitic community. However, their choice of rules is not indicated in Cassian's works, nor elsewhere. Many scholars have wondered what kind of rule the early monastery of Lérins could have been following, if any. M.-D. Valentin and, more recently, M. Carrias have proposed that the original rule of Lérins was Basil's *Asketicon*.¹⁵⁷ However, de Vogüé has clearly proved the error of the above idea, and suggested as an alternative that a short text known as the *Règle des Quatre Pères* was the Rule of foundation of the Lérinian cenobitism.¹⁵⁸ He writes that the *Rule*, provided by Honoratus, depends probably on the *Rule of Saint Pachomius*, translated by

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* XI, Preface 2.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* XVIII, Preface 3.

¹⁵⁷ See for the argument on the rule of the initial Rule of Lérins, Terrade, "Hilarius of Arles' Life of St Honoratus,"; Carrias, M. "Vie monastique et règle à Lérins, au temps d'Honorat." *Revue d'Histoire de l'Eglise de France* 74 (1988): 191-211.

¹⁵⁸ *Les Règles des saints Pères; introduction, texte, traduction et notes par Adalbert de Vogüé*, vol.1 1982, pp. 21-177. De Vogüé wrote that Honorat would have had little by little put in writing and unite, then the *Rule of the Four Fathers* would have been finished only under its second successor, Faustus, and even at the end of the reign of the former that is after the council of Arles (456).

Jerome.¹⁵⁹ He highlights several apparent similarities: (1) the liturgical resemblance; this community had two meetings for daily office, which is thought of as more particularly Pachomian (2) the period of probation, *pro foribus* for a new applicant is a week; one finds this also in the *Rule of Saint Pachomius*.¹⁶⁰ (3) the related details of the material and working organisation of the monastery. Through these points, one can see the resemblance between the Pachomians and Lérins. De Vogüé insists that neither Basil, nor Augustine seems to have influenced Lérins at first,¹⁶¹ although Lérins knew the *Rule of Augustine* and Basil's *Asketicon*.¹⁶² However, he missed certain significant points in the *Rule*, which present some differences from the *Rule of Saint Pachomius*. Of the clearest examples, first is the starting point of this *Rule*, Abba Serapion's stress on obedience and consistency as the first principle for monastic life,¹⁶³ agrees with the initial witnesses of the Roman noble traveller, Postumianus, when he originally observed the rule of Egyptian monasteries at the end of the fourth century: "their highest rule is to live under the orders of their Abbot, to do nothing by their own inclination, but to depend in all things on his will and authority...In fact, this is the first of virtues in their estimation, to live in obedience to the will of another."¹⁶⁴ Second is an emphasis on discernment as the main virtue of the Superior; Abba Macarius indicates how superiors need discernment to exert influence spiritually over their subjects: "*Discernendum est ab illo qui praeest qualiter circa singulos debeat pietatis affectum monstrare.*"¹⁶⁵ The term *qui praeest* appeared first in Rufinus' works, and indicated a charismatic elder, not a responsible person of the

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 142.

¹⁶⁰ *Rule of Saint Pachomius* 49. 152-153.

¹⁶¹ Vogüé, "Les débuts de la vie monastique à Lérins. Remarques sur un livre récent," 7-8.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* 9-10.

¹⁶³ *Règle des Quatre Pères* 1. Serapion says that; "Firmly established by such examples of virtue, the obedience has therefore to be practiced with great care and great diligence."

¹⁶⁴ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues* 1. 10.

¹⁶⁵ *Règle des Quatre Pères*, 2.

community.¹⁶⁶ Basil used the term *'ho proestos'* for *abbas*. Hilary stressed this virtue of Honoratus as an abbot: "He discerned what was troubling anyone as easily as if he carried everyone's mind in his own."¹⁶⁷ This gift allowed him to see clearly the qualities and weaknesses in the characters of each of his followers and adapt his orders or advice to them accordingly. Following Antony, Egyptian fathers stress discernment as the most important qualification of an abba to direct disciples.¹⁶⁸ Discernment at its most general involves spiritual direction on how to help bring out the best in the different spiritual capacities of different people. However, the term discernment does not appear in the *Pachomian Rule*.¹⁶⁹

Third is the rule of fasting time: Lerinian monks did not eat in the monastery before the ninth hour. The customary ninth-hour meal was a common tradition of Antony, his disciples, Nitrian Monks, the Great Macarius and his followers in Scete.¹⁷⁰ Antony placed the second Nitrian settlement of Kellia based on the distance walked from the ninth hour to sunset. But in the *Pachomian Rule*, the daily meal began at midday after works or study, and an extra meal was provided

¹⁶⁶ See for the terms *abbas*, Claude Peifer, "Abbas," in *RB 1980 : the rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with notes*, ed. Timothy Fry, 1981, pp. 322-45.

¹⁶⁷ *A Discourse on the Life of St. Honoratus* 18.

¹⁶⁸ cf. *The Life of St. Antony* 22, 38, 44, 88; Anthony the Great, 8,12, 14, 20; Macarius the Great, 3, 33; Moses, 1; Paul the Simple, 1; Sisoies, 12; Zacharias, 3, 4; John the Dwarf, 33, 40; Joseph of Panephris, 11; Paphnutius, 1, in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*; John of Lycopolis, 28; The Monks of Nitria, 15, in *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*; *The Wisdom of Desert Fathers*, 37, 44, 49, 228, 234-8; *The World of Desert Fathers*, 1.11; 2.9; 6.6; 7.1-7, 9, 10; 8.3, 6; "On Discrimination," in *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, 38-52; *The Letters of Ammonas* 11; "On Discernment" of Cassian's *Conferences* II, For the articles on the gift of the discerning of Spirits, see Joseph T. Lienhard, "Discernment of Spirit' in the Early Church," *Studia Patristica*, 22 (1991): 519-22; R.M. Peterson, "The Gift of Discerning Spirits' in the *Vita Antonii* 16-44," *ibid.* 523-527.

¹⁶⁹ But, Pachomius and his successor, Theodore used this gift to search their monk's hearts. Cf. *The First Greek Life of Pachomius* 112; *The Letters of Ammonas* 21.

¹⁷⁰ Anthony the Great 34; Macarius the Great 3, in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*; Poemen 31, in *The Alphabetical Collection*. Most Egyptian monks followed the inspected way of the Desert Fathers. Abba Poemen said "The Fathers tried all this out as they were able and they found it preferable to eat every day, but just a small amount. They have left us this royal way, which is light." Eating only once a day became a classical form in the desert monasticism.

for children and elders, on hardworking days and hat days.¹⁷¹ It cannot be said that Lerinian monks changed the Egyptian fasting system in terms of meal-time in accordance with however, in terms of meal-content, they did change it. This was due to different climatic conditions.¹⁷²

As a result of these decisive facts, neither the Pachomian *Rule*, nor Augustine's *Rule* or Basil's, were the primary sources of *Règle des Quatre Pères*, and so it must have been derived from some unknown desert tradition. For the hypothesis, we should think that this *Rule* is attributed respectively to the four Abbas: Serapion (of Thmuis probably), a disciple of Antony, along with Athanasius, were bequeathed two goat-skin mantles by Antony during his last moments¹⁷³; Macarius (the Great), who, after being disciplined with his friend Serepion by Antony, was a pioneer at Scete; Paphnutius, the disciple of both Macarius, who was the speaker of *Conferences III*; and another Macarius (the Alexandrian), a priest of Kellia, influenced by Macarius the Great. Although one supposes that the *Rule* is a literary fiction written in the form of assembly records, and spoken by the mouth of the authoritative Abbas, there is no reason not to believe the possibility of their meeting due to their neighbouring living territory and their close relationship.¹⁷⁴ The list of four fathers, at a minimum, manifests the Lerinian desire to adopt the principles of Scete, Nitria and Kellia, where ascetical theory developed and most of the *Apophtegmata* were produced. One might assume that the "holy old men", mentioned above in the quotation of Eucherius, who introduced the fathers of

¹⁷¹ Jerome's Preface 5, in *Pachomian koinonia Vol.2 Pachomian chronicles and rules*, trans., A. Veilleux, 1981, p. 143.

¹⁷² Cassian compared Goal custom with that of Egypt: "through which it is considered the greatest luxury if the plant called cherlock, prepared with salt and steeped in water, is set on the table for the repast of the brethren; and many other things like this, which in this country neither the climate nor the weakness of our constitution would permit." (*Institutes VI.11*)

¹⁷³ *The Life of St. Antony* 91-2.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Macarius the Great 21, 28.

Egypt to the Lerinian monks, handed down the fathers' rules from Egypt to Honoratus. The existing *Règle des Quatre Pères* in Lérins could be a reason why Cassian did not provide simply a collection of customs and rules in his works. Even if this hypothesis is ignored, it is clear that Lerinian monasticism did not follow existing modes in the West, but was derived from the head-spring of original monasticism in the Egyptian desert.

In addition, I would like to indicate another connection between Egyptian monks and the Gauls, which flourished in the mission of charity and the recourse of spiritual advice. According to Jerome, in 406, before the onset of the Vandals, Exuperius, Bishop of Toulouse sent a monk from his urban monastery, Sisinnius, to distribute the alms gathered from his congregation to support the pressing needs of the poor saints at Jerusalem and Egyptian monks, as a result of drought and famine.¹⁷⁵ E. D. Hunt says such far-flung generosity was not unique to the Christians of southern Gaul. Individuals and communities elsewhere in the west sent charitable contributions for monks in holy places. Later, in 427, when Cassian completed the second set of the *Conferences*, he notifies us of he who "has been anxious to make his way to Egypt to be edified by the sight of these in the flesh."¹⁷⁶ One might suppose the continuing influence of eastern monasticism on Gaul through these connections without interruption. With the advantage of transportation facilitated by proximity to the Mediterranean, the southern Gauls knew what had happened in the desert of Egypt, what the desert monks had done. In *Institutes*, Cassian points out his Gallic readers' knowledge of desert monasticism, "you ask for a full account of everything, and want even what you

¹⁷⁵ Jerome, Prefaces to *The Commentaries on Zechariah*. Cf. E. D. Hunt, "Gaul and the Holy Land in the early fifth century," in *Fifth-century Gaul*, pp. 267-70.

¹⁷⁶ *Conferences XI*, Preface 2.

know perfectly well to be repeated to you in this treatise.”¹⁷⁷ Because none of his readers were in complete ignorance of the teaching of the desert, Cassian seemed to need to say the following: “this is in conformity with our own experience and not with the view of the elders,”¹⁷⁸ and “clearly and most earnestly do I lay down, not giving my own opinion, but that of the elders.”¹⁷⁹

By all counts, if Cassian’s indications are right, the Gauls had certain information, which was even complete in some parts. Thus we may raise here a question: how was it possible that Cassian plausibly and deceptively presents, as contemporary scholars assert, his own theological synthesis, or his theological arguments to those who have some that “know perfectly well”, or those who plan to make a pilgrimage to the Egyptian desert?¹⁸⁰ We can not think that likely. If that is the case, there is one more question: why did the Gallic authorities enthusiastically seek the knowledge of Egyptian monasticism from Cassian? To get more firm answers, in the following chapter we must begin to survey the character of his texts and literary context.

¹⁷⁷ *Institutes* IV.19

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* VI.20

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* XII.14

¹⁸⁰ Stewart proposed as following: “By presenting his own theological synthesis as their teaching, Cassian uses the Egyptian monks as validating authorities... advances his theological arguments... was responding to critics... This deception was not malicious.” See, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 28.

CHAPTER 2.

UNDERSTANDING

CASSIAN'S MONASTIC

TEXTS

In this chapter we shall investigate, firstly, how far the Latin monastic literature had developed in the first wave of the monastic movement in the West, from around 360 to Cassian's arrival sometime in 410s.¹ This survey will explain why the West was in need of Cassian's works. Secondly, on the basis of an

¹ Adalbert De Vogüé classified the monastic rules in chronological order over eight generations. The first generation of rules had begun to appear around the end of the fourth century in Latin: Augustine's *Praeceptum* (397) and *Obiurgatio*, the *Ordo monasterii* attributed now to Alypius, Basil's *Regulae brevius tractatae* (397), the *Rule of Pachomius* (404) and the *Règle des Quatre Pères* (400-410). *Institutes and Conferences* belong to the second generation of rules, with the *Seconde Règle des Pères* (427). See his *Les Règles Monastiques Anciennes (400-700)*, 1985, pp. 13-14.

understanding of the historical literary setting, this chapter will proceed to analyse the literary character, sources and style of Cassian's texts. Finally, in relation to the dialogical style of his works, we need to clarify the realities of authentic conversations with the desert Abbas, for they are often regarded as little more than a synthesis of various monastic sources, and a modification of Evagrius Ponticus' teaching. Some of Cassian's conferences were thought to be the means through which Cassian participated in western theological debates rather than to be connected with the teaching of the desert elders. This leads us to make a comparative study of Cassian's works and other monastic materials considered to have had an influence on the assessment of the former, such as the *Apophthegmata*, the *Historia monachorum*, and Evagrius's works. I will present some old troublesome points that cast serious doubt on the authenticity of Cassian's works, and inquire whether they state an obvious fact, that Cassian's dialogues are merely fictive writings, or whether his works must be earnestly defended on these fronts.

This examination is very important to determine the identification of the primitive Egyptian monastic theology, for Cassian repeatedly claimed that his records were the very words spoken to him by the desert elders. So far, I have not found anyone to take him at his word. If I am the very first person, my concern is to produce sufficient evidence to be able to defend what Cassian said.

2.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN LATIN MONASTIC LITERATURE

While "rumour has spread abroad concerning him (Antony)", 'the brother from overseas' (*fratres peregrinos*) asked Athanasius urgently for some account of the

father of monasticism “to emulate him and follow his example.”² He undertook to write an aretology,³ the original title of which was *The Life of our father Antony*. It propagandises the ideal of desert monasticism in the pursuit of the perfect life. Evagrius of Antioch, a faithful friend of Athanasius, unsatisfied with the first anonymous Latin translation, soon provided a more elegant version some fifteen years after its composition. This was certainly before 374 when Innocentius, to whom the work is addressed, died.⁴ The *Vita Antonii* appears to have become an immediate bestseller in the East and West and ascetics from all areas embraced, with astonishing enthusiasm, the Egyptian desert model as their standard. A modern historian, surveying the effect of the *Vita Antonii*, described it in terms which, by their very hostility, illustrate its power: ‘If I may be permitted to use strong language, I should not hesitate to say that no book has had a more stultifying effect on Egypt, Western Asia and Europe than the *Vita Antonii*.’⁵ Later, fired with enthusiasm generated by spreading anecdotes of heroic monks, visitors began to undertake the journey to Egypt in order to observe the monastic life and the monks at first hand. It is said, “the monks had, indeed, left the world, but the world followed them into the desert.”⁶ The conduct and words of the monks were

² *Vita Antonii*, Preface.

³ Lacarrière states that ‘the *Life of Anthony* did not in fact belong to the realm of biography but to that of aretology (from the Greek *arete*: virtues and *logos*: speeches which may be translated as edifying dissertation), a form of writing which was very fashionable for several centuries in pagan Antiquity and which complied with precise rules of literary composition. Its aim was not to provide historical and objective testimony to a man’s life but to offer the reader an edifying picture of ideal life which is almost to say that it was literary expression of an ideal model of behaviour. The main literary processes in the *Life of Antony* are to be found in an identical form in the *Lives* of sages of previous centuries, and some exegetes considered it to be a pure and simple imitation of such pagan *Lives* as *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, written by Philocrates about the middle of the third century, *The Life of Pythagoras*, written by Iamblichus early in the fourth century, *The Life of the Sophists* by Eunapius at about the same date.’ Jacques Lacarrière, *Men Possessed by God: the story of the desert monks of ancient Christendom*, trans., Roy Monkcom, 1964, p. 53.

⁴ Introduction in *Vita Antonii*, in *Early Christian Lives*, trans., Carolinne White, 1998, p. 4.

⁵ Harnack, quoted by H. Waddell, *The Desert Father*, 1936, p. 7.

⁶ Quoted from Karl Suso Frank, *With Greater Liberty: A Short History of Christian Monasticism and Religious Orders*, trans., Joseph T. Lienhard, 1993, p. 45.

recorded by some travellers who wanted Western Christians to emulate them. Around 395, a pilgrim to Egypt, probably an anonymous Jerusalem monk, was repeatedly requested by the pious community on the holy Mount of Olives to write “an account of the practices of the Egyptian monks... their fervent love and great ascetic discipline.”⁷ The request produced the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, translated from Greek into Latin by Rufinus of Aquileia. At the turn of the fifth century, a year or two after Evagrius Ponticus’ death in 399, Rufinus translated his best known work, the *Praktikos*, into Latin as *Sentences for Monks*. This was Evagrius’ reply to Anatolius in the Holy Mountains, who had requested him to write “an explanation of the symbolism of the habit of the monks who live in Egypt.”⁸ Rufinus continued to translate Evagrius’ treatises, including *Centum sententiae*.⁹ In the West, at first, Evagrius enjoyed a wide popularity through these Latin translations. After a lapse of about fifteen years after his death, Jerome observes discontentedly that Evagrius’ books were devoured in the East and in the West through the translation of his disciple, Rufinus.¹⁰ About ten years earlier, in 404 and in response to a request by priest Silvanus, Jerome had translated into Latin from the Greek translation of Coptic, the *Pachomiana Latina*, a series of documents that included the *Rule of Pachomius*.¹¹

⁷ *Historia monachorum*, Prologue 2

⁸ Evagrius Ponticus, Introductory Letter to Anatolius, in *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, trans., John Edudes Bamberger, p. 12.

⁹ Cf. Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources*, 1969, pp. 236-7.

¹⁰ Jerome, *Epist. ad Ctesiphontem* 133.3 (PL 22, 1151).

¹¹ Pachomius Tabennensis, *Pachomian Koinonia*, Vol. 1-3, trans., Armand Veilleux, p. 7-8, 141. Jerome states that: “I received the books sent to me by the man of God, priest Silvanus, who had himself received them from Alexandria that he should bid me to translate them. He said that in the communities of the Thebaid and in the monastery of Metanoia lived many Latins, who did not know the Egyptian and Greek languages in which the precepts of Pachomius, Theodore, and Horsiesios were written.” This works were not widely influential in early western monasticism although it formed the basis of a *Rule for the Monks* drawn up by Vigilius about 432. Cf. James O. Hannay, *The Spirit and Origin of Christian Monasticism*, 1903, p. 216.

All the above cases show that information about the Egyptian way of monastic life was constantly sought, for this served as the greatly-admired model of Christian sanctity and perfection, and the authoritative basis for the establishment of monastic communities. Around 417, as Castor had requested a written rule from Cassian to ensure high standards of regimentation and organisation for his new monastery, the ascetics of Gaul still longed to hear about Egyptian monasticism. The transmission of Egyptian monasticism had not yet been completed, although the Latin monastic literature on heroic anecdotes, hagiography and monastic rules, including the original texts by Jerome, Sulpicius, Paulinus of Nola and Augustine, were already abundant. Cassian replied with the *Institutes*, which cannot have been before 417-8, according to M. Olphe-Galliard,¹² and the *Conferences*, likely to have been written between 425-429. There were to be no more Latin monastic writings of Egyptian monasticism, written in response to similar requests, for two generations. The march of the desert monastic literature, which had begun to be propagated by the *Vita Antonii*, was ended by Cassian. The curtain was not raised until *Apophthegmata patrum* came out in Latin during the sixth century. This seems to indicate that Cassian's works revealed the concealed parts of the desert fathers' teachings, and were able to reach a rich kernel of spiritual nourishment.

¹² Olphe-Galliard, "Cassien (Jean)", in *DSp*, 2:217. M. Cappuyns notes, "nous ne pouvons qu'ère reculer au-delà de 424-425," in his "Cassien," *DHGE*, 11:1329. Stewart with Chadwick proposes it was written in the middle 420s. See Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 16; Chadwick, *John Cassian*, pp.38-9.

2.2 THE LITERARY CHARACTER OF CASSIAN'S TEXTS

The existing Latin monastic literature was a potent influence on the format and content of Cassian's works. In the Preface to the *Institutes*, he makes a sound distinction between his works and the monastic literature written by those previously, including Basil, Jerome, and others. He approaches "things that have been left utterly untouched by our predecessors, because they tried to describe what they heard rather than what they experienced".¹³ What was untouched was a guide to the path of spiritual growth and interior endeavor, and so his books are designed to show the monk how to improve his character and to achieve a perfect life. Consequently, he omits intentionally accounts of miracles and signs, of which he says: "Nor shall I strive weave a tale of God's marvelous works and miracles...Apart from wonderment they contribute nothing to the reader's instruction in perfect life."¹⁴ Cassian's works then were not biography, rules, travelogues, collections of sayings, historical descriptions, or miracle stories, but a new style of monastic literature based on his own experiences of monastic discipline, to lead his readers to practise the good and contemplative life, and to climb a ladder of sanctity. He explains, according to Stewart, "where to begin, what to do, what to expect along the way, where it all leads",¹⁵ using narration, argument, description, instruction, biblical exegesis, discourse, and interview with the air of question and answer. The form of his works raises a number of questions. We are unable to give a definition of his literary vehicle by reason of his

¹³ *Institutes*, Preface.

¹⁴ *Institutes*, Preface: *Nec Plane mirabilium dei signorumque narrationem studebo contexere...quae legentibus praeter admirationem nihil amplius ad instructionem perfectae uitae conferunt.*

¹⁵ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 29.

comprehensive use of a wide variety of genres. He excludes one monastic genre from his works. Although it has been believed firmly that Cassian relied heavily on Evagrius' ascetic theology, his works did not use at all the textual strategy of most of Evagrius's major works, which appear in chapter or century form, namely, as collections of often enigmatic aphorisms organised in groups of hundreds, and which assign the readers to ponder over the difficulty in understanding by a subtle and deliberately ambiguous mode of thought. Cassian might be indifferent to 'his gnomic chapters like the tips of mystical icebergs, revealing their true size and configuration only after prolonged meditation and extensive exploration beneath the surface'.¹⁶ The Evagrian written form was quite short, in comparison with the long oral speech in reality for monastic teachings among desert fathers. Cassian's concern was directly 'revealing their true size and configuration' of the teachings preserved in oral traditions rather than in written texts. In this sense, Cassian had been faithful to his announcement in the Preface that "I shall faithfully attempt to explain, as well as I can with the Lord's help, just the institutes of these men and rules of their monasteries"¹⁷, of which a more critical investigation requires further explanation. No document brings us nearer to a realistic picture of the desert pedagogic than his works. No other monastic authors of his time so clearly articulate their spiritual teachings on the life of perfection as Cassian.

2.2.1 Sources

Cassian's primary source is the discourses of the desert fathers, his own transforming experiences through their teachings and observation of the long path

¹⁶ Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, 1992, p. 146.

¹⁷ *Institutes*, Preface.

of his monastic life. What dominate Cassian's works are the biblical texts that shaped the desert monastic theology, and mobilised the support of the ascetic project and practices. Petschenig, in his "*Index Scriptorum*," lists over 1700 passages of Scripture quoted in more than 2000 actual citations.¹⁸ While the *Institutes* contains 157 quotations from the Old and 248 from the New Testament, the *Conferences* shows 1622 quotations, 800 from the Old and 822 from the New Testament.¹⁹ Their sheer volume prompts us to imagine that the only value consisted in quotations from the Bible. It is natural to consider that "the doctrine of Cassian is in essence biblical."²⁰

In addition to the Scriptures, Cassian's works show familiarity with Christian materials, particularly Origen's teachings and his exegetical method, which I will expose in detail in the following chapters.²¹ Marsili showed similarities in this area by making a comparative study of Origen's seven principal passages with those of Cassian.²² In an exaggerated assertion that some texts of Cassian derive from Origen directly, he drew the conclusion that "Origen has contributed to form the spirit and the mentality of Cassian."²³ It does not come as a surprise that a number of Cassian's Abbas showed evidence of the great thinker's influence, since Origen's teaching had remained a force in Alexandria throughout the third and fourth centuries.²⁴ Towards the end of the fourth century some of the leading Egyptians

¹⁸ *Conlationes XXIV*, ed. Michael Petschenig, CSEL, 17:392-409.

¹⁹ See the detailed statistics given in Ansgar Kristensen, "Cassian's Use of Scripture," *American Benedictine Review* 28 (1977): 276-288.

²⁰ Olphe-Galliard, "Cassien (Jean)", 223: "La Doctrine de Cassien est d'essence biblique."

²¹ Cassian hardly mentioned the sources except his citations of two brief sentences to Basil of Caesarea in his *Institutes* VI.19, VII.19.

²² Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico*, pp. 150-8.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 158: "Origene ha contribuito a formare lo spirito e la mentalita di Cassiano."

²⁴ McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, p. 145.

avowed themselves disciples of Origen. Passages of Origen were memorised by some intellectual monks.

One significant factor in the sources is a few demonstrations of classical references. Abba Chaeremon mentions two classical authors, Socrates and Diogenes.²⁵ Having received a good education in classical literature, Abba Joseph shows thorough familiarity with Cicero's treatise on friendship. Abba Abraham employs the Greek terms on the teaching of the threefold nature of the soul.²⁶ Demonstrating his wide reading in classical texts,²⁷ Cassian, following Abba Serenus, uses a Platonic anthropological term, the Greek nous for the Latin mens, "mind" in the *Institutes*.²⁸ How can we evaluate this interweaving of the classical references with Christian ascetic teachings? One scholar notes that since Christian literature was still in its infancy in the view of educated Greeks in the first half of the fifth century, it was inevitable that what Christians had produced would borrow heavily from the styles and motifs already present within the classical tradition.²⁹ In relation to the pagan literature in the fifth century, as Theodore Haarhoff demonstrated, there are three tendencies among the Christian Latin authors: (1) that of Sidonius, which is 'essentially heathen with a veneer of churchmanship'; (2) that of men like Paulinus of Nola, who 'jealously guards his pupils from contamination by the Gentile classics'; (3) and that of 'the wiser and more catholic teachers', such as Hilary of Poitiers and Sulpicius Severus (in his *Chronicon*), who are liberal enough

²⁵ *Conferences* XIII.5. The speaker quotes both Socrates and Diogenes, but the source of the Greek text is unknown.

²⁶ *Conferences* XXIV.15ff. The Abba's teaching on this is platonic (cf. Plato, *Rep.* 4.12ff.) mediated by Middle Stoic psychology.

²⁷ See *Conferences* XIV.12.

²⁸ *Institutes* VIII.10; *Conferences* VII.4. He just alludes to Cicero's name in *Institutes* XII.19. Cassian also quotes two Latins, Cicero and Persius in *De incarnatione domini*: 6.10 cites Cicero *In Verrem, actio II* 1.5.40; 6.9 cites Persius *Satire* 3.116.

²⁹ Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the 4th Century*, 1983, p. 25.

to imitate and benefit by the older pagan literature.³⁰ However, one might not place Cassian's works under any of these three categories, but rather under the category of the Eastern tendency of the Adexandrian theologians, who synthesized theology and the pagan philosophies, more specifically, such as Origen. Although Origen had none of the welcoming attitude towards philosophy, characteristic of Justin Martyr or Clement of Alexandria, his theology is permeated through and through by Platonic ways of thought.³¹ Origen's philosophical tendency is deeply indebted to Platonism, which infiltrates his exposition of the Scripture, which was certainly at the very heart of his life's work. Rowan A. Greer comments in the following way:

We are left in a circle. On the one hand, Origen begins with scripture, and his careful reading of it yields the theological conclusions that comprise his view as a whole. From this point of view he is certainly a Christian and indeed, a Biblical theologian. On the other hand, Origen approaches scripture with preconceptions that are in great part determined by his philosophical training and bent of mind. At this level it is possible to charge him with simply importing Greek philosophy into his interpretation of scripture. The resulting puzzle is not easily solved...³²

When one thinks that Cassian became associated with a group of monks who read the theology of Origen, it is a matter of course that some parts of his works would display a background of philosophical spirituality provided by Origen's theology.³³ Yet, it should be noted that the philosophical hue in Cassian's works differs from

³⁰ Quoted from Theodore Haarhoff, *Schools of Gaul; A Study and Pagan of Christian Education in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, 1920, p. 43.

³¹ Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, 1981, pp. 53-4.

³² Rowan A. Greer (trans.), Introduction in *Origen*, 1979.

³³ Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 25.

that of the Origenist tradition, especially that of the chief exponent, Evagrius, who was dependent on neoplatonic cosmological speculation. (I will argue against Cassian's dependence on Evagrius in Section 2.3.2) On the other hand, Cassian's readers in the West were not unfamiliar with the biblical, ascetic literature bearing a philosophical constituent. Origen's Latin versions were read extensively, largely through the work of two translators at the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth, Rufinus of Aqaileia and Jerome.³⁴

2.2.2 Style

The format of *Conferences* shows a professional knowledge of a special subject that Cassian consults with the anchorites. That originated with Antony's counsel. In *Institutes V.*, Antony teaches that each virtue ought to be sought from him who professes it in a special degree, "For if we want to gain all virtues from some one person, we shall with great difficulty or perhaps never at all find suitable examples for us to imitate... not that any one can alone acquire those things which are divided among many."³⁵ Thus, the monks sought all virtues individually on foot from those who were specially gifted in each. They drifted about at the mercy of the sandy wind of the desert, and flow of the Nile. To converse with them was normal, pedagogical practice in the desert. Following Antony's admonition, Cassian gathered spiritual honey in the desert like a most careful bee, and diligently stored it up in the vessel of his own breast. Sacred knowledge had not been attained from a source, or an offerer, but from the many holy flowers of the desert. He now shared his own honey pot with Gallic bees. Since Castor sought

³⁴ See for the lists of translations by both men, Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, 1989, pp. 41-3.

³⁵ *Institutes V.4*

that “the simple life of holy men be told in simple language to the brethren in his new monastery”³⁶, Cassian chose a literary means that retained the naturalness of his conversations with the elders, in which some fundamental topics inevitably repeatedly appeared, retaining even some inconsistencies. Unfortunately, this form prompts his readers not to regard him as a systematic thinker, but, fortunately, to regard the realism demonstrating its authenticity. It was more important for Cassian to transmit in as raw a form as possible what he himself had received than to earn a reputation as a new monastic author. He professed himself to be concerned more about usefulness than renown: “since if he considers the grandeur of the thoughts, the fact that the awkwardness of our style annoys him, need not be prejudicial to the profit of the reader, and for our part we are more anxious about its usefulness than its being praised.”³⁷ Cassian was acutely concerned not only with avoiding rhetorical techniques of late antiquity popular among the upper class, but also with the difficult question as to how his writings might manifest themselves and be recognized among those works that weave “a tale of God’s miracles and signs” into the desert monastic heroes.³⁸ As someone who, feeling himself questioned, tried to imagine how his readers might respond to the works, he selects a literary form with verbatim reports for achieving his purpose.

Cassian consistently maintains an intimate and conversational style in his whole works. His sentences are long, smooth, flowing, rhythmic, and rhetorical, and his vocabulary is vivid and tending toward the superlative. His grammatical constructions are those of a cultured man, reflecting multiple resources of

³⁶ *Ibid.* Preface: sed sanctorum simplicem vitam simplici sermone fratribus in novello monasterio tuo cupiens explanari.

³⁷ *Conferences* XVII. 30.

³⁸ *Institutes*, Preface.

vocabulary and syntax.³⁹ There is nothing tortuous or snatched or even artificial about the style. It flows readably and, in addition, his Latin is clear. In the early sixth century, Cassiodorus pays a great tribute to Cassian's style, twice describing him as "Facundissimus" and "eloquentissimum Cassianus."⁴⁰ A modern scholar, Olphe-Galliard, also states: "his style, full of image, explains a part of the success won by the author of the *Conferences*."⁴¹ Chadwick extols his gift "of illustrating with the concrete and the picturesque without descending to the anecdote."⁴² In comparison with John Chrysostom, whom he so much admired, though Cassian had been under him for several years at the beginning of the fifth century, his Latin style was generally less florid and ornate than the Greek Chrysostom's developed oratorical rhetoric in terms of style, arrangement, and delivery. The most decisive factor affecting Cassian's literary style and projects is the Castor's request: "you are not looking for a pleasing style, with which you yourself are particularly gifted; rather, you are concerned that the simple life of holy men be explained in simple language to the brothers in your new monastery."⁴³ Cassian complied faithfully with the Castor's desire by the adoption of dialogue, which was a common style in the Egyptian desert. Cassian told the readers of the text mode in the Preface of the third set of *Conferences*: "they can more readily receive the precepts and institutes of the Elders, and receiving into their cells the authors of the *Conferences* together with the actual volumes of the *Conferences* and talking with them after a fashion by daily questions and answers."⁴⁴ This reminds us of Origen's style, "devoid of rhetoric or elaborate eloquence; rather he spoke in a

³⁹ Rea, "Grace and Free Will," p. 48; C. von Paucker, "Die Latinität des Johannes Cassianus," *Romanische Forschungen* 2 (1886):391.

⁴⁰ *Facundissimus* in *Expos. Ps.* 69 (col. 492D) and *Expos. Ps.* 141 (col. 1009B); *eloquentissimus* in the preface to *Div. litt.* (col. 1108C).

⁴¹ Olphe-Galliard, "Cassien (Jean)", 222.

⁴² Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 161.

⁴³ *Institutes*, Preface.

⁴⁴ *Conferences* XVIII, Preface 3.

conversational style as one would speak privately to a friend.”⁴⁵ At this point, Cassian’s selection of this instructional mode through dialogue between a master and disciple leads to an inquiry into the hard facts of reality in the following section.

2.3 THE AUTHENTICITY OF CASSIAN’S TEXTS

In the Preface of *Institutes*, Cassian demonstrates that his plan is to say what he has learned from the elders to satisfy Castor’s commands: “I shall try, so far as I can, with the help of God, faithfully to explain only their institutions and the rules of their monasteries, and especially the origins and causes of the principal faults, of which they reckon eight, and the remedies for them according to their traditions.”⁴⁶ In nine small paragraphs of the Preface, we meet similar expressions at least six times on his function as an eyewitness. Was Cassian faithful to his announcement in the Preface? We hardly find one who gives credit to his assertion among contemporary scholars. Stewart, for example, notes that “Cassian sets his sights beyond Castor’s territory’s seeking to reform existing monastic movements as well as to help establish new communities. The *Institutes* are inescapably a critique of the native monastic tradition associated especially with Martin of Tours.”⁴⁷

Before bringing the *Institutes* to completion, when Castor had bidden him write ten *Conferences* for him in the same style, Cassian seemed to remain with the

⁴⁵ Carl A. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church*, 1990, p. 116.

⁴⁶ *Institutes*, Preface.

⁴⁷ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 17.

same intention, writing “the *Institutes*, which are not mine but the fathers.”⁴⁸ He was careful not to state opinions as his own, but to claim dependence on what had already been found in those who came before him. While he requested prayers from his readers to be granted a perfect recollection of their teaching, Cassian desires that “we may explain them as beautifully and as exactly as we received them from them and may succeed in setting before you the men themselves incorporated, as it were, in their own *Institutes*, and what is more to the point, speaking in the Latin tongue.”⁴⁹ Making frequent reference to his readers to the names of the authoritative Abbas, Cassian hopes that they will enter into the dialogue for transformation, which was typical in the deserts. His readers are invited into the cells of the desert to listen to the aged elders talking about their experience and about monastic theology. Did Cassian merely write a report of an oral and lived tradition that he had seen and heard? C. H. Lawrence points out a problem with his transmission: “Memory is an incorrigible improver. We cannot be sure how much Cassian’s recollections improved upon the discourses of the Egyptian abbots, for twenty-five turbulent years intervened before he committed them to writing.”⁵⁰ Examining the range of Cassian’s historical claims, J. Guy argued that Cassian could not possibly have met many of the fathers whose acquaintance he had claimed, though he did not deny the fundamental role that Cassian’s Egyptian experiences had played in his formation.⁵¹ He declared that Cassian’s choice of an autobiographical form was little more than an attempt to appeal to the authority of a venerated lineage of desert fathers. Stewart accorded with the assessments of Guy, stating: “Therefore, although the great Egyptian monks to whom Cassian attributes *Conferences* were mere historical figures, he

⁴⁸*Conferences* I, Preface 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Clifford Hugh Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, pp. 12-3.

⁵¹ Guy, “Jean Cassien,” 363~72.

uses them, and the literal structure he creates for them, as a monastic allegory designed to lead his readers to true doctrine and traditional monasticism.”⁵² Benedicta Ward says gently that: “The *Institutes* and *Conferences* are not verbatim accounts of conversations with the monks of Egypt; they are a carefully constructed interpretation of the aims and methods of monastic Egypt for the use of the monks of the West, and they are also shaped by the theological and ethical ideas of John Cassian.”⁵³ Although Cassian wanted nothing else than to pass on the teachings of those who preceded him, although a century ago Cuthbert Butler wrote that he found “it impossible to doubt the substantial truth of Cassian's picture of monastic life, based, as it appears to be, upon the writer's personal observation,”⁵⁴ most modern scholars believe that his autobiographical works have a literary fictive quality. What are the grounds of their view? Integrating all criticism on Cassian, I spot three troublesome positions that threaten seriously the authenticity of his texts, as follows:

(1) from the standpoint of the other desert literature, particularly of the *Apophthegmata* and the *Historia monachorum*, the names of Cassian's elders are not great names, but are obscure, and even unknown by the other sources. Chadwick's note that Cassian was not fathering his theology upon famous men to win acceptance is partly true.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the form and contents of Cassian's texts is strikingly different from the *Apophthegmata*, which, according to Graham Gould and Karl Suso Frank, has been regarded, without doubt, as the most important single source for understanding the milieu of the Egyptian monasticism of the fourth- and fifth-century.⁵⁶

⁵² Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 17.

⁵³ Benedicta Ward, in Introduction of *The Lives of Desert Fathers*, p.10.

⁵⁴ Cuthbert Butler, *The Lausiatic History of Palladius*, vol.1, 1904, p. 205.

⁵⁵ Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 18.

⁵⁶ Frank, *With Greater Liberty*, p. 39; Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*, p. 4.

(2) from the standpoint of Evagrius Ponticus's teachings, the *Institutes* are assessed as little more than an expansion of Evagrian sources of the monastic garments, and of the eight principal vices. Pristas comments on the book, stating that Cassian consistently alters the Evagrian material to fit his own ends.⁵⁷ In addition to the contents of *Institutes*, the majority of scholars have been convinced that Cassian modifies Evagrius' term *apatheia*, which he defines as "the very flower of ascesis"⁵⁸, to purity of heart. Stewart notes, "Cassian was surely wise to opt for biblical ambiguity of purity of heart rather than risk the misunderstanding possible with Evagrius' term, *apatheia*."⁵⁹

(3) from the standpoint of Augustinian orthodoxy on grace and free will, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Cassian's thirteenth Conference has been assumed to be a controversial piece of writing, containing his famous opposition to Augustine. For instance, even though Chadwick disregards the extreme view that all the *Conferences* were inventions, he asserts that the conference must be attributed to Cassian himself and not to the Egyptian Abba, Chaeremon, "inasmuch as it betrays at every turn too innate an acquaintance with Augustinian theology."⁶⁰

In the following sections, I would like to re-examine the accuracy of these assertions, which have held sway for so long. While I make a comparative study of Evagrian sources with Cassian's texts on the above matters, the commentary of the Lord's prayer, presented in the works of both authors, will be added for an examination of a link between them. In relation to the thirteenth Conference, my

⁵⁷ Pristas, "The Theological Anthropology of John Cassian," p. 19.

⁵⁸ *Chapters On Prayer*, 81.

⁵⁹ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 43.

⁶⁰ Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 19-20.

exploration will be mostly restricted to the discussions of literary context, and the aspect of its theological contents will be treated in Chapter 4.

2.3.1 The *Apophthegmata*, the *Historia Monachorum* and Cassian's Texts

Though the *Apophthegmata* itself was not written down until much later, in the late fifth or perhaps early sixth century, it seems to have been a bit of a hindrance to the verification of the primary nature of Cassian's texts due to wide dissimilarities between them.

Firstly, a word about genre. The former has a gnomic, or terse and aphoristic character. The texts actually include a lot of monastic anecdotes that differ from pure *apophthegmata* in that their essence is not in a word or statement, but rather in a situation and its resolution.⁶¹ They surprise the hearer, and often they puzzle him by virtue of their utter simplicity. On the other hand, the long discourses of Cassian's works with rich variations, such as letters, sermons, exegetical commentaries, and collections of sayings and stories, form a contrast to the former. Designed as texts in the natural dialogical form, *Conferences* in particular are considered "as an intermediate form between the oral discourses of the pioneers and the bald recollections of the *Apophthegmata*."⁶² In fact, Cassian tried "not only to compress what had to be told into a brief discourse, but also to pass over very many points in silence."⁶³ When we see long sermons in the *Vita Antonii* and

⁶¹ Stewart, Introduction xv, in *The World of the Desert Fathers: Stories and Sayings from the Anonymous Series of the Apophthegmata Patrum*, 1986.

⁶² Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority*. p. 222, no. 6.

⁶³ *Conferences* IX.1

Historia Monachorum,⁶⁴ it is clear that the prolonged lesson was certainly a feature of early desert monasticism.

Secondly, a word about theology. Whereas the desert monks who appear in the *Apophthegmata* shared a profound mistrust of the speculative theology influenced by Origen, some of Cassian's Abbas shared deeply theological speculation and principles of allegorical exegesis that had originated in the teachings of Origen and his followers. In addition to anti-Origenism, the *Apophthegmata* describes the desert monks as uninterested in philosophical matters, whereas, as mentioned previously, Cassian's texts demonstrate that some of the elders couched their understanding of the ascetical life in Platonic anthropological terms. Because of these two opposite tendencies in theology and intellectualism, the position of Cassian's texts as primary sources on desert monasticism is doubted. Rather, the texts are classified into a branch of Evagrian data, whereas the *Apophthegmata* ranks among the sources. The latest research of the compiler and editorial process of the *Apophthegmata* casts a new light on the understanding of the desert literature.

Wilhelm Bousset, in 1923, hypothesized that Poemen and his school played a pivotal role in the formation of the great collections with the title, *Apophthegmata*.⁶⁵ Most recently, Driscoll, too, asserts that the "Basis of the collections later grouped under the title *Apophthegmata* very likely grew up in a circle around Poemen."⁶⁶ We understand why the *Apophthegmata*, attributed to

⁶⁴ See *Vita Antonii* 16-43; *Historia Monachorum*, John of Lycopolis 20-64, Apollo 50.

⁶⁵ William Harmless, "Remembering Poemen Remembering: The Desert Fathers and the Spirituality of Memory," *Church History* 69:3 (2000): 487. Quoted from Wilhelm Bousset, *Apophthegmata: Studien zur Geschichte des ältesten Mönchtums*, 1923, pp. 68-71.

⁶⁶ Jeremy Driscoll, "The Fathers of Poemen and the Evagrian Connection," *Studia Monastica* 42(2000): 27.

Poemen, form one seventh of the whole of the Alphabetical Collection. A question that arises is this: how are the compilers of the *Apophthegmata* connected with anti-intellectualism, or anti-Origenism? Driscoll states, "in their present redaction they come to us in a form that is not especially friendly to the memory of Evagrius and to others who were considered to have suffered the influence of Origen."⁶⁷ L. Regnault suggests that a group of monks known for their fondness of the theology of Origen stood outside the tradition of the Desert Fathers, which is revealed in the *Apophthegmata*.⁶⁸ They were the Origenist monks apparently led by Evagrius, Ammonius and the "Tall Brothers", whose monastic teaching possessed a strong Stoic and Platonic flavour.⁶⁹ Their intellectual life put on record and propagates the monastic life and thought, but was not unpleasant in the eyes of many uncultivated monks.⁷⁰ We come to see why the *Apophthegmata*, as Guy points out, does not speak of what Evagrius would call the realm of knowledge.⁷¹ Inversely, Poemen is surprisingly absent from the sources of Evagrius and his disciples, such as Evagrius' *Praktikos*, Palladius's *Lausiaca History*, and the *Historia monachorum*.⁷² It is certainly impossible to prove why they decline to comment on the most prominent in the *Apophthegmata*. The evident fact is that there was a great discord between two parties, leading both to leave a record of their own voices and to exclude that of the other.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Driver, *John Cassian*, p. 55, no. 122. Cf. Lucien Regnault, *La vie quotidienne des Peres du desert en Egypte au IVe siecle*, Paris: Hachette, 1990. pp. 35-6.

⁶⁹ Palladius, *The Lausiaca History* 11.4, 24, 35.

⁷⁰ See *The Saying of the Desert Fathers*, Evagrius 7, pp. 54-5.

⁷¹ Driscoll, "The Fathers of Poemen," 31. Guy, "Les *Apophthegmata Patrum*," *Théologie de la vie monastique*, p. 82, n. 32.

⁷² Harmless, "Remembering Poemen Remembering: The Desert Fathers and the Spirituality of Memory," 487.

With the exception of Evagrian sources, the *Apophthegmata* has held dominion over the understanding of primitive Egyptian monasticism. Many scholars, based largely on the influence of *Vita Antonii* and the final redaction of the *Apophthegmata*, believe that the purest movement of Egyptian monasticism is represented in illiterate peasant types.⁷³ Chitty says, "Antony was an illiterate layman, and the majority of the Egyptian monks were much the same."⁷⁴ Peter Brown also notes, "in these Sayings, the peasantry of Egypt spoke for the first time to the civilized world."⁷⁵ Grounded in a belief that there was a high rate of illiteracy among them, the assumption of a harsh division between illiterate Egyptians and educated Origenist Greeks has largely been accepted for a long time. Recently, there have been several attempts by contemporary scholars, such as S. Rubenson, J. Driscoll, and S. Driver, to undermine this traditional view.⁷⁶ Without the consideration of their outcome, the desert monastic literature itself can open our eyes to the intelligent Coptic elders who neither belong to the Origenist group outside the *Apophthegmata*, nor are illiterate monks opposed strongly to Hellenistic thought in general, and to Origen in particular. In the *Historia monachorum*, certain Abbas, John of Lycopolis, Apollo leading five hundred monks, and Abba Pityrion at Pispir, show the influence of Origen and use the

⁷³ Driscoll argues that this supposition is exaggerated and ungrounded. See "The Fathers of Poemen," 27-51.

⁷⁴ Chitty, *The Desert a City*, p. 86.

⁷⁵ Peter Brown, *The World of late Antiques, AD 150-750*, p. 100.

⁷⁶ Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony: Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint*, 1990; Driscoll, "The Fathers of Poemen," 31; Driver, *John Cassian*, p. 28ff.. In the study of the *Epistulae* of Antony that is regarded as being of little value to the understanding of Antony, Rubenson has declared that that the *Epistulae* were composed in Coptic and deserve precedence over the *Vita Antonii* as a source for the historical Antony. He argued that the *Epistulae* employed a Platonic understanding of knowledge, cosmology and anthropology. There seems be little doubt to assert that that the *Epistulae* were influenced by a Platonic world-view. Then the present readers of Antony are in an awkward position with two references between. Which of them provides a knowledge of the real Anthony? We do not have firm evidence to reach a determination on that matter.

typical concept of purity in the Platonic tradition.⁷⁷ Even in the *Apophthegmata*, several anecdotes of the native monks, such as Theodore of Pherme and Serapion, who store books, and a Scetian scribe who earned his living out of copying books,⁷⁸ lead us to the conclusion that the traditional view of the Egyptian monks as illiterate peasants must be revised.

Cassian's Abbas provides high-level teachings that satisfy the intellectual desires of some monks, but differ from the philosophised Evagrian doctrines that I will treat later. For example, Abba Moses, in the first Conference, requested to exercise wise discretion concerning worldly philosophy, since some monks had been deceived by elegant words and by certain teachings of the philosophers.⁷⁹ Who were these monks except the Origenists, according to the existing materials?

In addition to the matter of the transmitters, we must bear in mind a process in time, place, and language that the *Apophthegmata* had undergone up until their final redaction: firstly, they had been passed down orally for a period of 30 to 180 years. Part of the collection is explicitly attributed to famous monks who lived during the fifth century; secondly, they had been put together not in Egypt, but in Palestine; thirdly, while the written text is in Greek, the oral tradition behind it is

⁷⁷ See *Historia monachorum* 1, 29; 62-3, 8, 14; 15, 15, 2; 3.

⁷⁸ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Abraham 3; Theodore of Pherme 1 and 29; Serapion 2; Epiphanius 8. It is temptingly easy to recognize two tendencies in treating books in the desert: allowing and encouraging possession of books and tools that were necessary for writing, on the contrary prohibiting ownership of them. Scattered statements show that individual monks possessed books in the fourth century. For example, Theodore of Pherme, an educated monk in Scete "had acquired three good books" which he used and which he also loaned to his monastic brothers; he told Abba Macarius, "I have three excellent books from which I derive profit; the brethren also make use of them and derive profit from them." When Theodore asks Macarius whether he should keep the books, or sell them and give the money to the pool, Macarius says that "it is best of all to possess nothing", so he sells them. However, maybe late again, Theodore kept books as possessions, because they were stolen by three thieves.

⁷⁹ *Conferences* I.20

largely Coptic. Furthermore, the transmission of the *Apophthegmata* had suffered intervening theological controversies, such as the Origenist crisis of 400 and the bitter feuds between Chalcedonians and Monophysites after 451. In this historical process, the theological, or social matters of those actual days in Egypt might have been, little by little, eliminated in the contents of the *Apophthegmata*. It thus bends to convey the instructions, or the issues of *praktiké* that are identified, according to Guy, in three principal features: the role of an elder in the initiation of a beginner, an apprenticeship based on experience, and the exposure of one's thoughts to the elder.⁸⁰

On the other hand, the subjects in Cassian's works go over to the wider concerns in theological, controversial, or even social matters in the desert that are almost absent from the *Apophthegmata*, for example, the Anthropomorphite controversy, delicate demonology and its hierarchy, an inscrutable problem between the grace of God and free will, three types of monks, the impossibility of sinlessness, transcendent contemplation, etc.

The preceding considerations might suggest that the *Apophthegmata* could not take a unique position as a living document, which brings us nearer to the early Egyptian monks. This view concurs with Driscoll's declaration that "Evagrius, Cassian, and Palladius all three lived for some years in the desert, and their writings consequently reflect firsthand testimony, which, it must be admitted, the hand of the final redactor of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* does not."⁸¹ Therefore, it is proper to conclude that the differentiae between the *Apophthegmata* and

⁸⁰ Guy, "Educational Innovation in the Desert Fathers," *Eastern Churches Review* 6 (1974): 44-51.

⁸¹ Driscoll, "The Fathers of Poemen," p. 28.

Cassian's works should not be taken to mean that doubt should be thrown on Cassian as a faithful steward of an inheritance that fell to him.

Before we turn to a comparative study between Evagrius and Cassian, the reputation of Cassian's elders should be considered, in comparison with the elders in the *Historia monachorum*. In *Conferences* I – XX, Cassian introduces the thirteen Abbots; seven from Scete, four from Panephrisis, and two from Diolcos. With the exception of a few, their names are mostly unknown from other contemporary sources, particularly from the *Historia monachorum*, thus raising the question of Cassian's historical reliability. This inconsistency can be seen through their different itineraries. The author of the *Historia monachorum* notices the perilous path which one must follow to approach the perfect monks of Scete: "This place is a waste land lying at a distance of a day's and a night's journey from Nitria through the desert. It is a very perilous journey for travelers. For if one makes even a small error, one can get lost in the desert and find one's life in danger".⁸² The author and his teams, thus, steer clear of the desert of Scete, though he himself said that such distances and dangers are the necessary conditions for being "counted worthy to see these things."⁸³ Moreover, they later were not able to go through Diolcos to Panephrisis. In Diolcos, they met two Abbots, Piamon and John, the names of whom are consistent with those of two speakers in *Conferences* XVIII and XIX. If the names had been Scete and Panephrisis, it would have testified to the authenticity of Cassian's elders.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.* epil. 3 (Russell, 118).

2.3.2 Evagrius Ponticus's Teachings and Cassian's Texts

The additional doubt about Cassian's assertion of the elders' originality stems from his dependence on Evagrius. It has been generally accepted that Cassian conveyed the teaching of Evagrius in a purified form, eliding the heretical elements, although he never mentioned the name, beyond question, due to the Origenist controversy. J. Leclercq's claim, "in order to understand Cassian, it is necessary to know Evagrius,"⁸⁴ has become an immovable motto. Most scholars have been bound to assume that there is an important similarity within Cassian's doctrines in comparison with Evagrius'. For example, Driver asserts, "Although composing a discursive treatise, Cassian adapted an understanding of monastic reading drawn from the Origenist monks of Egypt and, more specifically, from Evagrius's *sententiae*."⁸⁵

The ground of the deep connection between Cassian and Evagrius has been offered by Salvatore Marsili since the 1930s.⁸⁶ After he compared accurately the collected fifty-one passages in Cassian with the texts of Evagrius, such as *Praktikos*, *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus*, and *Antirrheticos*, he states strongly his conviction that: "*ci dice già abbastanza chiaro quanto sia forte e stretto il contatto tra i due autori. Una penetrazione nel pensiero stesso, facendoci conoscere ancora più che la semplice scorza, ci dirà anche più chiaro e manifesto quanto Cassiano debba ad Evagrio nella sua dottrina.*"⁸⁷ In his final conclusion, he declares that:

⁸⁴ J. Leclercq, Preface xvi, in Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*.

⁸⁵ Driver, *John Cassian*. p. 121.

⁸⁶ Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico*.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 103-4: "It already tells us clearly enough how strong and close is the contact between the two authors. The penetrating nature of the thought itself shows us even more than the simple words, how much Cassian owes to Evagrius in its doctrine."

Sa tradurre in latino, ciò che Evagrio ha scritto in greco; sa ridare in uno stile proprio, ampio e non di rado tortuoso ed oscuro, quel che il filosofo aveva lasciato in formule brevi, spesso lapidarie, sempre concise. Specialmente questa diversità di stile, che manifesta però l'uomo, e si riduce così ad una diversità di carattere, mentre si deve tener presente nel giudicare la dipendenza di Cassiano da Evagrio, ha fatto sì che Cassiano non in tutto e per tutto seguisse il suo maestro.⁸⁸

Finally, Marsili asserts that it was actually the teaching of the *Didascalia of Alexandria* that was transmitted to the West by Evagrius and Cassian, without verifying the following statement: *“Colui che aveva codificato ad uso del monachismo la “spiritualità dotta” dei maestri del Didascaleo Alessandrino.”⁸⁹* Highly convinced of Marsili's demonstration, P. Courcelle asserted that Cassian's originality was very limited:

The textural relations between the two works are striking and numerous. Cassian borrows from Evagrius the description of the different items of monastic dress and their symbolical interpretations... Classification and the definitions of the various vices, or the various practices of the spiritual life are the work of Evagrius, and not of the illiterate monks of the Desert... Cassian is only careful not to accept

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 161: “He is able to translate into Latin what Evagrius wrote in Greek; he is able to rewrite in a proper, ample, and sometimes tortuous and dark style, what the philosopher left in brief formulas, often lapidary, always concise. The difference in style is typical of the man, so it reduces itself to a difference of character. You must keep this in mind when you judge the attachment of Cassian to Evagrius, because it made Cassian not follow his teacher in everything he did.”

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 164: “He who had codified “the learned spirituality” of the teachers of the *Didascalia of Alexandria* for use in monasticism.”

on his own account the theory of ἀπάθεια whose Pelagian tone St. Jerome had condemned.⁹⁰

Courcelle has arrived at the conclusion that Cassian was merely the Latin translator of Evagrius' elaborate theories, and a codifier using the teaching of the *Didascalia of Alexandria* and Evagrius.⁹¹ Following their assertion, one might safely assert that Cassian's works were a literary fiction manifestly based upon and an elaboration of Evagrius' doctrines. However, I have been skeptical about this traditional view, which seems to have gone too far for the following reason: most of the comparisons used by Marsili seem to have failed to demonstrate clear affinities between two authors. One of the critical reviewers, D. B. Capelle, has thrown cold water on Marsili's achievement:

*On s'attendait bien a de nombreux points de contact. Dom M. estime qu'il faut aller plus loin et reconnaitre dans Evagre une source litteraire de Cassien. Malgre l'impressionnante liste de paralleles, rassembles en une quinzaine de pages (p. 87-103), je n'oserais dire que la preuve est faite d'une dependance litteraire, mais bien celle d'une etroite correspondance doctrinale.*⁹²

As Courcelle mentioned, what induces us to cast doubt on Cassian's originality are three principal factors: the symbolical interpretations of monastic dress, the scheme of eight principal vices, and the terms and system of practices of ascetic

⁹⁰ Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources*, p. 230.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 229-30. Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico*, pp. 85-6, 161-4.

⁹² D. B. Capelle, in "Comptes Rendus," *Revue d'histoire ecclesiastique* 35 (1939): 554: "One might well expect many points of contact. Dom M. deems that it is necessary to go further and to recognize a literary source of Cassian in Evagrius. In spite of the impressive list of parallels, gathered in about fifteen pages (p. 87-103), I would dare to say that the proof only is made of a literary dependence, but most definitely the one of a narrow doctrinal correspondence."

life. It is my intention in this section to shine a new light on an old view of the similarity between Evagrius and Cassian by re-examining the above three matters. In addition, I will examine some affinities between the two authors with regard to the teaching of prayer.

2.3.2.1 The Monk's Clothing

In accord with the saying, "To change one's condition was to change one's clothes,"⁹³ a renunciation of the profane world called for exterior signs of inner renewal. By the late fourth century, Egyptian monks exemplified themselves by their symbolic clothing, wearing a style similar to that of John the Baptist and reminiscent of Elijah's camel-hair mantle and leather girdle (Mark 1.6).⁹⁴ In *Institutes I*, the habit has two functions, firstly, to assert the Biblical origins of the monks as belonging to the same lineage as Elijah, John, and the Apostles; secondly, to be conscious of the monks' true colours, by which different parts of the habit act as teaching aids. The monks gave a spiritual significance to each part of the habit: a robe, hoods, girdle, cords, capes, sheepskin, or goatskin, staff, a sleeveless tunic covering the head and shoulders. There are three paragraphs describing the symbolism of the habit among the early monastic literature: in *Institutes I*, in the *Introductory Letter* in the *Praktikos*,⁹⁵ and on Section II. 10.V.(55.) in the *Anonymous Series of the Apophthegmata*.⁹⁶ The comparison among them is perhaps best illustrated in the following diagrammatic form.

⁹³ Lynda Coon, *Sacred Fictions Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity*, p. 69.

⁹⁴ On the symbolism of garments in hagiographies of male saints, see *ibid.* pp. 52-70.

⁹⁵ Evagrius, *Praktikos* prol. (Bamberger, 12-15) Bamberger says "this is probably the first time a symbolic meaning was given to different parts of the habit."

⁹⁶ *The World of the Desert*. p. 33.

Cassian gives far more precise descriptions of the habit, which far exceed the others. Though Evagrius evokes a specific biblical verse on each part of the habit, with the exception of the scapular,⁹⁷ he is totally out of accord with Cassian's citations.

	<i>Apophthegmata</i>	<i>Praktikos</i>	<i>Institutes</i>
cowl	innocence	charity of God	innocence & simplicity
Scapular	cross	faith in Christ	
belt	courage	rejection of impurity	protection & preparing for works, controlling of desires
hands bare		free life of hypocrisy	
sheep-skin garment		Bearing Lord's mortification	death of carnal passions & abiding in the virtues
staff		secure footing	warning of armament
tunics			cutting off a worldly way of life
CORDS			ready for all activity
mafortes (capes)			modesty of dress
shoes			ready for spiritual race, & for preaching the Gospel

Figure 1: Comparisons of the three texts on the symbolism of the monastic habit

⁹⁷ The *Praktikos*, pp. 13-4. Ps 126:1 (cowl); Jn 5:44 (bare hands); 1 Cor 7:11 (belt); 2 Cor 4:10 (sheepskin); Gen 3:22; cf. Prov 3:18; Rev 22:2, 14, 19 (staff as tree of life)

2.3.2.2 *logismoi* and *apatheia*

The discordance between the two authors is amplified in their dealings with the matter of the eight principal evil thoughts, namely, *logismoi*. Unless one has a 'birds eye view', which sees colonies of busy ants from the sky, it induces us not to think that "Cassian reproduced the teaching of Evagrius", as Courcelle suggested.⁹⁸ Two books of Evagrius, the *Praktikos* and the *Antirrheticus* deal with the eight *logismoi*.⁹⁹ While the former cites directly only one verse of Scripture in connection with all the lists, the latter, a much longer treatise on the matters than the former, is a mere selection of verses with a succinct memorandum for use against each of the vices, organized sequentially according to his list of the canonical Scripture, which differed slightly from the modern canon. The author expects his readers to do their own share of intense meditation for a remedial application of the verses. Evagrius' division into eight types is an empirical device, since all others were connected to one or another of them; greed, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, *accidie*, vainglory, and pride. Driscoll states, "There is a certain logic to the order of the thoughts as Evagrius lists them and analyzes them, an order that derives from experience...Thus, in a general way the order of the eight thoughts follows the order of spiritual progress."¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, there is a slight, but significant variation in Cassian's list: the order of sadness and of anger

⁹⁸ Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources*, pp. 229-30.

⁹⁹ Evagrius' *Antirrheticus* was also a reply to Abba Loukios of the Ennaton monastery in Alexandria requesting a compendium on spiritual warfare. Evagrius sent this work from his desert retreat in Nitria during the 390s. Before the fifth century ended, Gennadius of Marseilles translated it into Latin, and the Latin version is now lost, it survives in Syriac and Armenian. (Gennadius *De vir. inl.* 72, PL 58, 1102 A). See for the translation of some parts into English by Michael O'Laughlin, "Evagrius Ponticus, *Antirrheticus*," in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, pp. 243-62.

¹⁰⁰ Driscoll, Introduction, pp.22-3 in *The Mind's Long Journey to the Holy Trinity: The Ad Monachos of Evagrius Ponticus*, 1993.

is reversed; gluttony, fornication, avarice, anger, dejection, *accidie*, vainglory, and pride. What were the reasons for this sequence? Abba Serapion in the fifth Conference explains the reason for his order of the list, which does not appear in the *Institutes*: he divides them into the categories of the natural and unnatural, and into a further distinction, touching on the four kinds of operation:

Of these faults then there are two classes. For they are either natural to us as gluttony, or arise outside of nature as covetousness. But their manner of acting on us is fourfold. For some cannot be consummated without an act on the part of the flesh, as gluttony and fornication, while some can be completed without any bodily act, as pride and vainglory. Some find the reasons for their being excited outside us, as covetousness and anger; others are aroused by internal feelings, as *accidie* and dejection.¹⁰¹

According to their motivating causes, avarice should be accompanied by anger and dejection by *accidie*, unlike the order presented by Evagrius. Cassian's framework of the list has a more diagnostic sequence in terms of their causes and progress, in comparison with Evagrius' more empirical approach. Though it seems to be a trivial matter, Cassian's own grouping does not indicate a mere reiteration of the Evagrian classification.

However, rather than arguing by splitting hairs, let us turn to the main issue of making a comparison of the contents of two authors. As the whole range of comparative study cannot be reviewed in this section, attention will be directed to the analysis of a chapter on lype, sadness, as an example of the way in which the contents of the two authors differ.

¹⁰¹ *Conferences* V.3.

In *Antirrheticus* IV, the manifestations of the demonic attacks are vivid, physical, visual and auditory. Evagrius, to a large extent, refers to horrifying visions of snakes, scorpions, and hideous figures, smoke and coals from the burning fire, sounds of animals and warfare, and serious physical attacks that leave welts and other visible marks on the monks.¹⁰² In contrast, in *Institutes* IX, Cassian never makes such graphic descriptions. Whereas Evagrius describes nocturnal battles more than five times, and the demons that make disturbances in the air more than six times, Cassian makes no reference whatsoever. Moreover, with regard to biblical quotations, there is only one verse, 2 Corinthians 7:10, that is simultaneously employed by both authors;¹⁰³ “The sadness that is in accordance with God works repentance unto a lasting salvation, but the world’s sadness works death.” Nevertheless, even their applications of this verse are contrasting. While Evagrius focuses upon the useless sadness stressed in the latter half of the verse, Cassian highlights the beneficial one stressed in the first half. Not only on the biblical citations, but also in the diagnosis of the nature of the vices and the way to combat them, is there a considerable difference between Evagrius’s restrained and sensible description and Cassian’s delicate, psychological one. This observation leads us to draw the conclusion that the similarities between the two authors are nothing more than slight. In addition, in the discussion of gluttony, Evagrius expounds on the temptation for the monk to mitigate his ascetic discipline through fears for his health,¹⁰⁴ causing him to eat more than necessary. Yet, one does not discover an article similar to this account in Cassian’s *Institutes* V and *Conferences* V.

¹⁰² O’Laughlin, “The Bible, the Demons and the Desert: Evaluating the *Antirrheticus* of Evagrius Ponticus,” *Studia monastica* 34 (1992): 206.

¹⁰³ The *Antirrheticus* IV. 74; *Institutes* IX. 10.

¹⁰⁴ See The *Praktikos* 7. p. 17.

Thus, the result of the above considerations suggests that Cassian is neither a fascinated devotee of Evagrius' ascetical theology, nor does his own work represent a development of that of Evagrius. To what extent, then, can we be convinced that Cassian's dependence on Evagrius is only in terms of holding the same conception and structure with regard to the eight *logismoi*, and the same intention to form the complete corpus of the Desert Fathers' teachings?

Though Evagrius' single concept on the eight *logismoi* has been generally accepted as illustration of his originality,¹⁰⁵ he himself presented the dependence of all his teachings on the Desert Fathers. In the Introductory Letter in the *Praktikos*, while Evagrius demonstrates the symbolism of the monastic habit, he expresses clearly the desire to, "let me go on to tell you what I have learned about these matters from the holy Fathers."¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, in the same letter, he repeats his entire dependence on the Fathers through a direct quotation of a belief that summarises the ascetic life in stages:

The Fathers speak the following words to the young monks: "The fear of God strengthens faith, my son, and continence in turn strengthens this fear. Patience and hope make this latter virtue solid beyond all shaking and they also give birth to apatheia. Now this apatheia has a child called agape who keeps the door to deep knowledge of the created universe. Finally, to this knowledge succeed teleology and the supreme beatitude."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Morton W. Bloomfield, "The Origin of the Concept of the Seven Cardinal Sins," *Harvard Theological Review* 34 (1941): 127-8

¹⁰⁶ Introductory Letter to Anatorius, *The Praktikos*. (Bamberger, p. 12.)

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 14.

J. E. Bamberger comments, "While the individual ideas it contains are all quite traditional, the particular manner of relating them is quite original with the author."¹⁰⁸ However, we can track a part of the system to his predecessor, John of Lycopolis, whom Evagrius consulted, and who said, "try through asceticism to acquire apatheia with regard to the appetites."¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the notion of apatheia was also used without naming it by the other desert fathers, such as Poemen, Pityrion, and Apollo.¹¹⁰

In addition to the summary of ascetic theology, in the Letter, Evagrius again represents his dependence on the elders before the discussion of eight kinds of evil thoughts: "Let us go on to the discussion of the ways of the ascetic and contemplative lives. We shall not, to be sure, tell everything that we have seen or heard, but as much as we have been taught by the Fathers to tell to others."¹¹¹ This statement of Evagrius is congruent with a surprising announcement of Abba Serapion in the fifth Conference: "That there are eight principal vices which attack the monk is everyone's firm opinion."¹¹² At the end of the fifth century, Gennadius of Marseilles was already asking himself whether Evagrius was the first to teach this doctrine.¹¹³ But, with the exception of Serapion, we are not able to find direct reference to "everyone's firm opinion" on the eight principal vices.¹¹⁴ With the absence of primary sources, the same used concepts had the great effect of leading

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ *Historia monachorum* 1.29. (Russell p. 56, 126, note 25.)

¹¹⁰ cf. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Poemen, 127; *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, Pityrion, 3; Apollo, 15. Apollo said that "Let it be a sign to you of progress in the virtues, when you have acquired mastery over the passions and the appetites."

¹¹¹ Introductory Letter to Anatolius. (Bamberger, pp. 14-5.)

¹¹² *Conferences* V.18.

¹¹³ Špidlík, Tomáš. *The Spirituality, of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel, 1986, p. 248. Cf. Gennadius of Marseille, *De viris illustribus* II; ed. Ernest C. Richardson, TU 14 (Leipzig, 1896): 65.

¹¹⁴ Bloomfield, "The Origin of the Concept of the Seven Cardinal Sins," 126.

Cassian's readers to understand his texts through Evagrius' theology. However, we find a vestige of the eight principle vices in the teachings of Abba Pityrion, one of Antony's disciples in the *Historia monachorum*:

He spoke with particular authority on the discernment of spirits. He said that there were certain demons which followed the passions and often made us disposed to do evil. "Therefore whoever wishes to drive out the demons must first master the passions...You must conquer the passions step by step in order to drive out the demons which belong to them. There is a demon which follows gluttony; if you gain control over gluttony, you will drive out its demon."¹¹⁵

It is disappointing that the author too quickly cut Pityrion's discourses at this place. There is another reference where he named another vice. In the *Apophthegmata*, "Abba Pityrion, the disciple of Abba Anthony said, 'If anyone wants to drive out the demons, he must first subdue the passions; for he will banish the demon of the passion which he has mastered.'¹¹⁶ Through this saying there is no denying that the *Apophthegmata's* Pityrion is the very same one described in the *Historia monachorum*. He continues "For example, the devil accompanies anger, so if you control your anger, the devil of anger will be banished, and so it is with each of the passions."¹¹⁷ Not only does the counsel on two vices bear a resemblance to Evagrius, but so does the portrait of Pityrion in the *Historia monachorum*, such as his great rigour in fasting, his emphasis on the discernment of the spirits, and use of the notion of *apatheia*.¹¹⁸ The material here

¹¹⁵ *Historia monachorum* 15, Pityrion, 2, 3. (Russell p. 99)

¹¹⁶ *The Saying of the Desert Fathers*, Pityrion, 1.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Palladius notes that Evagrius characterized by great austerity, reached the purification of the mind he was judged worthy of the gift of the science {γνῶσις}, of the wisdom {σοφία} and of the discernment of the spirits. *Historia Lausiaca* 38. (Butler, p. 120.)

presented would strengthen what must be a nebulous, though very probable, assumption about the sources of Evagrius and Cassian.

We turn now to consider a central and indispensable Evagrian term, *apatheia*, and Cassian's alternative term, "purity of heart," *puritas cordis*, according to the Scriptures. *Apatheia* became universal in Greek ascetic theology, while it was never welcomed in Latin.¹¹⁹ The stoic concept of *apatheia* had been introduced by Philo as the goal to be sought through purification of the soul from passions.¹²⁰ Following the adaptations of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, Evagrius claims that it is impossible to achieve a complete union with God without *apatheia*, thus one must overcome the passions and reach complete purification. He indicates, "The purpose of *praktiké* is to purify the intellect and to render it *apatheia*."¹²¹ The result of fighting victoriously with the vices brings deep peace to the lower parts of the soul, so then the harmony of the parts of soul comes. It is the state of the *apatheia* that tries to prevent the vices from originating. *Apatheia* is often misunderstood as passionlessness, which means, for Evagrius, 'the conquering of the passions', 'a habitual state of imperturbable calm'¹²² or 'a state of the health of the soul'¹²³. *Apatheia* gives birth to *agape*, which is seen more or less clearly as a preparation for the contemplation of the physical world, then the contemplation of the Trinity. At this point the soul comes to the highest level, the *gnostikē* (γνωστικη). When Cassian composed his works, he faced a polemical situation resulting from the Pelagian controversy, which seemed to be the second round of

¹¹⁹ Chitty *The Desert a City*, p. 50

¹²⁰ See Juana Raasch, "The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and Its Sources III. Philo Clement of Alexandria and Origen," *Studia Monastica* 10 (1968): 8-13. Quoted from *Phaedo* 82 c.

¹²¹ *The Gnostic*, 49. Evagrius Ponticus, *Le Gnostique ou A Celui qui est Devenu Digne de la Science*, trans. Antoine Guillaumont et Claire Guillaumont, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1989.

¹²² *Chapters On Prayer*, 52.

¹²³ *Praktikos*, 56.

the Origen controversy, since Jerome linked the apatheia-theory of Origen and Evagrius with Pelagianism.¹²⁴ Attacking the use of the term, Jerome directly attributed its doctrine to Origen and remained constant in his claim that Origen had been responsible for introducing apatheia into Christian thought.¹²⁵ He, R. Samos notes, refers explicitly to Origen's *Stromateis*.¹²⁶ Evagrius received only a brief mention, having been placed together with Mani, Priscillian and Jovinian. This key word was understood to Jerome as insensibility, *impassibilitas*, which was a divine prerogative, the aim of which was to seek to be equal to God.¹²⁷ Jerome attacked the notion as blasphemous and heretical, since it could not be achieved, arguing that it was, in any case, inhuman and that the exercises by which one sought to achieve it were also to be discredited. His criticism had an immediate effect upon his sympathetic recipient, Augustine, thus many Latins shared in this erroneous identification. In this specific ecclesiastical context, the problem for Cassian was how to present the apatheia-theory, the central concept in the spiritual life, in an intelligible way. It, thus, has been believed that he found an alternative term, *puritas cordis* or *puritas mentis* or *puritas animae* in order to evade the doctrinal controversy. This assumption is supported M. Sheridan's observation that the use of this phrase is found rarely before Cassian.¹²⁸ According to Raasch, however, Clement and Origen had already used both apatheia and *puritas cordis* in parallel in the interpretation of the beatitude; "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8)¹²⁹ Moreover, I find the phrase,

¹²⁴ cf. Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, (Princeton 1992) 221~222; Róbert Samos, "Origen, Evagrius Ponticus and the Ideal of Impassibility," in *Origeniana Septima*, pp. 365-73.

¹²⁵ Jerome, *Letter 133.3; Dialogus aduersus Pelagianos, prol. 1.*

¹²⁶ Samos, "Origen, Evagrius Ponticus and the Ideal of Impassibility," 372-3.

¹²⁷ See for the understanding and attacks on this term of Jerome and Augustine, Mark Sheridan, "The Controversy over ΑΠΑΘΕΙΑ: Cassian's Sources and His Use of Them," *Studia Monastica* 39 (1997): 287-310.

¹²⁸ Sheridan, "The Controversy over ΑΠΑΘΕΙΑ," 306.

¹²⁹ See Raasch, "The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart," 13-55.

puritas mentis employed by Rufinus in his Latin version of the *Historia monachorum*.¹³⁰ Furthermore, two Latin versions of the *Vita Antonii* had already displayed the phrases, *puritas mentis* and *puritas animae*.¹³¹ This leads us to conclude that there was no need to find alternative Latin equivalents of *apatheia* for Cassian, because of the already established use of Latin terminology in this regard.

2.3.2.3 *praktikē* and *theologikē*

Not only was *apatheia* asserted to have been adapted by Cassian from the Evagrian system, but so also were the twofold representative terms describing monastic life, *praktikē* and *theologikē*.¹³² Recently, M. Dunn comments that “In Conference fourteen he uses the Greek terms *praktike* and *theoretike*, closely related to Evagrius’ ideas of the *praktikos* and *gnostikos*, but now in relation to biblical study and contemplation.”¹³³ This assertion is another problem to overcome. Evagrius divides the spiritual ascents into a twofold stage: (1) *praktikē*, the stage of the cultivation of virtues through the struggle with the demons and evil thoughts, and the reformation of intellectual, reasonable soul, at the end the attainment of *apatheia*, the foundation of *agapé*; (2) *theologikē* or *gnostikē*, the stage of contemplation of God, acquiring the knowledge of the Holy Trinity, reabsorption of the soul into the original ‘bare intellects’ filled with a light of

¹³⁰ *Historia monachorum* 1.1 (Russell p. 142): “divinum illud, et quod super omnem mentem est, tota mentis puritate consecrans.”

¹³¹ Cf. Ludovicus T. A. Lorié, *Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translation of the Vita Antonii: with Reference to Fourth and Fifth Century Monastic Literature*, 1955, pp. 112-5.

¹³² Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, pp. 50-4.

¹³³ Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages*, 2002, p. 77.

intellect and the Trinity within oneself, finally returning to the original union with God. The latter sometimes is subdivided into two stages, *physikē* and *theologikē*.¹³⁴ This middle *physikē* is, according to the definition of O. Clément, “contemplation of nature, i.e. of ‘second nature’ that is, of the spiritual essence of things, their *logoi*, and of the ‘first nature’, a participation in angelic knowledge, the traversing of the higher ‘aeons’ in which the intellect, coming to know God’s providence and judgement, strips itself increasingly.”¹³⁵ This scheme came to be understood as a chronological triad.¹³⁶ On the other hand, in *Conferences XIV*, Abba Nestorius deals with spiritual knowledge or science, dividing them into two parts: “first, *praktike* (πρακτικη), i.e., practical, which is brought about by an improvement of morals and purification from faults: secondly, *theoretike* (θεωρητικη), which consists in the contemplation of things Divine and the knowledge of most sacred thoughts.”¹³⁷ The assumption that Cassian adapted the twofold Evagrian model, is confronted by confusion through the illustration of a good ascetic by John of Lycopolis, an advisor to Evagrius, in the *Historia monachorum*:

He is exceedingly good, for he is a man who puts the commandments into practice (πρακτικὸς) and does them. But he is occupied with earthly things. Better and greater than he is the contemplative (θεωρητικὸς), who has risen from active works to the spiritual sphere and has left it to others to be anxious about earthly

¹³⁴ Cf. *Praktikos* 1-3.

¹³⁵ Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Text and commentary*, p. 331. For the *physikē*, see David Alan Ousley, *Evagrius' Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, 1979, 229-47.

¹³⁶ Raymond Moloney, ‘Spiritual Progress and the Three Ways’, *The Downside Review*, vol. 114 (1996): 33.

¹³⁷ *Conferences XIV.1*

things. Since he has not only denied himself but even become forgetful of himself, he is concerned with the things of heaven.¹³⁸

Here, the common assertion that the twofold system in Cassian's texts originates from Evagrius is deprived of its persuasive power. In the description of John and Nestorius, there is no philosophical, metaphysical speculation, as in the Evagrian model. The structure of John convinces us of the authenticity of Evagrius' statement that "everything that we have seen or heard...we have been taught by the Fathers," and at the same time, of the authenticity of Cassian's decree that "the institutes which are not mine but the fathers'."¹³⁹

2.3.2.4 Prayer

Finally, that the link between the two authors is not clear is verified by a comparative study of the teaching on prayer. It has been asserted that some of the teachings on prayer in *Conferences IX-X* were based on the teachings of Evagrius.¹⁴⁰

The greater parts of Cassian's two books do not appear in Evagrian material: (1) a detailed discourse of the four kinds of prayer based on the verse of 1 Timothy 2:1 in *Conferences IX.9-17*; supplications (*obsecratio*), prayers (*oratio*), intercessions (*postulatio*), and thanksgivings (*gratiarum actiones*); (2) Abba Isaac's instruction on the new method for unceasing prayer in which one is to say a mantra, repeating

¹³⁸ *Historia monachorum* 1.63. (Russell, p. 62. and for Greek text, Festugière, p. 34)

¹³⁹ *Conferences I*, Preface 1.

¹⁴⁰ Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico*, p. 97ff; Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, pp. 106-13; "John Cassian on Unceasing Prayer," *Monastic Studies* 15 (1984): 164.

always the verse of Ps. 70:2: "O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me."¹⁴¹ He states that it has been handed on to him by "a few of the oldest fathers"¹⁴², and "this is the formula which the mind should unceasingly cling to until strengthened by the constant use of it and by continual meditation."¹⁴³ Besides, in Cassian's texts, no vestiges remain of the Evagrian speculative conception of prayer, which "is cast within his intellectualist metaphysic, as the basic activity of the mind in its return to God."¹⁴⁴

In relation to the notions shared by both authors, the first point is the teaching of perfect formlessness, or conceptlessness at the time of prayer. Evagrius instructs his readers, 'Do not by any means strive to fashion some image or visualize some form at the time of prayer.'¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, Isaac points out the habitual prayer of the anthropomorphites: "as they believe that they can grasp and hold nothing if they have not some image set before them, which they can continually address while they are at their devotions, and which they can carry about in their mind and have always fixed before their eyes."¹⁴⁶ For both, the teaching appeared in the context of the anti-anthropomorphite polemic. But when one compares the sole passage of Cassian with the several texts on the formless prayer of Evagrius, one realises that the former does not take literally from the sayings of the latter.

¹⁴¹ *Conferences* X.10.

¹⁴² *Conferences* X.10.

¹⁴³ *Conferences* XI.1.

¹⁴⁴ Ousley, *Evagrius' Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, p. 261. He notes that "the fundamental meaning is the activity of mind in the final intellectual union with God: unitive knowing. The second meaning includes the various activities of *nous* preparatory to this final state of prayer."(p. 237)

¹⁴⁵ Evagrius, *De Oratione* 114. Cf. 56, 66, 67, 69, 70, 116, 117.

¹⁴⁶ *Conferences* X.5

Next, in *Conferences IX*, Stewart asserts that Abba Isaac's commentary of the Lord's Prayer exhibits some affinities with that of Evagrius. He notes, "The elements in Cassian's commentary characteristic of his own teaching suggest that he has adapted the Evagrian material as he typically did, amplifying and modifying aspects of it while integrating it into his own exposition."¹⁴⁷ Comparing three passages between two authors, Marsili has already pointed to Cassian's reliance on Evagrius, quoting from the translation of I. Hausherr.¹⁴⁸ However, one wonders if their assertions could sustain a deeper reading of the texts of both authors. For Abba Isaac, the use of Jesus' own prayer is only a means to ascend to higher stages of prayer, which is incomprehensible beyond description and which the Abba names 'a fire and light prayer' and 'pure prayer'.¹⁴⁹ M. Laird recently suggested a different view: "One might say that for Cassian the interior ground of the Our Father is the prayer of fire, and the exterior ground of the prayer of fire is the Our Father."¹⁵⁰ With regard to length, it was discussed in about 2,176 words in *Conferences IX.18-25*. To me, one thing seems certain, that the Lord's Prayer in Isaac's teaching of monastic prayers holds the predominant position. In contrast, when we turn to its place in the Evagrian prayer system, it emerges clearly as an insignificant dealing, as commentary on it is less than one tenth that of Isaac's. Let us look directly at the contents of both texts. As space does not permit us to see the

¹⁴⁷ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 109.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico*, pp. 99-101; I. Hausherr, "Le traité de l'oraison d'Evagre le Pontique," *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique XV* (1934): 88-9. Olivier Clément included the English translation of the Evagrius' text, *Catena on the Gospels, Coptic Documents* (Lagarde, 1886, p. 13), in his *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Text and commentary*, 1993, p. 200.

¹⁴⁹ *Conferences IX.15, 25*. Cf. for the commentary of the Lord's Prayer in *Conferences IX*, Roy Hammerling, "The History and Interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in the Latin West from the First to the Eighth Century," Ph D diss., University of Notre Dame, 1997, 129-36.

¹⁵⁰ Martin S. Laird, "Cassian's *Conferences Nine and Ten: Some Observations Regarding Contemplation and Hermeneutics*," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 62 (1995):148

whole range of the commentary, we will confine our present consideration to the second and fourth requests.

	EVAGRIUS	ABBA ISAAC
Thy kingdom come	The Kingdom of God is the Holy Spirit. We pray that he may be sent down upon us	The second petition of the pure heart desires that the kingdom of its Father may come at once; viz., either that whereby Christ reigns day by day in the saints (which comes to pass when the devil's rule is cast out of our hearts by the destruction of foul sins, and God begins to hold sway over us by the sweet odour of virtues, and, fornication being overcome, charity reigns in our hearts together with tranquillity, when rage is conquered; and humility, when pride is trampled under foot) or else that which is promised in due time to all who are perfect, and to all the sons of God, when it will be said to them by Christ: "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" (as the heart) with fixed and steadfast gaze, so to speak, yearns and longs for it and says to Him "Thy kingdom come." For it knows by the witness of its own conscience that when He shall appear, it will presently share His lot. For no guilty person would dare either to say or to wish for this, for no one would want to face the tribunal of the Judge, who knew that at His coming he would forthwith receive not the prize or reward of his merits but only punishment.
Our bread for tomorrow	What we shall inherit from God. We pray that we may have an earnest (taste) of it today, that is, that his sweetness may make itself felt in us in this world, causing a burning thirst.	"Give us this day our bread which is <i>epiousion</i> ," i.e., "supersubstantial," which another Evangelist calls "daily." The former indicates the quality of its nobility and substance, in virtue of which it is above all substances and the loftiness of its grandeur and holiness exceeds all creatures, while the latter intimates the purpose of its use and value. For where it says "daily" it shows that without it we cannot live a spiritual life for a single day. Where it says "today" it shows that it must be received daily and that yesterday's supply of it is not enough, but at it must be given to us today also in like manner. And our daily need of it suggests to us that we ought at all times to offer up this prayer, because there is no day on which we have no need to strengthen the heart of our inner man, by eating and receiving it, although the expression used, "today" may be taken to apply to his present life, i.e., while we are living in this world supply us with this bread. For we know that it will be given to those who deserve it by Thee hereafter, but we ask that Thou wouldest grant it to us today, because unless it has been vouchsafed to a man to receive it in this life he will never be partaker of it in that.

Figure 2: Comparisons of the two texts on the second and fourth requests in the Lord's Prayer

In this comparison, we find neither “affinities”, nor “Cassian’s reliance”. Even though, as Stewart noted, Evagrius’ passage is a summary, or a partial state,¹⁵¹ to use the term, ‘affinities’ or ‘reliance’, Cassian’s texts should show at least one point of relevance. One might produce evidence of a firm affinity between Evagrius and Isaac in the whole commentary, which is an epigram from the verse of 1 Tim 2:4 in the third request. While Isaac comments that “*voluntas dei salus omnium est*,”¹⁵² Evagrius declares that “*La volonté de Dieu c’est le salut de toute creature raisonnable*.”¹⁵³ When glancing over both sentences, one may miss key Evagrian anthropological, cosmological terminology, “salvation of all rational creatures or *logikoi*”. Ousley explains that “Evagrius’ use of the term, rationals, seems generally congruent with Origin’s use of *logikos* as an expression of the pre-existing rational creatures, and the fundamental nature common to all rational creatures, angels, men, and demons.”¹⁵⁴ Thus, Evagrius’ epigram contains the suspicious Origenist eschatological fulfillment, which I will mention in the following chapter. In contrast, Isaac’s commentary on the third request is a mere scriptural hermeneutic.

Taking a brief review of the joint use of the terms and conceptions on the spiritual ascent, we come to retouch the stereotyped view of sources that Cassian’s work relied heavily upon, that of Evagrius. When one finds some new ideas in Cassian’s texts, and can not track the foregoing records in the early monastic literature, they have been regarded as “his development and departure from Evagrian thoughts.”¹⁵⁵ However, based on what has been said so far in this section, we may conclude that it hardly seems fair to view Cassian’s texts simply as reliance on,

¹⁵¹ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 109.

¹⁵² *Conferences IX.20*

¹⁵³ Hausherr, “Le traité de l’oraison d’Evagre le Pontique,” 89.

¹⁵⁴ Ousley, *Evagrius’ Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, p. 147.

¹⁵⁵ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 36.

modification or reconciliation of Evagrian materials. Our findings certify that there were the Desert Fathers, who handed down their teachings to Evagrius and Cassian in an oral tradition. The Fathers stand between Origen and Evagrius, Origen and Cassian. Both authors were among contemporary monks who frequently invaded the Fathers' cells to seek anointed words with the strength of advice.¹⁵⁶ In connection with Evagrius' consultations, there are four references that indicate that Evagrius and his associates undertook fairly regular journeys to visit other holy Fathers. *Antirrhetikos* 6:16, first mentions a visit by Evagrius and Ammonius to John of Lycopolis, mentioned above,¹⁵⁷ the seer of Thebaide, to speak about profound questions concerning knowledge and the state of the mind, and the source of the holy light appearing in the time of prayer.¹⁵⁸ Palladius recounts in the *Historia Lausiaca* that he and Evagrius made the same long journey to reach John.¹⁵⁹ He reports later of another personal consultation of Evagrius with Paphnutius, the most influential monks in Scete,¹⁶⁰ who was also the one whom Cassian and Germanus consulted in the third Conference. These monks' consultations might function to draw the unity within the variety, or the desert orthodoxy consensus on ascetic life, or in the words of Serapion, "everyone's firm opinion." Since Evagrius and Cassian were not clearly going their separate ways, their thoughts were deeply rooted in the same lived tradition of the Desert Fathers. The Fathers' oral teachings were transmitted into written form by

¹⁵⁶ Rufinus, *Historia monachorum* 20.8. (Russell, p. 149.).

¹⁵⁷ For John of Lycopolis, see *Inst*, 4.23-6, *Conferences* 1.21.1, *Historia monachorum* 1 and Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 35, 47. John of Lycopolis in *The Saying of the Desert Fathers*.

¹⁵⁸ *Antirrhetikos* VI, 16. Evagrius asked that "Was it the *nous* itself which produces the light or some outside force?" John replied cautiously that the answer to this question was known to human beings, but without God's grace there could be no illumination. See O'Laughlin, "The Bible, the Demons and the Desert," 208-9.

¹⁵⁹ *Historia Lausiaca* 35.4. It took "eighteen days, partly on foots partly by sailing along the river." Palladius also mentions that he was slowed by disease, but disappoints on discovering John's cell locked and having to wait several days.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 47.

both. Here, one question arises: why did Evagrius come out so differently from Cassian and the other contemporary authors? What, to ask more specifically, caused the dissimilarity between Evagrius and Cassian in terms of the literary vehicle used, approach, and content, even though both had contemporaneously participated in the same tradition for quite an extended, overlapping period from the mid-380s until 399-400?¹⁶¹ We find a clue to the solution in the research by the authorities on Evagrius. Antoine Guillaumont and his wife, Claire, assert that Evagrius is indebted to the Coptic Desert Fathers for much of his practical teachings, although his speculative teachings are the fruits of personal speculation, nurtured by his previous exposure to theology and philosophy outside the desert.¹⁶² M. O'Laughlin also presents the argument that Evagrius, through association with Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil, became "adept not only in asceticism but also in Hellenistic learning and culture."¹⁶³ Evagrius did more than simply take over the teachings of the elders, and synthesise them into his own speculative theology. On the other hand, with regard to Cassian, it was not necessary to manipulate, or truncate, or simplify the metaphysical Evagrian schemata, as we have seen, because the core notions for monastic discipline were held in common among the elders.

¹⁶¹ Whereas Evagrius went first to Jerusalem, where he met Melania and Rufinus, and then to the Egyptian desert, where he lived from about 383 until his death in 399, Cassian went to Palestine around 380, and settled in Bethlehem, and then probably left for Egypt in the mid-380s and stayed until 399-400.

¹⁶² Antoine Guillaumont, "Un philosophe au desert: Évagre le Pontique," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 181 (1972): 43-4.

¹⁶³ O'Laughlin, "Origenism in the Desert: Anthropology and Integration in Evagrius Ponticus," p. 4.

2.3.3 The Context of *Conference XIII*

In relation to the testimony for the authenticity of Cassian's elders, the key is linked closely to Cassian's thirteenth Conference, labelling him, since the seventeenth century, a 'semi-Pelagian'. This has been assumed to be a controversial piece of writing, containing his famous opposition to Augustine. In the introduction of his translation on *The Conferences*, B. Ramsey, following Chadwick,¹⁶⁴ notes on *Conferences XIII* that "there is no doubt that this conference is an intentional reply to Augustine rather than simply a fortuitous composition."¹⁶⁵ Reversing this point somewhat, R. A. Markus claims that Cassian is aiming not at Augustine's, but at Pelagian views, although he does so "from a point of view more in line with a pre-Augustinian theological tradition than with Augustine's anti-Pelagian theology."¹⁶⁶ To make a point midway between the two arguments, many commentators have generally assumed that the *Conference* endeavours to forge an intermediate way between what Cassian regards as two equally unacceptable teachings in the extreme: the late doctrine of Augustine on grace and predestination, and the doctrine of Pelagius.¹⁶⁷ All the assumptions above are founded on a common understanding of Cassian's texts that discredits the authenticity of the speaker, Abba Chaeremon. We will not examine historical, theological contentions here, but will be content to refer briefly to some relevant aspects of the literary character and context of the thirteenth *Conference*.

¹⁶⁴ Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 119.

¹⁶⁵ Ramsey, *The Conferences*, pp. 10-1.

¹⁶⁶ Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 1990, pp. 177-9.

¹⁶⁷ Guy, *Jean Cassien: Vie et doctrine spirituelle*, p. 58; Rea, "Grace and Free Will," pp. 154-5, 163.

Firstly, it is not at all obviously an essay on metaphysical dogmatic theology, or a controversial book, but rather an expository treatise. Chadwick asserts:

When later he came to contemplate the doctrine of Nestorius (or what he believed to be the doctrine of Nestorius) he was roused to passion at the corruption of truth. Hardly a touch of this passion was allowed to enter the thirteen Conference. It is gentle and eirenic...Often it sounds more like a hymn in praise of God's grace. The spirit of reverence evident in so many of the *Conferences* continued to breathe through this tract of controversy.¹⁶⁸

Unlike *De incarnatione*, in which Cassian piled up the weighty authorities and teachings of the Fathers in the West and East to prove Nestorius wrong, none of this appeal to church authority is found in this particular Conference. Abba Chaeremon quotes nothing but what is in the Scriptures. Except for the passing hint of a polemical tone in certain passages where the speaker seems to argue against opponents, the style of the Conference was the same as that of the others.

Secondly, the thirteenth Conference is not an isolated treatise, but belongs to three *Conferences* from X to XIII, spoken by Chaeremon. The judgement as to whether Cassian is writing against Augustine should depend upon an understanding of its place in the overall structure, of which it is a part. Chaeremon's first conference presents the goal of the monks, perfection. The second conference, as a corollary of the first, according to Vogüé, sets out a tangible manifestation, and a ground for evaluation in the virtue of chastity. The Abba presents diagnostic tools by which the monk may know the attainment of purity: not to be seized by carnal impulses, to control lascivious thoughts and sexual appetite, not to experience any

¹⁶⁸ Chadwick, *John Cassian*, pp. 119-20.

movement of genitals, and nocturnal emissions with the illusions of women during his sleep.¹⁶⁹ Chaeremon's assertion that this advanced stage is only reached with the help of God's grace, not by one's own laborious efforts,¹⁷⁰ leads Germanus to inquire about the interaction of grace and free will. Then, *Conferences XIII*, the third conference, presents the need for and role of divine grace, and the relationship between grace and free will as the necessary means for the attainment of the goal. Paying attention to the designated composition of *Conferences XI-XIII*, Pristas notes, "Logical procession from one item of the conversation to the next is the ground of the trilogy's unity."¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the issue of the cooperation between divine grace and human labour has been already treated to a large extent in *Institutes XII* and *Conferences III*, and so requires only a single reference with a gradually rising concern. It is logical in the light of the whole monastic pedagogy that the issue has an independent place, since the discussion of grace and free will has always taken up space since the era of the primitive churches, which presented the basic system of salvation, as we see in the Epistles of Paul to the Romans, and to the Ephesians, and the Epistles of James.

2.4 CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER 2

It was my purpose to add some further information to clarify the complex problems of Cassian's texts. In particular, I examined the several well-known conventional opinions on the understanding of his texts, by which most scholars have been bound. It attempted to overcome several obstacles to the obtaining of

¹⁶⁹ See for the discussions of sleep deprivation and nocturnal emissions in the fourth century Egypt, David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, 1995, pp. 90-9.

¹⁷⁰ *Conferences XII.15*

¹⁷¹ Pristas, "The Theological Anthropology of John Cassian," p. 95.

definite assurance on the authenticity of Cassian's conversations with the Abbas. Our investigation shows that Cassian's works store the primitive treasures of the desert that the *Apophthegmata* and the *Historia monachorum* have not transmitted. In addition, this survey leads us to the conclusion that Evagrian materials are neither particularly striking, nor relevant for Cassian's texts. As Cassian's lengthy and discursive writing style differs completely from the terse, gnomic form of Evagrius, the teachings on the key vocabulary and conceptions do not even appear to be purely Evagrian in background. The problem, however, is not so much to show the exact sources of the teachings in Cassian's texts, as to refute certain misleading old theories with regard to Evagrius. As Stewart notes "Despite significant studies of his use of sources, much work remains to be done,"¹⁷² one may be continuously unable to trace the preceding sources. In fact, we have already received an advance notice on the matter in Cassian's preface to *Institutes* that "those matters which were altogether left untouched by those who preceded us." Nevertheless, most scholars try to regard the "untouched" teaching as that of the "touched". All our considerations reveal him to be a man who knew his era more than any one. As he said, only Cassian represented the profound authentic Egyptian monastic theology, largely still unknown to the Latin monks.

¹⁷² Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*.

CHAPTER 3.

THE VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE BEFORE THE FALL IN CASSIAN'S TEXTS

It is reasonable to suppose that spiritual anthropology regards man from the standpoint of what human beings are in creation. The writings of Cassian, which contains several accounts of God's creation of humanity, answers the ultimate question and thus gives us a certain sense of identity: human beings were (1) made in the image and likeness of God through a conscious, purposeful act by God, and (2) created perfect before the Fall. This is a summary of the doctrine of primitive humanity before the Fall in Cassian's texts.

With this in mind, since we must have criteria by which to make the theological judgment, this chapter aims to, firstly, survey the teachings of several important Alexandrian fathers before Cassian, the desert elders with regard to the nature of

the human being before the Fall, and the image and likeness of God. As this investigation is too wide and complex to analyse here in detail, it is necessary to narrow the focus to selective texts directly relevant to our present concern that are representative of Alexandrians, such as Clement (c.150-c.215), Origen (c.185-c.254), and Athanasius (c.296-c.373). In particular, I include the teachings of Irenaeus of Lyons (c.130-c.200) on the issues under our consideration, as a copy of his Greek text, *Against the Heresies* was circulating in Egypt within a few decades of its composition before the end of the second century, and Clement would soon use the treatise in Alexandria.¹ In relation to the teachings of the desert elders, I will track all remaining records of the principal topic of the chapter in the contemporary monastic literature, including Evagrian material. As one major point of the Origenist controversy in the 390s and 400s was the creation and condition of primitive human beings, it will be necessary to deal with the contemporary treatment of the issues to understand the position of Cassian's works. As a consequence of these considerations, our investigation will be directed to assay all related passages in Cassian's texts in detail, and to attempt to demonstrate the points of difference and those in common with the traditional and contemporary views. This investigation will be most helpful in determining their theological impact upon the anthropology in Cassian's texts, and in discriminating between the originality and mere conformity with tradition.

In the relation to our approach to Cassian's texts, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, we should be careful about the way in which we examine the issues. If one, as most scholars have traditionally done, merely assembles what Cassian says on the subjects from several separate passages, and synthesizes them to produce a coherent definition, one might neglect some of the distinctive aspects. One consequence of this approach is a misrepresentation of his works, leading to

¹ Cf. C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, 1979, pp. 23, 53; Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 1997, pp. 6-7.

accusations against Cassian of inconsistency, contradiction and a lack of incisiveness and precision.² Such an inappropriate approach is derived from the presupposition that Cassian's works are not the authentic teachings of individual, distinctive Abbas, but his own. Thus, from this chapter I will attempt to examine separately each of the speakers that touch on our present concerns at length, and then seek to gain conclusive evidence on the matter.

3.1 FROM IRENAEUS TO ATHANASIUS

According to Irenaeus, man although made to be the lord of the earth, appeared as a child in a world specially prepared for his nourishment and growth. In *Demonstration* 12, he states, "The lord (of the earth), that is man, was but small; for it was necessary that he should grow, and so come to perfection." Being newly created, man was morally, spiritually and intellectually a child, who was intended to advance towards full perfection by a long process of response to grace and submission to God's will.³

In reference to the image and likeness of God, while his statements are very inconsistent, Irenaeus seems occasionally to have distinguished between the image and the likeness,⁴ and seems to be the first church father to use the distinction. By the former he meant that Adam was a being possessed of reason and free will, by the latter Irenaeus pointed to some sort of supernatural endowment that Adam enjoyed through the action of the Spirit.⁵ However, because Adam and Eve were childlike and immature, they fell easy prey to Satan's wiles and disobeyed God,

² Cf. Rea, "Grace and Free Will in Jonh Cassian," 220, n. 13.

³ John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, p. 110.

⁴ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 171. *Against Heresies* 5, 6, 1; 5, 16, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.* 3, 23, 5.

causing them to lose the divine image and likeness; -the likeness at least, since the image must have persisted to some degree—and fell into the clutches of the Devil.⁶ Through Christ, what humanity lost by Adam's fall is restored and the freedom to be what they were intended to be is recapitulated.⁷ It is noteworthy that not only does Irenaeus locate the image of God in the incorporeal aspect of the human being, namely, reason and free will, but he also stresses that an image must have a form, and a form can exist only in matter. Behr describes it as follows:

Arguing against the Gnostics, he is emphatic that the image of God in man is described quite concretely in the flesh... If the image of God is located in the flesh of man, then that very flesh must reveal God. But as God himself is immaterial, and therefore formless, the archetype of the image of God in man must be the incarnate Son of God.⁸

His coherent accounts have been attractive to many who have had difficulties with the traditional teachings on the state of Adam and the two words, image and likeness.

For Clement of Alexandria, as for Irenaeus, Adam was created with childlike innocence, and he was to achieve the purpose of his creation through further growth by stages towards full perfection.⁹ He notes that: "We say that Adam was perfect as regards his formation, for he lacked none of the characteristics of the idea and form of man. Coming into being, he received perfection, and he was justified by obedience, and this was growing to adulthood, which depended upon

⁶ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 171. *Against Heresies* 3, 18, 1; 5, 21, 3; 5.6.1.

⁷ See *Against Heresies* 4.38,

⁸ Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, pp. 89-90.

⁹ Cf. *Protrepticus* 2.3.1; *Stromata* 2.2; 3.17.

him.”¹⁰ As a child of God, Adam played freely in Paradise, and, by reason of his simplicity, he was free from passions and their pleasures.¹¹ His concept of being advancing towards perfection was congruent with his description of the image and likeness of God. However, Clement uses these terms inconsistently, attributing them with different meanings on different occasions.¹² While the image refers either to the final state of likeness to God, or to the basic starting-point for man, his created nature, the likeness, refers to the final perfected likeness of the Christian to God and includes the dynamic process by which man attains this end. Clement’s clearest statement of the relation between the image and the likeness is given in the first book of the *Paedagogus*:

It seems to me that he himself formed man of the dust, and regenerated him by water; and made him grow by his Spirit; and trained him by his Word to adoption and salvation, directing him by sacred precepts; in order that, progressively transforming the earth-born man into a holy and heavenly being, he might fulfil to the utmost that divine utterance ‘Let us make man in our own image and likeness’. And in truth Christ became the perfect realization of what God spoke, and the rest of mankind is only in the image.¹³

This transformation was delayed by the fall, which took place because Adam and Eve, using their free will wrongly, made use of their sexual capabilities before God gave them leave.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Stromata* 4. 23. 150. 3-4

¹¹ Cf. *Protrepticus* 2.3.1; *Stromata* 7.7.46.6.

¹² Behr, *op. cit.* pp. 139-42.

¹³ *Ibid.* 141-2. *Paedagogus* 1. 12. 98. 2-3.

¹⁴ *Stromata*. 3.17; *Protrepticus* 11;111

In contrast to Irenaeus, Clement explicitly rejected the concept of the image regarding material form. He is quite definite that the scope of the image does not extend to the body: 'For conformity with the image and likeness is not meant of the body (for it were wrong for what is mortal to be made like what is immortal)'.¹⁵

Origen likewise follows his master, Clement, in describing the rejection of anthropomorphism as follows:

But it is our inner man, invisible, incorruptible, and immortal which is made "according to the image of God." For it is in such qualities as these that the image of God is more correctly understood but if anyone supposes that this man, who is made "according to the image and likeness of God" is made of flesh, he will appear to represent God Himself as made of flesh and in human form. It is most clearly impious to think this about God.¹⁶

Among the early Christians were some, the anthropomorphites, who took the anthropomorphisms that the Scripture attributed to God and to the soul and consequently pictured God as corporeal. It was against these that Origen clearly affirmed the absolute incorporeality of the Trinity and of the soul. While he treated the image and likeness of God in a spiritual way, he made a distinction between the "ontological" image character and the "eschatological" likeness.¹⁷ He saw the image as something given immediately at the creation, with the likeness to be conferred by God at a later time. "The human person was given the dignity of the image in his first creation," Origen wrote, "but the perfection of likeness was

¹⁵ Behr, *op. cit.* p. 141. *Stromata*. 2. 19. 102. 6.

¹⁶ In *Genesis Homily* 1:13, trans. Ronald E. Heine, p. 63.

¹⁷ See H. Crouzel, *Theologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origene*, pp. 31-70.

reserved for the consummation.”¹⁸ This indicated to him that the received image represented a dynamic potentiality fulfilling the perfection like God.¹⁹ The basis of this distinction was linked to his interpretation of the two verses in the creation account. Origen notes that in Gen. 1:26 it is God’s final intention to create man. He mentions both the image and the likeness, but in 1:27 only the image is mentioned. The holy book shows that when creation had been accomplished, there was no longer any question of the likeness.²⁰ Thus the image of God was what was given at the outset of Adam, while the likeness is what could be achieved by the effort within the bounds of Adam’s lifetime. Origen advises: “Let us always, therefore, contemplate that Image of God so that we can be transformed to his likeness.”²¹ The likeness was not to be lost by the Fall, since it was a man’s destiny to be developed regardless of the Fall. The result of this consideration is that the only problem caused by the Fall is the image. Later, Origen added another image, which was assigned as a penalty for sin:

Man has two icons, one he had received from God at the time of creation as it is written in Genesis “In the image of God He created” Gen. 1:27, and the other is the image of the earthly man (1 Cor. 15:49) which he received on his disobedience and sinning, when he was moved away from Paradise... Jesus orders us to render this image and move it away so that we may have the original image in which He created, so that we should be in the likeness of God.²²

¹⁸ *Treatise on Principles*, 3.6.1.

¹⁹ Lars Thunberg, “The Human Person as Image of God,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, p. 298.

²⁰ Crouzel, *Origen*, p. 97.

²¹ *Homilies on Genesis* 1,13

²² Origen, *Homilies on Luke* 39:4

Two received images are reminiscent of his doctrines on the first spiritual creation and a second material creation, namely, pre-existence of souls and fallen souls clothed with material bodies.²³ That becomes one of the essential points of later Origenism, particularly of Evagrius' thought, which I will discuss in the following section. For Origen, the image of God shall be restored to its primitive status, which man received in the beginning. The sensible world, created by God for the purification of fallen souls, will come to an end when all have been restored to their original purity. This reflects one principle dominating Origen's cosmology: '*Semper enim similis est finis initiis*', 'The end is always like the beginnings'.²⁴ "Perfection therefore, for him, is a process of return to origins."²⁵ On this point, the gaining of the likeness as distinct from the image might generate the impression that something is lacking in created humanity at the beginning. The tension between the progress from the image to the perfection of likeness and the similarity between end and beginning is barely resolved in Crouzel's following note: "This similarity between end and beginning must not be taken too strictly to mean a perfect identity and equality: beginning and end are similar because of the submission of all to God, but that does not exclude the possibility of progress between the beginning and the end."²⁶

It is necessary to look at the writings of later Alexandrians to understand the theological anthropological context in the era of the desert fathers with special attention to their views on Origen's theological position. Although Origen's influence on other Christian writers and theologians was profound and far-reaching in the third and fourth centuries, some of Origen's allegorical

²³ Origen, *Treatise on Principles*, I.8.

²⁴ Crouzel, *Origen*, p. 205. *Treatise on Principles*, I.6.2.

²⁵ Anthony Meredith, "Origen", in *The Study of Spirituality*, Ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, p. 116. Cf. *Treatise on Principles*, II.8.3.

²⁶ Crouzel, *Origen*, p. 205.

interpretations received denunciations. The most controversial aspects of Origen's teaching were those on the pre-existence of the soul, the *apokatastasis* (the final restoration of the devil and all rational beings at the end of the times), the resurrection of the corporeal form, and his trinitarian theology (his "subordinationism"). In the early years of the fourth century, while Methodius of Olympus (d. c. 312) attacked mainly Origen's view of the mode of resurrection and his denial of the resurrection body, the Alexandrian bishop St. Peter (d. c. 311) clearly opposed his notion of the pre-existence of the soul: God created both body and soul at one time and in one place, that is, from the earth, when he said "Let us make man in our image."²⁷ He also, like Methodius, denied Origen's allegorical interpretation of Gen. 3:21: that the coats of skins that Adam and Eve received were bodies.²⁸ Vivian has suggested, "Even if one allows the criticisms of Origen's teaching by Dionysius and Peter, one can conclude only that they criticized or modified certain positions of Origen."²⁹ It cannot be asserted that these two Alexandrian bishops were anti-Origenists, but rather that they criticized some of Origen's teachings. Although Vivian suggests that anti-Origenism was really detonated by Theophilus, one finds such an attitude in the desert at least a half century before Theophilus' reaction. In Upper Egypt, after Pachomius had a conversation with some visiting great anchorites, they were revealed to him as Origenists by an angel. He called them back and warned them, "every man reading Origen and accepting his writings is going to reach the bottom of hell...take all of Origen's books you have and cast them into the river, and never want to read them again, and especially the blasphemous ones."³⁰ Pachomius put his words into practice. One day, having found one of Origen's books, he threw it into the water

²⁷ See chap. 2, Tim Vivian, *Saint Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr*.

²⁸ See for Origen's opinion, Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4:40; Chadwick' note, p. 216, n. 5.

²⁹ Vivian, *Saint Peter of Alexandria*, p. 125.

³⁰ *Pachomian Koinonia*, Vol. II, *Paralipomena*, p. 28-9.

and destroyed it.³¹ Though Pachomius emphatically ordered the brothers not only not to dare to read Origen's writings, but not even to listen to his sayings, some of the earliest monastic documents, such as the seven letters attributed to Antony, *The Letters of St. Antony*, circulated in the fourth century, show the presence of Origen's thought.³² The author presents a well-educated Antony, unlike the Athanasian uneducated Antony, and shows his familiarity with Platonic philosophy and his indebtedness to the Origenist tradition in Egyptian Christianity.³³ Origen's writings were still receiving both censure and support in the desert around the middle of the fourth century. Later, Athanasius and the Cappadocian fathers admitted that his works were not wholly free from error, yet regarded him as an orthodox in the main and defended him.³⁴

Athanasius represents the first human beings as those who were created after the Word of God, in God's image, and contemplated God through the Word by means of their rational faculty. But, unlike Origen's rational beings, they already had bodies, whose 'desires' had to be controlled, and souls, whose 'purity' had to be preserved.³⁵ For Athanasius, Adam, "unconscious of his own self, spontaneously turned away from his body and from the sensible world, and ecstatically turned toward the divine Logos,"³⁶ and "clinging to the divine and intelligible realities in heaven through the power of their mind."³⁷ Brakke, thus, comments that to Athanasius, "Adam was not merely a contemplative; he was also an ascetic in all control of his body."

³¹ *Ibid.* Vol. I, *The First Greek Life of Pachomius* 31, pp. 317-8.

³² See Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony*.

³³ *Ibid.* pp. 59-88, 95-9, 109-15, 185-6.

³⁴ Henri De Lubac: *Origen, On First Principles*. NY., p. XXXII.

³⁵ *Against the Nations*, 2.22, 33, and cf. Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, pp. 146-7.

³⁶ *Against the Nations*, 17.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 2.20-1.

In the same manner, in his *Life of Antony*, he controversially states that soul was created very upright and exceeding honest, then when its rational faculty was in its natural state, virtue was formed.³⁸ The task of the original human being was to preserve the ‘purity’ of his soul and the soul’s rational faculty as it had been created: “If we abide as we have been made, we are in a state of virtue... And as we have received the soul as a deposit, let us preserve it for the Lord, that He may recognise His work as being the same as He made it.” In the *Festal Letters*, he says, “man at the beginning was rational and in the image of God.”³⁹ Athanasius means that man’s reason is an image of God’s reason, and implies that God has given every man the possibility of gaining true revelation and knowledge of Himself. It is possible for him to follow the commandment of God by his reason created in God’s image, for reason points in the right direction.⁴⁰

However, instead of their mind being fixed on ‘divine and intelligible things in heaven’, the soul turned towards the sensible realm through the needs and desires of the body; it was an act of ‘negligence’, ‘hesitation’, and ‘forgetting’.⁴¹ The fall of humanity resulted from their failure to contemplate upon the Word through their ‘likeness’ to him. On this point, in *De Incarnatione*, Athanasius inconsistently attributes the fault of the soul’s nature to the fact that the soul created *ex nihilo* is weak and naturally unstable, and so is in need of divine pity, even for steadfastness before the Fall.⁴² He describes the way in which primeval mankind disobeyed God and so marred their state of being created ‘in the image’.⁴³ In the *Festal Letter*, he writes that humans are changed from the likeness of God into the

³⁸ *Life of Antony*, 20.

³⁹ St. Athanasius, *Festal Letters*, *Syriac Text* 2:2. In St. Athanasius, *NPNF*, ser. 2, vol. p. 510.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 547.

⁴¹ *Against the Nations*, 2. 5-35; 3. 2-13; 33. 6-7. Cf. Brakke, *op. cit.* pp. 239-41.

⁴² Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 3.16-17, 19; 5.1-2, 6-7.

⁴³ *De Incarnatione* 3 ff.

likeness of fools.⁴⁴ Athanasius departs from Origen as well as Irenaeus and Clement in not making a distinction between the image and the likeness.⁴⁵ However, in connection with the image of God, Athanasius adapts Origen's Trinitarian phrase, the "image of the Image." Humanity, being derived from the Word, the unique Image of the Father, therefore, is the "image of the Image." The image was required to participate in the Image's archetypal relationship with the Father. Athanasius asserts that only the true Image can renew the impaired or lost soul's image-likeness to God within us.

3.2 THE DESERT FATHERS AND EVAGRIUS

We turn now to consider the anthropological ideas of the desert fathers late in the fourth century. Firstly, it is necessary to highlight the fact that their theological anthropology has hardly been systematically examined. The reason for this is directly related to the contents of the *Apophthegmata*, which is characterised by suspicion of theological and Scriptural inquiry.⁴⁶ Douglas Burton-Christie points out, "it is largely true that the sayings are very practical in character and encourage imitation rather than reflection and speculation."⁴⁷ Accordingly, in the *Apophthegmata* there is no theological discussion of the image and likeness of God, the nature of the soul, the human condition before and after the Fall and other themes in the entire collection. We find only one story denoting the primitive state of Adam:

⁴⁴ St. Athanasius, *Festal Letters*, 2:3. In St. Athanasius, *NPNF*, ser. 2, vol. 4, p. 510-11.

⁴⁵ Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, p. 57.

⁴⁶ Guy, "Les Apophthegmata Patrum," In *Théologie de la vie monastique: Évades sur la tradition patristique*, 1961, pp. 74-83.

⁴⁷ Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, p. 89.

They said of Abba Pambo that he was like Moses, who received the image of the glory of Adam when his face shone. His face shone like lightening and he was like a king seated on his throne. It was the same with Abba Sylvanus and Abba Sisoës.⁴⁸

Here, the connection between the glorious image of Adam and the present state of the three monks indicates that the original condition of Adam was perfect, and his lost image with the Fall is restored by their ascetic efforts. With the exception of this narrative, the *Apophthegmata* is not of concern to our present survey. When one considers over a hundred characters, a long period until their compilation into a book, and a highly developed Alexandrian ascetic theological milieu, there ought to be an intrinsic diversity and complexity in the *Apophthegmata*. However, it shows a uniform disposition as the work of a single author, or several authors with a single viewpoint. As I briefly introduced the suggestions of Bousset and Regnault in Section 2.3.1, we again find a reason for this in the Rubenson accounts, which suggest that the collection revolved around the monastic tradition of Abba Poimen and was compiled in Palestine after the Origenist controversy.⁴⁹ Katos also suggests that the compilers imposed their own non-Origenist spirituality:

Since the present compilation was first assembled at a time when anti-Origenist sentiments still lingered in the wake of the Anthropomorphite controversy, and since the compilers sought to distinguish themselves as much as possible from the

⁴⁸ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Pambo 12; and cf. Sylvanus 12; Sisoës 14.

⁴⁹ Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*, pp. 151-2.

Origenist tradition, one might argue that the differences it exhibits may have been artificially imposed upon the work by its editors.⁵⁰

As a matter of course, there was absent from the *Apophthegmata* the developed terminology and conceptualizations of Evagrius, for example, the profound teachings of the tripartite division of the soul, an interiorizing analysis of *logismoi* and the notion of ascent to God as a goal of the ascetic life.⁵¹ If we accept the proposals of the above scholars, *Apophthegmata* theology eliminated the theological speculation of the Origenists. At this point, it is revealed that the desert monks obviously held their own theological position. Even in the place of burning ascetic life, the monks did not alienated theology from their general concerns. Just as Antony was involved in the battle against Arianism, his heirs were not spared from having to defend the orthodox dogmas against heresy. In *Conferences XV*, there is an anecdote that Abbot Macarius was asked about by some Catholics to combat Eunomianism, which had already deceived a large number of the simple folk of all Egypt.⁵² The monastic writings described the monks as being very zealous in theological concerns, in some cases violent. In relation to their theological inclinations, Dechow points out, in similar vein to Hausherr, that there were two theologies; two types of spirituality in the desert: the intellectual theology and spirituality of Origenists and of the simple monks.⁵³ That Origen's influence had spread over time to the deserts, was the impression of St. Epiphanius of Salamis just a generation after the death of Antony and Pachomius, sometime around 375, when he lamented that the influence of Origen was to be

⁵⁰ Katos, *Palladius of Helenopolis: An Origenist monk and writer of the fifth century*. p. 79.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* pp. 81-2.

⁵² *Conferences XV.3*

⁵³ Jon F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen*, 1988, p. 105.

found in the desert of Egypt.⁵⁴ In a relatively brief note in his extensive attack on Origen in *Panarion* 64, Eppiphanius declares that the “sect which sprang from him was in Egypt first, but (*it is*) now (*to be found*) among the very persons who are the most eminent and appear to have adopted the monastic life.”⁵⁵ Palladius also provides evidence that Origen’s writings were circulated in the desert, and that his passages were memorized by the monks.⁵⁶ He shows the evidence of a strong Origenist movement in Lower Egypt, led by Pambo, Abba Isidore, Evagrius, and Ammonius and his three “Tall Brothers”.⁵⁷ This movement was marked by the emphasis it placed on the intellect, which it believed to be the locus of spiritual activity such as prayer, purification, contemplation of divine knowledge and union with God. The intellectualism of Origenists emphasized the study of the Scriptures and the writings of the fathers, even the books of anti-Origenist, Epiphanius.⁵⁸ Ammonius, for instance, not only memorized the Old and New Testaments, but also six million lines of Origen and other Fathers.⁵⁹ Origenists had free access to books, and also published them, even their own works. Formed out of a combination of the philosophical Origenistic tradition and the desert ascetic disciplines, the development of their theology was brought to an end with a council held in Alexandria in 400 A.D to condemn Origenism. In the synodical letter of the council, written originally in Greek, and translated into Latin by Jerome, Theophilus reports to the bishops of Palestine and of Cyprus a demand for the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Epiphanius brought back to Palestine a monastic life he had learnt in Egypt. In 393, he was stirring trouble in Palestine. During his visit to Jerusalem, he spoke publicly against the errors of Origen hoping to compel bishop John of Jerusalem. For much of what follows on events in Palestine, see J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 1975, pp. 195-209.

⁵⁵ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64.4.1; see *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, trans. Frank Williams, vol.2, 1994.

⁵⁶ Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* XI; LV; LX.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* X, XI. For Origenist monks at Nitria and Scete, see Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism*, chapter 7.

⁵⁸ Sozomen, *H. E.* 8:13.

⁵⁹ Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* XI.

condemnation of Origen's theology: "We have personally visited the monasteries of Nitria and find that the Origenistic heresy has made great ravages among there... The books of Origen have been read before a council of bishops and unanimously condemned."⁶⁰ Who owes a great deal to the Origen's heretic teachings among the Nitrian monks? It was Evagrius who developed the uncertain metaphysical framework of Origen's cosmology, making it visible and systematic. We now turn to explore some aspects of Evagrian teachings relevant to our present topics.

Following Origen, Evagrius, a displaced disciple of the Cappadocians, was interested in first causes and in understanding the series of mystical events by which the world came to exist.⁶¹ To understand Evagrius' notion of the primitive condition of human beings, it is necessary to know the fundamentals of his cosmology. In considering the human makeup, he sees that humans possessed the *nous*, a mysterious intellectual and ethereal element when they existed incorporeally as pure intellectual creatures, the *logikoi*. The *nous* has a capacity for knowledge, and its goal is to receive the unique knowledge of God. Thus the human *nous* is the true icon of the Father, and considered to be the image of God on the basis of the principle of 'receptivity':

It is not because the *nous* is incorporeal that it is the image of God, rather, it is because it has been made "receptive" to him. If it were because it is incorporeal that it is the image of God, (the *nous*) would then be essential gnosis, and it would not be by receptivity that it has been made the image of God.⁶²

⁶⁰ NPNF, *Series 2*, vol. 6, pp. 185-186.

⁶¹ Cf. O'Laughlin, "Origenism in the Desert: Anthropology and Integration in Evagrius Ponticus," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1987, pp. 122-7.

⁶² *Kephalaia Gnostica* 6:73. Translated by O'Laughlin, in *ibid.* p. 172.

Evagrius states here that the *nous* is the image of God, not because it is incorporeal, but because “that which is receptive of the Unity is the image of God.”⁶³ But, through the negligence of the *nous*,⁶⁴ the *logikoi* departed from the level of contemplation and the unity with God. Then the judgement of God caused the second bodily creation, and the fallen *logikoi* lost the sight of pure intelligence, all clothed bodies and souls.⁶⁵ The human composition had a tripartite division into *nous*, body and soul. Created to save the soul, the human body was not a punishment, but a vehicle for returning to the ethereal sphere, which was the first rank of the *nous*. According to O’Laughlin, “the soul is frequently characterized as being an incorporeal entity created to inhabit a body, and which cannot exist unattached to a body.”⁶⁶ The relationship of the soul and the *nous* calls for careful and precise handling, since, although the *nous* is almost always viewed as separate from the soul, we find that Evagrius classifies it as one of three parts of the soul, or equated with the rational part of the soul. *Nous*, McGinn points out, is one of the most difficult terms in Evagrius’ vocabulary.⁶⁷ As the *nous* is not a faculty inside the soul, the rational soul is not an extension of the *nous*.⁶⁸ The soul, like the *nous*, has a contemplative, visionary function, which shares in the contemplative and reasonable activities of the *nous*.⁶⁹ The soul is divided into three identifiable sections: the higher part, the *nous*; the lower parts, the *thymos* and the *epithymia*. Evagrius attributed this formula to his master, Gregory of Nazianzus.⁷⁰ In the

⁶³ *Ibid.* 3:32. (O’Laughlin, *ibid.* p. 183)

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 1:49, 3:28. (O’Laughlin, *ibid.* pp. 124, 155)

⁶⁵ Cf. O’Laughlin, *ibid.* pp. 120-88.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 156.

⁶⁷ Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, p. 385, n. 72.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 155.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 170.

⁷⁰ Evagrius, *Prac.* 86.

Gnosticus, he introduced another commenter, Serapion, a companion of St. Antony, who, after 399, became the bishop of Thmuis and who mentioned curing ills in the three parts of the soul: “Serapion, the angel of the church of the Thmuites said that the *nous* is cleansed completely by the drinking in of spiritual gnosis [knowledge], that love heals the inflamed parts of the *thymos*, and self control stops the evil upsurges of the *epithymia*.”⁷¹ We find that the threefold division appeared in *Conferences XXIV*: Abba Abraham says, “And, as some very wise men have laid down that its powers are threefold, either what is *logikon*, i.e., reasonable, or *thymikon*, i.e., irascible, or *epithymetikon*, i.e., subject to desire, is sure to be troubled by some assault.”⁷² Ramsey notes that this teaching “seems to be taken almost literally from Evagrius, *Prac.* 86.”⁷³ Stewart was also convinced that Cassian learned the tripartite division from Evagrius.⁷⁴ However, their views are weakened by two factors: exterior contextual evidence, and the interior frequency and gravity of terminology used. The tripartition, coming from Platonic anthropology,⁷⁵ seems to have enjoyed a continuous popularity in Alexandria, Cappadocia, and the desert. The first Christian user of the tripartite division goes back to Clement of Alexandria: to *noeron* (the intellectual), to *thymikon* (the irascible), to *epithymetikon* (the appetitive).⁷⁶ Following him, Origen sometimes uses this soul division, and he indicates that the idea has no warrant in the biblical text: “I do not observe to be strongly confirmed by the authority of divine scripture.”⁷⁷ Later, Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa also represented the tripartite

⁷¹ Evagrius, *Gnosticus* 149. Translated by O’Laughlin, “Origenism in the Desert,” p.198.

⁷² *Conferences XXIV.* 15.

⁷³ Ramsey, *John Cassian: the Conferences*, p. 857.

⁷⁴ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 64.

⁷⁵ Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 4.12 ff. Guillaumont have found the same reference in an anonymous first century Peripatetic tract, *On the Virtues and the Vices*. Guillaumont, *Traite* 2.683-4.

⁷⁶ *Stromata*, V.80.9.

⁷⁷ Origen, *De Princ.* 3.4.1. (trans. G. W. Butterworth)

parts of the soul.⁷⁸ The former offered once the teaching to his monk friend, seeking guidance on how to understand the Psalms:

Seeing that different movements appear in the soul- and in it is the power of reasoning, and eager appetite, and high-spirited passion, from the motion of which comes also the activity of the parts of the body- the reason intends man neither to be discordant in himself, nor to be at variance with himself.⁷⁹

For he is much less interested in an analysis of the immanent structure of the soul, Athanasius hands down a concise record that the reason should play a role in the soul as a leader “both to be a master of its passions and to govern the body’s members, so as to comply with reason.”⁸⁰ In the description of the structure of the human being, he prefers the Pauline distinction between the ‘inner’ and ‘outer persons’ (cf. Rm. 7:22, 2 Cor. 4: 16, Eph. 1:16; 3: 14-17), which Origen used most often.⁸¹ This is also manifest throughout in Cassian’s works.⁸² Because of this preference, the tripartition of the soul did not play a considerable role in the anthropology of Origen, Athanasius and Cassian. In the whole of Cassian’s texts, the teaching with the original Greek terms was referred to only once. On the other hand, in Evagrius’, there are numerous texts where the tripartition of the soul functions as a leading concept in his anthropology, which was expounded mainly in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*.⁸³ This stands to reason since he systematically combines the threefold parts of the soul with the monk’s *ascesis*. The aim of the

⁷⁸ Athanasius, *The Letter to Mascellinus*, 27; Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, II. 96, 123.

⁷⁹ Athanasius, *The Letter to Mascellinus*, 27.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 28.

⁸¹ *On Sickness and Health*, 1 (5. 6-16 D.). For Origen’s uses, see DSp 7/1: 653ff.

⁸² *Institutes*. I.1, 9; II.9, 14; V.11, 13, 21; XII.11.

⁸³ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 49, 78, 84, 86; *Kephalaia Gnostica* 1.25, 53, 68, 84; 2:61; 3:16, 34, 35, 59; 4:59, 73; 5:27, 31, 34, 66; 6:51, 53, 55, 83-5.

praktikē is to make the passible parts of the soul, the *thymos* and the *epithymia*, function naturally through the spiritual struggle against vices,⁸⁴ and to unite two parts to the proper virtues.⁸⁵ In *Conferences XXIV.15*, Abba Abraham more elaborately identifies various vices as trouble related to one part of the soul.

When then the force of noxious passion takes possession of anyone by reason of these feelings, the name of the fault is given to it in accordance with the part affected. For if the plague of sin has infested its rational parts, it will produce the sins of vainglory, conceit, envy, pride, presumption, strife, heresy. If it has wounded the irascible feelings, it will give birth to rage, impatience, sulkiness, accidie, pusillanimity and cruelty. If it has affected that part which is subject to desire, it will be the parent of gluttony, fornication, covetousness, avarice, and noxious and earthly desires.⁸⁶

In addition to the classification of vices into three groups, Abraham, in the following two chapters, proceeds to analyse the causes and remedies of the vices in relation to the tripartite nature of the soul, and to give the allegorical expositions of the biblical examples proposed in the three narratives; Balaam and Israel (Nm 31:16), King Ahab and Syrians (1 Kgs 20:31 ff.), and the temptations of Christ (Mt 4:3 ff.). With these descriptions, we should question that Abraham is congruent with Evagrius. The comparison between both of them leads us to discriminate between Abraham and Evagrius, since there was no resemblance of the contents except the use of common terminology. Hence, it is perhaps presumptuous to assume Cassian's dependence on Evagrius for the tripartition.

⁸⁴ *Kephalaia Gnostica* 3:16

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 5.66

⁸⁶ *Conferences XXIV.15*

In turn, Evagrius, following Origen in making a distinction between the image and the likeness, writes that human beings are created in the image of God, but we must be brought into his likeness:

This is what certain people also say: if the soul were to be exactly in the likeness of God as it was created, it should be able to lift the body above all those movements; but after the soul ceased to be the image of God and voluntarily became the image of animals (Rom. 1:23)⁸⁷... That which is natural to man, is that man was created in the image of God; what is supernatural is that we come to be in his likeness.⁸⁸

When the soul was involved in the “movement” (Evagrius’s word for the precosmic fall)⁸⁹, the image of God no longer remained in embodied humans, for they had lost the image, thus the image of animals took its place.

Just as Origen fought against the anthropomorphists’ belief that man with his body had been made in the image of God, thus depicting God as looking like man, so did Evagrius.⁹⁰ Man did not look exactly like God: the image was somewhat hazy, it was not a complete likeness. The mind was called the “true image” of the Word and the Spirit, while at the same time, the “likeness” was still in the process of being communicated to it.⁹¹ And when the mind had grown into the complete likeness of God, it would have lost its body – for that was not even the simple

⁸⁷ Evagrius of Pontus, *Letter to Melania* 9, in Martin Parmentier (trans.), “Evagrius of Pontus’ “Letter to Melania”,” *Bijdragen, tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 46 (1985): 16.

⁸⁸ *Letter to Melania* 12.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth A. Clark, “New Perspectives on the Origenist Controversy: Human Embodiment and Ascetic Strategies,” *Church History* 59 (1990): 150-1.

⁹⁰ Antoine Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, p.59-60.

⁹¹ *Letter to Melania* 4.

image of God. Bodies would ultimately be destroyed, not just transformed at the end.⁹²

Therefore, the result of the above consideration of the Evagrian anthropological system leads us to conclude that it is possible to charge him with simply importing the classical noetic philosophy into his texts to a greater extent than Origen. With much evidence of the influence of philosophy upon the subjects he treated, there is no doubt that his masterful creative synthesis deserved to be condemned at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553, which also condemned Evagrius personally.

3.3 THE OBSTACLES TO THE ADAPTATION OF EVAGRIAN ORIGENISM

Before we turn our attention to Cassian, there is one question to be considered: whether Evagrius' anthropology, integrated into his metaphysical and cosmological framework as described above, was characteristic of other desert Origenists in the late fourth century. This inquiry helps us to find a clue to the question as to why Cassian neither referred to the Evagrian framework, nor even mentioned him by name. Since Evagrius was a close friend of most of the Origenists, Ammonius and his three Tall Brothers and other Nitrian monks who were involved in the controversy at the end of fourth-century, one might assume that they shared his ideas. Although there are no surviving works to attest to this, Ammonius and his companions provides evidence to show that their thoughts are far removed from the anti-Origenist accusations. When they went to

⁹² *Kephalaia Gnostica* 4:60;62; 4:86; 4:34.

Constantinople to complain at court after having been expelled from the desert, they interviewed Epiphanius of Salamis. Ammonius justified their orthodoxy to him, "We read your works frequently, and among others, that are entitled '*The Anchored*.' When we have met with persons who have ridiculed your opinions, and asserted that your writings are replete with heresy, we have contended for you, and defended you as our father."⁹³ It is extremely odd that the Origenists read Epiphanius' *Anchoratus*, which argued against the disgraceful Origen's heretical teachings and his allegorical exegesis.⁹⁴ If we believe in Ammonius' testimony as valid, it indicates that even Origenists were very discreet in following Origen's teachings. Ammonius proceeded to enquire, "we come respectfully to know whether you have read any of our works or those of our disciples?"⁹⁵ Epiphanius replied that he had not seen them, and said that he had formed his judgment by the reports he had heard on the subject. In relation to the question of Ammonius, we scent that he himself had plenty of confidence in their own works. To him it might be unreasonable to become the focus of censure. At this point, the attentive reader will note that they seem not to adapt all of Origen's ideas. Although one in terms of sharing the essential ideas of Origen, Origenists were not a kind of monolithic group with a monolithic way of thinking. One might be tempted to gloss over differences among individuals in the Origenists and then to make simple generalizations about them. To know Evagrius is not to know the Origenists as a whole. One might assume that there is a wide difference among them in the degree to which each digested Origen's ideas, and in the way they were expressed. Stewart points out that the "Origenism" of Cassian's circle in Scete, led by Paphnutius and Theodore, was not based on speculation.⁹⁶ They had the

⁹³ Sozomen, H. E. 8:13.

⁹⁴ For detail of Epiphanius' *Anchoratus*, see Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, pp. 86-90.

⁹⁵ Sozomen, H. E. 8:13.

⁹⁶ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, pp. 10-11. Cf. Plladius, *Lausiac History*, 1; *Conferences*. III; *Institutes*. V. 33-4.

charisma to interpret the Bible through purity of heart, not sophistication of learning, or by means of commentaries. In this context, then, it is necessary to re-evaluate Cassian's dependence upon Evagrius, just one among over several hundred Origenists, simply because they held common terms and conceptions. After this interview with the Origenist defendants, Epiphanius dismissed them, and immediately embarked for Cyprus to return to his bishopric. If he was largely convinced that Ammonius' circle did not hold the heretical ideas of Origen and, accordingly, cleared them of such a charge, who provided the evidence for the anti-Origenist accusations made at the turn of the fifth century? Clark, like Guillaumont, surmises that Evagrius' theology provided a backdrop for Theophilus' charges against Origenism.⁹⁷ It was not only Theophilus who exhibited direct knowledge of Evagrius in the synodical letter of 400,⁹⁸ and in his Festal letter of 404,⁹⁹ but also Epiphanius who had already shown a familiarity with the texts of Evagrius in a letter to John of Jerusalem in 394.¹⁰⁰ In the 390s, there was a suspicion about Evagrian teachings on the final restoration of all rational beings to an original purity, which was derived from the theory of Origen's *apokatastasis*, and on the soul clothed with bodies as a punishment for sin, which stemmed from Origen's interpretation of the "tunics of skins". We also have a story warning the monks, before the outburst of the Origenist controversy, not to follow Evagrius' teachings. A good man named Heron of Kellia once insulted Evagrius, saying, "People who follow your doctrine deceive themselves. It is not right to have any teacher but Christ".¹⁰¹ This shows that Evagrius deserves a prominent place in the following group, and provides a first hand account of their theology. On the

⁹⁷ Clark, *op. cit.* p. 107.

⁹⁸ Cf. *ibid.* pp. 106-7. (Jerome, *Ep.* 92) For the Theophilus' summary of the errors in Origen's theology, see *NPNF, Series 2, vol. 6*, pp. 185-6.

⁹⁹ Cf. Clark, *ibid.* pp. 116-7; Theophilus, *Ep. paschalis* 11. (Jerome, *Ep.* 100)

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 100.

¹⁰¹ Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* XXVI.

other hand, the account displays solid proof that his teachings had been rejected by his contemporaries. Evagrius, again, derided by Eucarpus, a possibly-deranged, would-be director of Scete, tells the monks that Christ had appointed him as teacher: "Do not be misled any longer by the writings of Evagrius, and no longer listen to the words of John (John Colobos)."¹⁰² Since Eucarpus is described as a madman, his words are not such a reliable witness to the disapproval of Evagrius. However, it is certain that his works circulated in the desert and became the focus of criticism. Even Evagrius, himself, realized that few would accept his theology. He had something to hide in "secrets which should not be learnt by everyone," since he thought that his teaching would be easily misunderstood and rejected.¹⁰³ The monks had been alerted to the dangers of the desert Origenism, adopted by Evagrius. Even the western monks received a caution through Jerome's castigation in about 414, before the publication of Cassian's works.¹⁰⁴ When Jerome wrote his letter to Ctesiphon, a short tract against Pelagianism, and continuously, just a year later, when he wrote his *Dialogue Against the Pelagians*, he reproached that the Evagrian's foolish notion of *apatheia* was at the root of this current evil of Pelagius' new teaching of sinlessness, or *impeccantia*.¹⁰⁵ By all counts of the theological milieu with which Cassian had faced, we may ask the question, did Cassian want to convey the Evagrian theology at the risk of injuring his own monastic authority and career? Did he, under the existing conditions, borrow and alter liberally the Evagian material to fit his own ends, as most present scholars remarked? In answer to this important question, two negative points, based on Cassian's works, should be added to the answers in Section 3.2 of Chapter 2.

¹⁰² O'Laughlin, *Origenism in the Desert*, p. 67. Quoted from R. Draguet, *Les Formes syriaques (Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium 399)* Appendix 73, 371. John Colobos is praised in Evagrius' *De Oratione* 107 as one of the greatest of monks.

¹⁰³ Evagrius, *Letter to Melania* 1, (Parmentier, 8, 21)

¹⁰⁴ *Ep.* 133.3.6-7.

¹⁰⁵ Jerome, *Dialogue Against the Pelagians*, Prologue 1.

Firstly, when bishop Castor sought advice on Eastern monastic customs and rules for his newly established monastery, Cassian was faithful to the episcopal order by his presentation of the ancient orthodox tradition.

In accordance with that which we received from our elders, I will try to satisfy your directions, so that if I happen to find that anything has been either withdrawn or added in those countries not in accordance with the example of the elders established by ancient custom, but according to the fancy of any one who has founded a monastery, I will faithfully add it or omit it, in accordance with the rule which I have seen followed in the monasteries anciently founded throughout Egypt and Palestine.¹⁰⁶

Cassian regards himself as an authentic desert successor of his time, discriminating between antiquity and novelty. He always thinks much of what he received from his elders, and detests contemporary deviation from the tradition. Cassian shows an utter indifference to all private theories of an individual or of a school, as they represent uncertain teachings of the elders. For example, in a discussion of the monastic garments, Cassian offers a rebuke to those following the latest fashion of sackcloth for monks' robe:

For whatever is claimed by one or a few among the servants of God and is not the common property of the whole body of the brethren alike is either superfluous or vain, and for that reason to be considered harmful, and affording an appearance of vanity rather than virtue. And, therefore, whatever models we see were not taught either by the saints of old who laid the foundations of the monastic life, or by the fathers of our own time who in their turn keep up at the present day their

¹⁰⁶ *Institutes*. Preface.

customs, these we also should reject as superfluous and useless...For the opinion of a few ought not to be preferred to or to interfere with the general rule for all. For we ought to give unhesitating allegiance and unquestioning obedience, not to those customs and rules which the will of a few have introduced, but to those which a long standing antiquity and numbers of the holy fathers have passed on by an unanimous decision to those that come after.¹⁰⁷

In this passage, Cassian's veneration for antiquity comes to the fore quite clearly. The ancestral monks made themselves the ascetic tradition by consensus, and their inheritors reflect a deep respect for the authority of the tradition of the elders. Vincent of Lérins' well-known dictum of the Catholic faith "*teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*"¹⁰⁸ had already existed as an unspoken criterion in practice. In the *Conferences* II, while Abba Moses presents discretion as the most practical means by which one is to attain the goal of monastic life, he reports that the idea has been laid down after the elders' consultation.¹⁰⁹ Antony and the elders sit up all night discussing what virtue or observance could lead them with firm tread on the right path to the attainment of perfection. The elders reach a consensus that it is discretion. Their concluding remark would always be accepted as desert orthodoxy. There is another account that reveals Cassian's criterion for judging orthodoxy. In the report of the anthropomorphite controversy in Scete, Cassian verifies the orthodoxy of his side by referring to all the heads of the Catholic Eastern churches in the teaching of a deacon named Photinus.¹¹⁰ It is important for Cassian to know that the point at issue is in line with antiquity and catholicity. There was no place for unorthodox

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* I. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Vincent of Lérins. *Commonitory*, 2. 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Institutes*. II. 2-4.

¹¹⁰ *Conferences*. X. 3.

teaching, or an unheard-of innovation by one or a few monks. On the other hand, the desert monastic documents show that Evagrius' teachings had not earned as much approval from the elders as had those of his admirer, Origen. He would take positions with which "the whole body of the brethren" could not be in accord. Therefore, the notion that Cassian's works imply that Evagrius was "mentor" to Cassian would seem unconvincing.

The second point is Cassian's strict observance of the teachings that come from worldly philosophy. In *Institutes* XII.19, Cassian declares his suspicion of "dialectical syllogisms and the eloquence of a Cicero", contrasting these with the simplicity of the apostles. He seems to try to separate the monks from contemporary philosophy. It is possible to find a similar negative manner of philosophy presented in other passages. In the *Conferences* I, Abba Moses warned his auditors to guard against counterfeit coins gaining currency in the desert that "are not stamped by those who have the right to coin, i.e., the approved Catholic fathers, nor do they proceed from the head public office for receiving them, but are made by stealth and by the fraud of the devil."¹¹¹ To him, those men deceived by false money were those "who after having been professed as monks are enticed by the grace of style, and certain doctrines of philosopher."¹¹² Nevertheless, the Abba seems to have a broad-minded with respect to the uses of Greek philosophical terminology. Stewart notes that he uses the Stoic distinction between *skopos* ("goal") and *telos* ("end") to distinguish the proximate from the ultimate, which had been adapted for Christian purposes by Clement.¹¹³ But, Abba Moses merely uses the philosophical term as a tool for explaining the biblical truth. No doubt he was helped by the same term, *skopos*, which he read in Phil. 3:13-4. This instance

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* I.20.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, pp. 38, 164, n. 81.

of the use of *skopos* is typical in Cassian's texts, in which some Platonic anthropological terms are used in accord with the biblical concepts. Furthermore, in the *Conferences XV*, we meet an elder who looked upon philosophy as an enemy of truth. While Abba Nesteros delivers an anecdote about the confrontation of Abbot Macarius with an Eunomian heretic leader who approached with a formidable mastery of Aristotelian dialectic, listeners are cautioned that 'dialectical subtlety' is the bane of orthodox belief.¹¹⁴ The tool of philosophical logic was disdained by Macarius' performance of a miracle in which a dead man was raised to life.

These three cases above reflect the precaution of the contemporary uses of the Greek philosophy by the well-educated monks and the Alexandrian cultivated Christians, who found in some philosophical statements great usefulness. Cassian's texts retain the independence of those who were captivated by the beauty of the philosophical style, and were fascinated by its materials. There was no complex philosophical conceptualisation of the human being along the lines of the Evagrian metaphysical framework which was constructed on the philosophical basis.

Thus far we have spoken of the literary dissimilarity in character and the theological milieu in order to reconsider the word "dependency" to define the relationship between Cassian and Evagrius. We will now turn to consider what Cassian's texts teach on human nature before the fall, and investigate what Cassian and other fathers agreed on and what is new in his writings.

¹¹⁴ *Conferences XV.3*

3.4 HUMAN NATURE BEFORE THE FALL IN CASSIAN'S TEXTS

As Cassian does not offer a systematic teaching on human nature in any one place, we must carry out the analysis of the scattered passages by clarifying their associations. Considering man's original state, as discussed extensively by three Abbas, the following points have to be noted.

3.4.1 *Conferences V* of Abba Serapion

In *Conferences V*, Abba Serapion writes that God assigned the virtues as the possession of man's heart in the creation: "For by nature God's will assigned the possession of our heart not to vices but to virtues, which, after the fall of Adam were driven out from their own country by the sins which grew up, i.e., by the Canaanites."¹¹⁵ In the allegorical reading of the conquest of Canaan, the virtues are the children of Israel, the vices are the Canaan nations which were not appointed inhabitants by God. Serapion followed Origen's interpretation that the seven nations of Canaan were sins which the soul must expel.¹¹⁶ When the deadly vices have been expelled, they will be filled by the opposite virtues of chastity, patience, a godly sorrow, one full of joy, courage, and humility. The Abba says, "We may believe that they have recovered their own possessions rather than invaded those of others."¹¹⁷ Before the fall Adam was possessed of a large fortune, and had

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* V.24

¹¹⁶ *In Jesu Nave* I ff.

¹¹⁷ *Conferences V.23*

mastery over the virtues. It can be the sum of Serapion's description of Adam's condition that he is a being spiritually and morally capable of fulfilling God's expectations, like the other Adam, Jesus Christ.¹¹⁸

3.4.2 Conferences VII and VIII of Abba Serenus

In *Conferences VIII*, while Abba Serenus asserts that the giving of the Mosaic law was not the improvement of man's primitive condition, he identifies human nature simply with man's original state of perfection:

And so then we see that from the beginning God created everything perfect, and so there would have been no need for anything to have been added to His original arrangement--as if it were shortsighted and imperfect--if everything had continued in that state and condition in which it had been created by Him.¹¹⁹

God made the first human a good and complete being, not out of some lower order, or falling short of perfection. Serenus has already referred human's original state to Lucifer's: man had "been formed out of the dust of the ground, was to be called to that glory, from which he (Lucifer) remembered that he himself, while still one of the princes, had fallen."¹²⁰ This is evident in his saying that Origen's ideas on the pre-existence of the soul, and the material creation after the Fall were denied. When God created man, Lucifer saw his lost glory in man, which he had once possessed through the free gift of the Creator.¹²¹ To Lucifer, God's latest creature

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* V.6

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* VIII.24

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* VIII.10

¹²¹ *Institutes* XII.5

compares favorably with His first, himself. To understand the meaning of the term “glory”, we must first know what precisely would be entailed in the previous glorification of Lucifer. Quoting Ezekiel 28:11-18, Serenus describes the wisest, fairest, and brightest of the angels, one whom the Creator addresses as “anointed cherub,” “Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty. Thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God: every precious stone was thy covering... Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day of thy creation, until iniquity was found in thee.”¹²² What these two glorious creatures have in common is their standing at the summit of their station in bliss. This is the foundation of the whole of Serenus’ teachings on man’s original state.

While Abba Serenus asserts that the first man was created in the blissful condition, how did he regard the exact nature of that? When the term perfect is used with respect to man, it does not point to one particular attribute, but rather to the greatness of his entire nature. There are at least three subordinate points that make this assertion in *Conferences VIII*.

First, Adam was gifted with fullness of wisdom and the grace of prophecy by divine inspiration, then he was able to possess “the true knowledge of the things that are, to know the disposition of the whole world.”¹²³

There was in him not only such fullness of wisdom, but also the grace of prophecy given by the Divine inspiration, so that while he was still an untaught inhabitant of this world, he gave names to all living creatures, and not only knew about the fury and poison of all kinds of beasts and serpents, but also distinguished between

¹²² *Conferences VII.8*, quoted Ez 28:11-18. Cf. *Institutes XII.3*

¹²³ *Conferences VIII.21*, quoted Wisdom 7:17-21 LXX: *eorum, quae sunt, scientiam ueram*.

the virtues of plants and trees and the natures of stones, and the changes of seasons of which he had as yet no experience.¹²⁴

Adam was a man unique in these gifts that could not be shared by his fallen descendants.

Second, Adam possessed complete knowledge of the law and so was able to observe its commands: “God at man’s creation implanted in him naturally complete knowledge of the law, and if this had been kept by man, as at the beginning, according to the Lord’s purposes, there would not have been any need for another law to be given, which He afterwards proclaimed in writing.”¹²⁵ The implanted law in human nature, pointed out by Rubenson, was an integral part of humanity, not a command he was ordered to obey.¹²⁶ Its inheritance from Adam was witnessed by some holy descendants of Seth before the written law was given. The offenders against the internal law were judged and punished by the implanter. The written law was the salutary response of the divine legislator to the continuing violation and utter obscurity of the internal law. The former is a drawing out of what is contained in the latter. In that respect there is no iota of difference between them. In the notion of the implanted law it is not difficult to recognize the close affinities with the teachings of Clement of Alexandria. He refers that God, who is the legislator of heaven, offered His people the universal Law which is inscribed in the hearts of human beings so that they can know him.¹²⁷ This Clement’s view was articulated in Gregory Nyssa’s *The life of Moses*.¹²⁸ In addition,

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* VIII.21

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* VIII.23. In the *Didascalia*, at the beginning God gave to his people a Law which was good and holy, but when they fell into idolatry, the Jews received from God a second Law, *Deuterosis*, which was hard and intolerable. The Lord Jesus confirmed the first but abolished the second. See for it, Jules Lebreton, and Jacques Zeiller, *The History of the Primitive Church, vol. IV, The Church in the Third Century*, 857-8.

¹²⁶ Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony*, 74.

¹²⁷ Cf. *Protrepiticus* 10.108ff; 11.114.

¹²⁸ *The Life of Moses*, II.215.

it is possible to trace the idea of the internal law in the desert monastic literature.

The author of *The Letters of St. Antony*, according to Rubenson, suggests:

the ‘implanted law’ is given to man in the creation by virtue of his spiritual essences;¹²⁹ it is since man has a spiritual and immortal essence that God can ‘visit’ him.¹³⁰ By virtue of this law man has spiritual insight, he knows himself according to his original nature, and he knows how to worship properly.¹³¹

He affirms the law laid down in creation. Yet, it is difficult to say that Serenus’ idea clearly manifests a derivation from *The Letters*. While Serenus makes a defence of the perfection of God’s original creation and sufficient pedagogy to humans with the implanted law, *The Letters* emphasize its function in the relationship with God.

Third, Adam enjoyed immortality in Eden before Satan, who by inducing him to sin, brought him “into a state of mortality.”¹³² As humans were created inherently immortal, they would have not died if they had not sinned. The possibility of living forever depended on their fidelity to the law. Death was not an original part of the human condition, not part of God’s original intention for the humans. It was provided as the means of chastisement God used in the supposed contingency, but Adam need not have died. Another contemporary Alexandrian theologian is worth a mention for the circulation of the same idea. Didymus the Blind, in *Against the Manichaeans*, presents the immortality of Adam and Eve before their

¹²⁹ Cf. Antonius, *Epistolae*, II.4, III.10, V.16 and V.17.

¹³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.* II.6.

¹³¹ Rubenson, *op. cit.* 73.

¹³² *Conferences* VIII.25: Adam in condicionem mortalitatis inducens.

transgression: “For being immortal before the transgression, when he transgressed he became mortal, and so the succession holds mortality.”¹³³

3.4.3 Conferences XI-XIII of Abba Chaeremon

Remarkably in *Conferences XI*, that the terms, the image and the likeness, were together repeated four times shows their conscious employment by Abba Chaeremon. For him, the image and the likeness were the property of human nature presented in the first human beings, and will be received, or restored by obedience to the Evangelic command of love.¹³⁴ Not only this conference, but also in the whole of Cassian’s works, we do not find a clear distinction between image and likeness. *Conferences I* shows that the image and likeness of God consists in the soul,¹³⁵ and *Conferences VI* says that both have been marred together as a result of the Fall.¹³⁶ In fact, the image and the likeness in Genesis 1:26 do not have separate referents. Moreover, there are no direct statements in Scripture to make a distinction between them. Cassian’s texts seem not to say by reasonable inferences what the Bible does not say on the subject. Consequently, there is no distinction between image and likeness either before or after the Fall. In this tendency, what it means to be in the image and likeness of God is not directly expounded but grasped in the context related the passages of the primitive state of Adam. We can detect two other characteristics of human nature in *Conferences XIII*.

¹³³ *Against the Manichaeans* 8.

¹³⁴ *Conferences XI.6,7,9,14; cf. VII.22; X.3; Incar. VII.6*

¹³⁵ *Conferences I.14*

¹³⁶ *Ibid. V.6*

Firstly, sharing with Serenus, Abba Chaeremon asserts that humans were created inherently immortal in Eden, and stepping beyond the former, he asserts that the Fall could not alter God's desire for human beings to live forever: "For the purpose of God whereby He made man not to perish but to live for ever, stands immovable."¹³⁷ God's eternal purpose for human beings was predestined, and was sustained even after they failed to respond to Him. The Abba continues that "God cannot be said to have made death, as Scripture itself testifies: "For God made not death, neither rejoiceth in the destruction of the living."(Wisdom 1:13)"¹³⁸ Accordingly, for the accomplishment of God's original purpose, the universal calling has intervened for the salvation of all human beings within time.

Secondly, God endowed humans with the good knowledge to be able to perform what is good, and with the faculty of free choice. Abba Chaeremon states, "as the wisest Solomon says: "God made man upright," i.e., always to enjoy the knowledge of good only, "But they have sought out many imaginations."(Eccl. 7:29 LXX)"¹³⁹ Man's knowledge was limited to good, but his option was at the boundary between good and evil. To be a perfect being, as it were, man needs the three requisites- knowledge of what should be done, the ability to do what one wills to do, and accountability for not doing what should be done. God did it, sure enough. The knowledge of good might be thought to be similar to complete knowledge of the law implanted in humans, but the former, like free will, still remains, whereas the latter lasted only before Moses' law.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* XIII.7: *Propositum namque dei, quo non ob hoc hominem fecerat ut periret, sed ut in perpetuum uiueret, manet immobile.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* XIII.7

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* XIII.12: *hominem...ut tantummodo boni scientia iugiter fruereetur.*

3.5 CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER 3

In the foregoing, we have attempted to examine the state of the first human, which is the basis of the spiritual anthropology. Now it is time to conclude this investigation as we summarise our findings.

Firstly, in three of Cassian's Abbas' texts, even though they differed in details, we found that they were of one voice in acknowledging that God assigned all necessary capacities as required of man. They agreed on the point of the original state of humanity, namely, that man was created perfectly in terms of intelligibility, morality and spirituality. This view is consistent in making no distinction between the two words, likeness and image. These interpretations show a major difference with Irenaeus, Clement, Origen and Evagrius, who drew a careful distinction between image and likeness, and proposed, or alluded to the theory of advancing towards full perfection for the human in the Paradise. While Cassian's texts remove themselves from such a typical patristic style of thought on Adam's primitive condition, they were shown to stand close to that of Athanasius in *The Life of Antony*. Antony instructs that "It (soul) holds fast according to nature when it remains as it was made-and it was made beautiful and perfectly straight... let us preserve the soul for the Lord, so that he may recognise his work as being just the same as he made it."¹⁴⁰ In addition to that, the concept of the image and likeness of God also resembles that of Athanasius, who did not make a distinction between the image and the likeness.

Secondly, this survey revealed that three Abbas read the Genesis story in a more literal and analogical fashion. This manner is very different in comparison with the

¹⁴⁰ *The Life of Antony*, 20.

allegorical reading of Origen and Evagrius, which neglected the literal sense, and allied with the philosophical presupposition about the pre-existence of the rational, disembodied beings, and the clothing of material bodies as the consequence of their apostasy. Yet, the Abbas' exegetical patterns went beyond the plain sense of the illiterate anthropomorphites, who, according to Cassian, used a more literal approach to a reading of Genesis 1:26, which failed to grasp the higher spiritual sense of the text.¹⁴¹ Their exegeses present us with a moderation between two extremes of literalistic and allegorising approaches to the human Genesis.

Thirdly, although Cassian's three Abbas maintained a good distance from the intellectual speculative approach in Alexandria and the desert, they had the forerunners of their doctrine on the original state of humanity in the same lands, such as Clement, Athanasius and Antony. It indicates that their thought had been brought up in the large cradle of the Coptic Church.

Finally, this chapter surveyed the narrow theme of primitive human nature, but Cassian's three Abbas showed divergent opinions as to the contents of Adam's possession that God assigned. For example, Abba Chaeremon's representation of the knowledge of good has individuality not to be mingled with Abba Serenus' discussion of fullness of wisdom, the grace of prophecy, and the implanted law in humans, although they have a similar aim to illustrate the perfect condition of human Genesis. This observation supports to some degree our present approach, which attempts to reveal the different points of distinctive, individual Abbas in one theme. The next chapter will more firmly verify this matter.

¹⁴¹ *Conferences X.3*

CHAPTER 4.

THE VIEW OF THE FALL

AND HUMAN NATURE

AFTER THE FALL IN

CASSIAN'S WORKS

It is the purpose of this chapter to examine the views in Cassian's texts on the Fall and human nature after the Fall, with a particular focus on the following questions: How do Cassian's texts describe the nature of the Fall, its cause and its results? How does Adam's personal sin affect the nature of himself and his descendants? How deep is our sin? Are we basically good and inclined to do what God desires, or are we so utterly corrupted as to be completely unable to extricate ourselves from the sinful condition, or something else? How consistent or different are the

doctrines in comparison with the earlier theologians who preceded him? Does Cassian, as most scholars believe, directly criticize either Augustine's or Pelagian's teachings on the consequences of the Fall for human nature; or does he criticize both?

This chapter will pursue answers to the above questions. As the main issues of this chapter are specifically related to most parts of *Conferences XIII*, we will pay particular attention to the meaning of the contents. To examine whether this conference directly opposed Augustinian doctrines, we will make frequent comparison of the two authors, and trace the Eastern materials related to our topics to prove that Cassian actually transmitted the desert tradition.

As we approached separately each of the speakers in the last chapter, our examination will be selective, and will be limited primarily to a comparison of some relevant texts in Cassian's works that bear upon our inquiry. We hope, within this chapter, to gain more conclusive evidence for the authenticity of Cassian's texts.

4.1 THE FALL AND ITS RESULTS

4.1.1 *Institutes XII* of Cassian

Treating the Fall in order to discover the essential elements of the eighth of the principle vices, the spirit of pride, Cassian finds its origin and cause set forth in Ezekiel 28:11-18, and Isaiah 14:12-14.¹ The first fallen being was Lucifer, and sin

¹ The connection between Lucifer and the Isaiah 14:12-14 appears in Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 5.11 and 17) Origen (*On First Principles* 1.5. 5), Athanasius (*Against the Arians* 3. 25), Basil (*Against Eunomius* 1.16) and Gregory of Nazianzus (*Oration* 28.12).

originated before the fall of man. The origin of sin was in Lucifer's desire to elevate his position in the terrestrial heaven to that of the seat of God, the Celestial heaven. This elevation was reiterated in the case of Adam and Eve. He who had said to himself that "I will ascend into heaven... I will be like the Most High," said to Adam and Eve that "Ye shall be as gods."² The same aspiration underlay the downfalls of both the captor and the captives; the same attitude of assumed equality with God is indicated; the same willful disregard for His sovereign commands. Cassian articulates the nature of Lucifer's pride accurately in relation to the spiritual ascents of the monks:

He believed that he had acquired the splendour of that wisdom and the beauty of those powers, with which he was graced by the gift of the Creator, by the might of his own nature, and not by the beneficence of His generosity. And on this account he was puffed up as if he stood in no need of divine assistance in order to continue in this state of purity, and esteemed himself to be like God, as if, like God, he had no need of any one, and trusting in the power of his own will, fancied that through it he could richly supply himself with everything which was necessary for the consummation of virtue or for the perpetuation of perfect bliss. This thought alone was the cause of his first fall.³

Pride is the sin of the spiritually proficient who dismiss the thought that everything is gifted from God, and credit themselves with gaining virtues. They show ingratitude for God's favour. Evil is the failure to let everything be attributed to God's grace. Pride is the usurping of the supreme nature of God's grace by satanic and human elements. Lucifer's downfall in the terrestrial heaven is

² *Institutes* XII.3

³ *Ibid.* XII.4

mimicked in the monks' paradise. Cassian says that the proud monks regard the present virtues and spiritual achievements as their own work, and trust that they can obtain perfect virtue and promised bliss only by their own strength without the assistance of God.

What consequences result from the Fall? Cassian describes four specific effects on the sinners: 1) The first immediate result of Satan's sin was the banishment forever from the Presence of God. A sinner could not abide in the presence of God's holiness. He was ejected from heaven itself, never to return, but permitted to dwell within the atmospheric or terrestrial heaven, immediately surrounding the earth.⁴ 2) The evil was so great that the proud angel made God Himself as the adversary. 3) Lucifer actually lost his glory, which he had already possessed through the free gift of the Creator. 4) The first sin led to a whole series of weaknesses and faults, which in the course of time disfigured the work of God.⁵ Cassian declares that pride is "the beginning of all sins and faults",⁶ and "the cause and fountain head of evils".⁷ As in the cases of Lucifer, not only the sin, but also its results are still repeated. The proud monk is deserted by God, is stripped of all virtues, and is inevitably given over to spiritual wickedness, lusts of the flesh, and many other sins—avarice, covetousness, disobedience of rules, spiritual deafness, fidgety behaviour, a hard heart, talkativeness, solemnity, wrath, bitterness and rebellion, and wicked retort.⁸ Cassian suggests that pride can be avoided by studying how the devil's fall happened,⁹ and by repeating the sayings of such passages as 1 Cor. 15:10, Phil. 2:13, John 15:5, Ps. 127:1,2 and Rom. 9:16, whenever

⁴ *Ibid.* XII.4

⁵ *Ibid.* XII.5

⁶ *Ibid.* XII.6

⁷ *Ibid.* XII.8

⁸ *Ibid.* XII.6, 7, 22, 26-8.

⁹ *Ibid.* XII.4, *Conferences* XII.8.

some progress in virtues is made.¹⁰ It is healed by following its opposite, the example of Christ's humility relying on the Father. The foundation of humility is to know of one's daily need of grace under the protection of God, and to know "that this very fact that we can understand this, is His own gift."¹¹

We, therefore, should make the observation that in *Institutes XII*, the main focus on the Fall and its results is the drawing of a parallel between Lucifer and the proud monks. Thus, there are not other issues related the Fall, like the direct results against Adam and Eve, and the indirect results for all of his descendents.

4.1.2 *Conferences V of Abba Serapion*

Conferences V primarily discusses the way to overcome eight principal faults which attack mankind. As part of the discourse, based on a literal interpretation of Genesis 3, the Abba Serapion deals with the nature of the act itself in Adam's fall, the whole process of the Fall, and the consequences that follow from the Fall, with regard to three vices--gluttony, vainglory and pride. While *Institutes XII* makes a comparison between Lucifer and the proud monks, *Conferences V* does so between the first Adam and the other who was threatened in the same temptation by Satan. A parallel between Adam's eating the fruit of the forbidden tree and Christ's refusing to turn stones into bread was a cliché in early fathers like Irenaeus and Origen.¹² Satan planned deliberately to reapply the strategy of Adam's first fall to Jesus. The language of the tempter bears a strong resemblance to that uttered ages before to Adam. Whereas Adam chose to act upon impulse and the suggestion of three vices, Jesus chose not to. Both were referred to as Adam

¹⁰ *Ibid.* XII.9

¹¹ *Ibid.* XII.33

¹² *Conferences V.6.* Cf, Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5.21.1f,; Origen, *Frag. in Luc.* 96

and they became the two termini or poles of the course for the desert ascetics. The second Adam is presented as a new and perfect representative and model for the human race. Such a description is bound to be a prescription or programme for all monks, who “are attacked on the same lines of temptation as He was.”¹³ Serapion describes the results of the two Adams’ choices in the subsequent sentences: “And so both the former and the latter are spoken of as Adam; the one being the first for destruction and death, and the other the first for resurrection and life. Through the one the whole race of mankind is brought into condemnation, through the other the whole race of mankind is set free.”¹⁴ The three consequences of the Fall are destruction, death and condemnation. 1) What we suppose in relation to destruction are the “marred image and likeness of God” and the “driven out” virtues. At the beginning of this chapter, the Abba notes that when Adam was involved in the transgression of the commandment through gluttony, vainglory, pride, “the image and likeness of God was marred.”¹⁵ What does the expression “the image and likeness of God” mean? Serapion just passes without any further account of that, but in another place he attributes them to our Lord, “who was in possession of the perfect image and likeness of God.” It is worthwhile examining carefully what the last word of that sentence implies. The idea of Cassian seems to be that the image and likeness has indeed been distorted by Adam’s sin, yet it has not been totally lost. This view differs from both systems of Pelagianism and Augustinianism. Augustine thought that as all mankind had become sinners through Adam, then the divine image was lost, though not in such a sense that no lineaments of it remain to us.¹⁶

¹³ *Ibid.* V.6

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Retractations*, ii. 24.

Later, Serapion writes that “For by nature God's will assigned the possession of our heart not to vices but to virtues, which, after the fall of Adam were driven out from their own country by the sins which grew up, i.e., by the Canaanites.”¹⁷ He adopts Origen's allegorical interpretation of the seven nations of Canaan, whom the Israelites must destroy, as sins which the soul must expel.¹⁸ To the Abba the rightful inhabitants of the heart, virtues, were usurped by vices, as the descendants of Ham wickedly invading the children of Shem with force and violence. 2) As a result of the Fall, death is now a necessity derived from a possibility both to die or not to die. Death was not something natural to Adam, but the unnatural price he had to pay for sin. 3) If both are so, what did Serapion mean by condemnation on all his descendents? They were condemned through Adam, not by their own sins, but by the forefather's. His entire posterity was seminally in Adam when he was condemned. Serapion had a view of the human race's corporate solidarity with Adam.

Though the three results of the Fall are mentioned only in passing, one theme that runs throughout this text is that Adam's sin is a very serious matter with far-reaching and long-lasting consequences for the entire human race. In addition, Serapion looks at the universal sinfulness of the human race while he compares our human nature with Christ's: “there was in Him no true sin inherited from the fall... For He had no experience of the fiery darts of carnal lust, which in our case arise even against our will, from the constitution of our natures... He in no sort of way received into Himself seeds or roots of it (sin).”¹⁹ Here Serapion affirms a doctrine of original sin in which man is fallen hereditarily in Adam. The one who sins becomes twisted or distorted as it were. The true nature in which Adam was created in the image and likeness of God was disturbed. We see a grave

¹⁷ *Conferences V.24*

¹⁸ *In Jesu Nave I ff.*

¹⁹ *Conferences V.6.*

characteristic of the fallen human nature in his saying that “the delight in carnal passions rages more powerfully in our members than does the desire for virtue.”²⁰ This is the result of Adam and the effect of sin on his descendants. The entire human race has a depraved or corrupted nature which so inclines it toward evil that it is virtually inevitable. Our fruits of sin are the result of its seeds or roots in human nature. We, apparently without exception, are sinners by birth. Serapion conceived of the concept of sin not only as an external wrong act but also as an inner thought, such as the cases of vainglory and pride.²¹ In relation to the evil thoughts, he observes a condition of sinfulness that inhabits our human nature: “Each fault has its own especial corner in the heart, which it claims for itself in the recesses of the soul.”²² While Serapion compels his audience to root out the seven troublesome faults from the innermost recesses of their souls, he expresses his deep sentiment about the unavoidable limitations of the human faculty. This comes from awareness of a natural fault such as gluttony: “We can then cut out the roots of these faults which are grafted into our nature from without while we cannot possibly cut off occasions of gluttony. For however far we have advanced, we cannot help being what we were born.”²³ Serapion knew that all other faults could be controlled and extirpated by God’s grace and our efforts, but not gluttony, which is natural to man and which does not cease from troubling.²⁴ To Augustine, the equivalence to the permanence of gluttony was that of sexual responsiveness, of which he says, “of all the appetites, the only one that seemed to clash inevitably and permanently with reason.”²⁵ He thought that the shame at the uncontrollable stirring of the genitals, which Adam and Eve had covered with fig-leaves, was the

²⁰ *Ibid.* V.16

²¹ *Ibid.* V.7

²² *Ibid.* V.24

²³ *Ibid.* V.18

²⁴ *Ibid.* V.8, 24

²⁵ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 389.

fitting punishment of disobedience in the first sin.²⁶ To him, under the high-handedness of sexual dynamics humans cannot simply replace the impulse by a free-floating want. While Augustine notes that a man is held away from the contemplation of God by 'a pressing throng of desires',²⁷ Serapion illustrates a spiritual flight of the excellent monk hampered by the needs of the belly with the simile of the eagle soaring in the sky above compelled to descend to the earth for feed.²⁸ The former's emphasis on sexual desire is based on his psychological observation, as Peter Brown pointed out;²⁹ the latter's view of gluttony comes from the ascetic experience of the monks saying that "from superfluity of gluttony fornication is sure to spring."³⁰ Both of them in common penetrated such sin with such great power that is part of human nature, then, that the only thing is to accept the inevitable.

Thus, the key point might be summarized as follows: in Serapion's deliverance we see a similarity between his view of the severity of the Fall and that of Augustine, though falling short of the latter's idea. The human condition after the Fall is well described in his quotation of a saying of one of the Elders on his state of being before renouncing this world that "I was, in my natural condition, encompassed by a great many faults."³¹ With the exception of the second Adam by the Virgin Birth 'without the infection of this appetite', the whole human race is born with hereditary sin transmitted from the first Adam.³² As we think that the Eastern fathers were reluctant to speak of mankind as a whole sharing in Adam's sin, this idea of the transmission of sin could be seen to enter upon a new phase of doctrine

²⁶ *Sermons* 151.5

²⁷ *Contra Julianum* VI, xviii, 56.

²⁸ *Conferences* V.20

²⁹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 389.

³⁰ *Conferences* V.10

³¹ *Ibid.* V.21

³² *Ibid.* V.5

effected by the Augustinian lines justifying the existence of original sin. Moreover, it might be viewed as an attack on the teaching of Pelagians that denied original sin: that Adam's sin injured only himself, not the human race.³³ It is hard to judge the matter, since there is neither explanation, nor dispute, but simply reference in passing. To place the position of Serapion's idea we should trace its source to the Eastern tradition.³⁴ A solution comes from Origen, who states that inherited sin "is quite Biblical, considering the great concern of the writers of Scripture for records of lineage in Genesis 5, I Chronicles 1-11, and Matthew 1."³⁵ Moreover, Origen thought that Jesus, Paul and Moses were aware that sin and its consequences were passed down through the generations.³⁶ In *Commentary on Romans*, after having spoken of our existence in Adam's loins, Origen notes: "... and all men have been driven out of paradise with or in him; and through him deaths which befell him because of his transgression, has also passed to those who were in his loins."³⁷ Later, his desert follower, Didymus also "speaks of 'the ancient sin' of Adam in virtue of which all men are held under sin. They contract it 'by transmission', the sexual union of their parents being apparently the means."³⁸ Therefore, it is proper to think that some of the desert monks were not unfamiliar with the teaching about a legacy of sin.

³³ *De gratia Chrisit, et de Peccato Originali, contra Pelagium* VI. 14. Cf. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, pp. 214-5.

³⁴ For the mention of original sin by the Eastern fathers, see Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin: a theological view*, 140-5. In his discussion, Schoonenberg demonstrates that the idea that we have sinned in Adam does appear early in Greek theology; namely in Irenaeus and Origen.

³⁵ Quoted from Constantine N. Tsirpanlis, "Origen On Free Will, Grace, Predestination, Apocatastasis, and Their Ecclesiological Implications," *The Patristic and Byzantine Review* 9 (1990), 110.

³⁶ *Ibid.* Cf. *Rom.* 7:20-24; *Rom.* 5:12f. *Deut.* 5:9; *Luke* 23:28. Tsirpanlis note that "Origen says, inherited problems do not completely determine one's fate. For example, the Jews were foreordained as God's chosen elect, and yet, due to their action of crucifying Jesus, they lost their position and carnal against God."

³⁷ Origen, *Rom.* VI.

³⁸ Cited from Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 351. Cf. *De trin.* 2, 12; 3, 12; 3, 17; 3, 21, *C. Munich.* 8.

While Serapion refers to ‘the experience of the fiery darts of carnal lust... from the constitution of our natures’, we perceive corrupted man to be in the bondage of carnal lust, then, not to have the full liberty to choose according to his desires. At this point how can we evaluate the remaining extent of freedom of the will in the idea of Serapion? This *Conference* does not allow a place for the discussion of the will’s moral inability, or total depravity, which was the chief concern of Augustine. The most likely reason for the absence is that in the earliest period of the Eastern church relatively little was said about the issue, as we see Origen’s frequent denial of total depravity.³⁹

4.1.3 Conferences VIII of Abba Serenus

While Abba Serenus examines the origin, hierarchy, characteristics and activities of evil spirits in *Conferences VIII*, he treats the two-fold fall of Lucifer, citing the causes and results of both cases, by referring mainly to three passages: Ezekiel 28:11-18, Isaiah 14:12-14 and Genesis 3:14-9. In comparison with the treatment of Lucifer’s fall in *Institutes XII*, a remarkable point of difference is its subdivision into two stages; The first took place through pride, with the angels following him in heaven, then, its result was his being called a serpent and his falling from heaven to earth. Serenus says of his present state that “as this one found him still in the possession of something upright so that he could enjoy some interchange of conference and counsel with man.”⁴⁰ The serpent had temporarily enjoyed a ‘specious friendship’ with the first humans in Garden of Eden. The second stage between the serpent and Adam and Eve happened after he had enticed them. The

³⁹ cf. *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 47; *Contra Celsum*.11; *Matt.* 117; *Joann.* XXXII, 19 (12); *Rom.* IX, 41.

⁴⁰ *Conferences VIII*.10

result was his receiving the everlasting curse which demanded that he trailed on the belly, took food off the ground and became the object of man's enmity. In the closing chapter of this *Conferences* the Abba affixed death to the list of Satan's sins. Satan was convicted of the murder of Adam and Abel. To Serenus, Satan, being the author of sin, was the author of its consequence, death. With regard to Serenus' illustration, Germanus observes that he had believed that envy of the first parents was the cause of the devil's fall.⁴¹ Envy as the motive was already indicated by Abba Piamun in *Conferences XVIII*, at a time prior to the *Conferences VIII*, whom Germanus with Cassian interviewed shortly after their arrival in Egypt:

Rightly then are the stings of envy compared by the prophet to the deadly poison of basilisks, as by it the first author of all poisons and their chief perished and died. For he slew himself before him of whom he was envious, and destroyed himself before that he poured forth the poison of death against man: for "by the envy of the devil death entered into the world: they therefore who are on his side follow him." [Wisdom 2:24, 25]⁴²

As there is no display of Satan's pride in Piamun's accounts on the Fall, I suppose that Germanus recapitulated what he heard from him. It is not an accidental abbreviation according to Russell's note: "Theophilus, bishop of Antioch from about A.D. 169, was the first to follow Wisdom 2: 24 in emphasizing envy as the motive in Satan's fall. Irenaeus and Cyprian later did the same, but Origen preferred pride, and that explanation came to prevail."⁴³ Serenus, however, confirms his own position that envy is the cause of the devil's second fall. I believe that this kind of divergence among the Abbases in the *Conferences* lends credence to

⁴¹ *Ibid.* VIII.9

⁴² *Ibid.* XVIII.16

⁴³ Jeffery Burton Russell, *Satan: the early Christian tradition*, 1981, pp. 78-9.

his claim in the first *Preface* that “we may explain them (the fathers) as beautifully and as exactly as we received them from them.”⁴⁴

With regard to Adam’s fall he very briefly presents the first parents as the archetypes who followed evil counsels, emphasizing God’s punishments on them, as illustrated in Genesis 3, as a lesson for the monks. The Abba was concerned with the immediate results following from the Fall- the man’s toilsome labour for his daily bread, and the woman’s dependence on her husband with the serpent’s everlasting curse. There is no attempt here to explain the effect on Adam’s descendants by his fall, or any transition of human nature. In the whole of Serenus’ deliberation, unlike *Conferences V*, we do not find a general statement about the universal depravity of all persons at all times, but about all those living at the time. This tendency arises from his view of the Sethians’ holiness following the example of their father’s justice and goodness. Serenus wrote:

And so the line which sprang from the seed of righteous Seth always mixed with its own kith and kin, and continued for a long while in the holiness of its fathers and ancestors, untouched by the blasphemies and the wickedness of an evil offspring, which had implanted in it a seed of sin as it were transmitted by its ancestors.⁴⁵

Here, Serenus seems to cognize the transmitted ‘inborn holiness’ and ‘wickedness’ in accordance with two genealogies of the human race in Genesis 4-5, and attributes the matter of the transmission to the fathers of the two lineages, namely, Cain and Seth, not to the first father, Adam. The idea of the righteous lineage of Seth shows an influence from Gnostic traditions. *The Gospel of the Egyptians*

⁴⁴ *Conferences I*, Preface.

⁴⁵ *Conferences VIII.21*

states that the heavenly Adamas requests a son, “in order that he (the son) become father of the immovable, incorruptible race” (III. 51,7-9).⁴⁶ For the authors of the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Apocalypse of Adam*, Seth was not only a symbol for the spirituals; he was their father.⁴⁷ They spoke of “the race of Seth” as that of the saved.

Serenus views that before their intermarriage with the descendants of Cain, the Sethians possessed the human nature and original goodness that Seth had. On the other hand, Serenus no longer developed the last part of the above citation, and shunned the notion of hereditary sin with regard to the descendants of Cain. Throughout all of his two *Conferences* he stressed that human corruption was a matter of personal choice, and of personal responsibility. Whereas the Sethians were handed down the study of all natural things from the fathers, the wicked genealogy following Cain inherited the strange arts of wizards, and sleights and magic tricks, learned at the instigation of demons. These deeds were for the destruction of all. But all Adam’s offspring without distinction of lineage have in common ‘a natural instinct’, or ‘a natural knowledge of the law’ implanted by God at creation. They were still sensitive in matters of the law, of right and wrong. Humanity does not lose its capacity for intelligence and free will as a result of the Fall, though there is no indication that humans enjoyed the original ability of prophecy by divine inspiration possessed by Adam before he sinned. Then it is a fair divine judgement on those who transgressed the natural law by the Flood. Serenus’ opinion on the human race before the Flood is based on his method of scriptural exegesis, resisting guesses and conjectures that “everything should be proven by plain text from Scripture.”⁴⁸ This way led to a lack of concern about the

⁴⁶ Cf. Birger A. Pearson, “The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature,” in *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, p. 69

⁴⁷ Simone Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans. by Carol Harrison, 1991, p. 201.

⁴⁸ *Conferences* VIII.5

direct results of Adam's fall on his posterity to reconcile the Sethians' goodness. It is worth noting how Augustine, commenting on the same passage, adjusted his doctrine of the original sin to the justice of the Sethians. He attributes the latter to the preservation by God's grace, not their obedience to or the natural knowledge of the law.⁴⁹ While Augustine weakened the moral achievement of the Sethians by the theology of original sin and grace, and overlooked the reasons for their utter corruption, Serenus was faithful only to the text itself and its context without using any aid of theology. The Abba, however, depended on ancient traditions to explain that human sins had not been washed away by the water, and reappeared before long after the Flood. His descriptions are not confined to the biblical text. He attempts to use extracanonical sources to overcome difficulties presented in it. We look at Serenus' paying of respect to tradition as its necessary complement, and as a valuable means for interpretation of the Scripture. He suggested that Ham, the son of Noah, learned the wicked and profane arts and inscribed them on plates of various metals and rocks before the Flood. Ham hunted them for after the flood and transmitted them to his descendants.⁵⁰ He was responsible for the continuation of wickedness on earth. Serenus attributed the reemergence of evil to exterior influences, not interior human nature. There is nothing wrong with the human nature that God has given them. In *Conferences* VII, when Cassian blames his human nature for his inability to control his wandering thoughts, Serenus

⁴⁹ *De Civitate Dei* XV.21

⁵⁰ *Conferences* VIII.21. Serenus' dependence on ancient traditions might be supposed the Coptic Gnostic writings. According to Pearson, Epiphanius tells us that he had personal knowledge of the Coptic "Sethians" Gnostics who trace their race from Seth, presumably met them in his travels in Egypt, and knew of some of their books (*Haer.* 39.1.2). He reports that the wicked angels installed Ham into the ark in order that wickedness might be preserved (39.3.2-3). Cf. Pearson, "The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature," pp. 52-83. In relation to the evil knowledge after the Flood, Klijn writes that "In the Book of Jubilees, a Jewish literature, there is another story about the preservation of knowledge until after the Flood, according to which Cainam, the son of Arpachshad, discovered the astrological teaching of the Watchers carved on a rock. He copied it but was afraid of telling it to Noah." See for antediluvian knowledge of an evil character, A. F. J. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature*, 1977, pp. 51-2.

rectifies his error and says that “We ought not then to ascribe this wandering inclination of our heart either to human nature or to God its Creator. For it is a true statement of Scripture, that “God made man upright; but they themselves found out many thoughts.”(Eccl. 7:29)”⁵¹ He emphasizes his own responsibility for the character of his thoughts, and continues “You see then that it lies in our power to dispose in our hearts either ascents, i.e., thoughts that belong to God, or descents; viz., those that sink down to carnal and earthly things.” His teachings offer nothing of the inner tensions of the individual, as we see in *Conferences VI* and *XXIII*, since the will has the ability to control thoughts. Representing the Gospel centurion commanding his soldiers as an ideal, Serenus allegorically comments:

And so we shall have the same right and power to command, so that we shall not be carried away by thoughts against our will, but shall be able to continue in and cling to those which spiritually delight us, commanding the evil suggestions to depart, and they will depart, while to good ones we shall say “Come,” and they will come.⁵²

To him, God still endows humans after the Fall with free will, by which they are able to struggle against passions and vices, and to subjugate the thoughts to the rule of reason. Serenus was an optimistic theologian, who placed the burden of freedom and responsibility for his deeds on the individual. With his exegesis of Scripture the main permeative idea that formed the foundation of his thought was the perfection of God’s creation: “God made man upright.” In order not to be misled in our judgments on the matter we must make certain allowances for the

⁵¹ *Conferences VII.4*

⁵² *Ibid. VII.5*

creationist view that he adopts with regard to the origin of the soul. Rejecting a traducian theory, according to which we receive our souls by transmission from our parents, just as we do our physical natures, Serenus teaches:

But what could be said with greater plainness than that he [Ecclesiastes] declares that the matter of the flesh which he styled dust, because it springs from the seed of man, and seems to be sown by his ministration, must, as it was taken from the earth, again return to the earth, while he points out that the spirit which is not begotten by intercourse between the sexes, but belongs to God alone in a special way, returns to its creator? And this also is clearly implied in that breathing by God, through which Adam in the first instance received his life.⁵³

This is the prevalent Greek view, namely that humans receive their physical nature by inheritance from their parents, but that the soul is specially newly-created by God for each individual and united with the body at birth. The issue of the origin of the soul had drawn the attention of Western theologians before Cassian wrote his works. While Latin writers like Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, Pelagius and his disciples shared the creationist view, Augustine confronted the thorny problem of the soul's origin: by whom it was produced, God or parents. Around 414, when Jerome had posited the creationist view; Augustine immediately, in the letter sent to him, highlighted the difficulties of creationism.⁵⁴ In 418, in a letter written to a fellow-bishop, Optatus, who held a creationist view like Jerome, Augustine explains that he is willing to accept the opinion that souls are created for men as they are born, if only it can be made plain that it is consistent with the original sin

⁵³ *Ibid.* VIII.25

⁵⁴ *Epistle* 166, IV, 10.

that the Scriptures so clearly teach.⁵⁵ Though the traducian view would have fitted in best with his teaching about the origins of sin, he hesitated to declare his position publicly between the two theories until the end of his life, showing uncertainty on the issue.⁵⁶ On the other hand, defending the creationist view, Pelagius asserted that the soul of every person was not tainted by any supposed corruption or guilt.⁵⁷ As God's goodness was revealed in the traces he had left in human nature, then, humans had no congenital spiritual fault or hereditary sin.⁵⁸ As Adam was merely a bad example, there was no other direct connection between Adam's sin and his descendants.⁵⁹

As a result of seeing the doctrinal context in the West, we may come to ask whether these circumstances had an influence on Cassian's discussion of the issue, causing him to dispute Augustine's criticism against the creationist view, or whether Serenus merely followed the prevalent Eastern view of the soul's origin. When we compare Pelagius' opinions with those of Serenus, we can see a certain affinity between the former's position and the latter's appreciation of the goodness of God's creation and his silence on original sin. Modern researchers, however, tend to make a judgment that Cassian's thought is not semi-Pelagian.⁶⁰ In accord with Markus, Ramsey proposes that Cassian seems to have been more widely read in Augustine, including anti-Pelagian works. Through a thorough investigation of his seventeenth *Conference* and a number of other shorter passages, Ramsey arrives at the conclusion that these works are the result of some familiarity on

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 190. Quoted from B. B. Warfield, *Introductory Essay on Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy*.

⁵⁶ Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, p. 197.

⁵⁷ Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals*, 1968, pp. 82-3.

⁵⁸ *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* V. 9; *De gratia Chrisit, et de Peccato Originali, contra Pelagium* VI. 14.

⁵⁹ *De peccatorum meritis et remissione, et de baptismo parvulorum* I. 10.

⁶⁰ Cf. Pristas, "The Theological Anthropology of John Cassian."

Cassian's part with Augustine, and writes, "Cassian's relation to Augustine was rather more rich than is generally acknowledged. He was, in a discriminating way, a student of Augustine... Augustine wielded the most influence on him."⁶¹ There is a trend in some quarters today to defend Cassian's doctrines from the criticism as semi-Pelagianism and even to claim that they are Augustinian teachings. Nevertheless, the case of Serenus' teachings casts a negative shadow on Cassian's orthodoxy in connection with Augustine's representation of the creationist view. A comparative reading of Augustine's refutation and Serenus' affirmation does not show any evidence that Cassian was familiar with Augustine. Thus, we cannot endorse Ramsey's view above. In this regard, we might call to mind that the subjective researchers would often, in thematizing one topic or point of view, let many other topics or points of view fade into the background. We cannot erase the words inclined toward a Pelagian view in Cassian's works. It is a denial of the *differentiae* between Latin theology and Greek.

Before closing our discussion of Serenus' ideas, we turn back now to consider the condition of the implanted internal law, which was treated in Section 3.4.2, after the Fall. It may be useful to judge his position. Serenus asserts that the internal law was completely maintained before the Flood;

How could Abel, without the command of the law, have known that he ought to offer to God a sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof, unless he had been taught by the law which was naturally implanted in him? How could Noah have distinguished what animals were clean and what were unclean, when the commandment of the law had not yet made a distinction, unless he had been

⁶¹ Boniface Ramsey, "John Cassian: Student of Augustine," *Cistercian Studies* 28 (1993): 15.

taught by a natural knowledge? Whence did Enoch learn how to “walk with God,” having never acquired any light of the law from another?

The internal law had been utterly corrupted by the freedom of sin in the descendants of Noah and so the reaction of God in this case was noted in the following terms, “the severe restrictions of the law of Moses were added as the executor and vindicator of this and to use the expressions of Scripture, as its helper, that through fear of immediate punishment men might be kept from altogether losing the good of natural knowledge.”⁶² To Serenus, the internal law has a more important position than the Mosaic law, whose function is defined as a helper, or keeper for the former. God brought the Mosaic law, like the case of the Flood, to those who violated the internal law. Man’s repeated falls were attributed to the disobedience to the interior law, not to corrupted human nature. Serenus’ view on the internal law maintained after the Fall is consistent with that of blameless human nature because of God’s creation of the soul.

4.1.4 Conferences XXIII of Abba Theonas

In *Conferences XXIII*, the main concern is the interior struggle spoken of in the passage in Romans 7:19ff; “For I do not the good which I would.” Abba Theonas regards Paul’s example in the same light with the monks who desire uninterrupted Divine contemplation, but “are oppressed by the weight of earthly thoughts and fall away from their loftiness of mind, and that they are led away against their will.”⁶³ In the analysis of Paul’s words, the Abba discusses the universal effects of

⁶² *Conferences VIII.23*

⁶³ *Conferences XXIII.10*

Adam's transgression, and asserts that his fall has internal consequences for all of his descendants. That is the law of sin "implanted in their natural human condition, which, "resisting the law of their mind,"[Rom. 7:22, 23] brings their thoughts into captivity to the forcible law of sin... and keeps it back from the vision of God."⁶⁴ Theonas concludes that "The whole human race in general therefore is without exception subject to this law."⁶⁵ To him, there are two kinds of sinners. The first are those who defile themselves willingly, and serve God neither with the mind nor the flesh:

as Scripture says, "Mankind is diligently inclined to wickedness from his youth." [Gen. 8:21] To this extent are all so inflamed by the love of sin and desire to carry out what they will, that they actually look out for an opportunity to commit wickedness and are afraid of being too slow to enjoy their lusts, and glory in their shame and the mass of their crimes.⁶⁶

They do not experience within themselves the tension of "the law of the mind" struggling against the "law of sin". The second, like Paul, are those who delight in the law of God after the inner man, and who soar above all visible things and ever strive to be united with God alone, and serve God with the mind and the flesh. However, they too are never able to rid themselves of the results of the first father's sin. All saints are caught by the unavoidable law of sin, which naturally produces the thorns and thistles of mortal thoughts and cares, in the ground of the their breast. They realize that they cannot escape distractions even in the midst of their most fervent prayer, that they cannot even for a single hour be free from the blemish of sin, and that they cannot maintain a grasp on divine contemplation. By

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* XXIII.11

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* XXIII.11

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* XXIII.1

discovering their inability to cling to contemplation, Theonas comes to see Adam's sin as the origin of these distractions, and the universal sinfulness of all humans. These distractions are an incurable disease for the human power of concentration. Quoting Isaiah 64:5, 6, he highlights the prophet's confession that "We are all become as one unclean, and all our righteousnesses as filthy rags."⁶⁷ Sin gains so much control and power over humans, even the righteous cannot escape. While the Abba cites Paul's saying, "But we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin" [Rom. 7:14], he asks what, or whose sin is it that makes us carnal? He replies, "Doubtless Adam's, by whose fall and, if I may so say, ruinous transaction and fraudulent bargain we were sold."⁶⁸ Theonas represents the cause of this human condition in terms of a deal that took place between Adam and the serpent.

For by eating of the forbidden tree he received from the serpent the price of his liberty, and gave up his natural freedom and chose to give himself up to perpetual slavery to him from whom he had obtained the deadly price of the forbidden fruit; and thenceforth he was bound by this condition and not without reason subjected all the offspring of his posterity to perpetual service to him whose slave he had become. For what can any marriage in slavery produce but slaves?⁶⁹

Adam used the divinely given free choice to obtain for the fruit and the immediate result of the transaction was to place himself and his descendants in perpetual slavery. The major problem of humanity is the utter helplessness in its enslavement to an unfit owner, Satan. As the slavery was Adam's own free choice, it would have been unjust to restore Adam to original freedom against his will, and

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* XXIII.17

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* XXIII.12

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* XXIII.12

to deprive Satan of his captives by some arbitrary method. God had left the slaves with their choice, “until by the price of His own blood the grace of the Lord redeemed them from their original chains and set them free in the primeval state of liberty.”⁷⁰ For the sake of God’s justice that can be no break in the terms of His own decree, the Lord voluntarily paid the price by Himself. Here Theonas adopted the so-called ‘ransom theory’, which had already been developed by Origen. While Origen deals with Paul’s statement that “you were bought at a price” (1 Cor. 6:20), he asks, from whom were we bought? It must certainly have been from the devil, who held us captive until the ransom was paid. “Now it was the devil that held us, to whose side we had been drawn away by our sins. He asked, therefore, as our price the blood of Christ.”⁷¹ It was the devil rather than God who demanded Christ’s blood, thus initiating this aspect of the transaction. So the ransom was determined by, paid to, and accepted in exchange for humanity by Satan. Through Origen this ransom theory became the dominant way of thinking in the idea of the atonement in the Patristic age. Cassian has already presented the theory in *Institutes* III.3, in which his treatment is a dogmatic declaration of the bygone that focuses on what His cross has achieved for mankind.⁷² On the other hand, in *Conferences* XXIII, Theonas construes the work of Christ on a level of present practical experience rather than on dogmatic conceptuality. To the Abba, Paul’s phrase that “but I am carnal, sold under sin” should not be interpreted as a sense of promulgation, or legal categories, since Adam’s sin still wields great influence over the contemplative life of Paul. The vulnerability to sin was the same for Theonas as it was for Paul. He identifies his experience with that of Paul, which lies beneath the literal words of Paul’s phrase. The Abba writes that “our father has

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* XXIII.12

⁷¹ Origen, *Rom.* 2:13.

⁷² “All of us who were liable to death and bound by the debt of the handwriting that could not be paid, He freed, by taking it away out of the midst and affixing it to His cross for a trophy.”

sold us by that unhappy bargain so that we cannot do the good that we would”⁷³ His experience in practice of virtue interprets Paul’s text and, vice versa, Paul’s text helps to understand his experience. The Abba speaks of Paul in the following way: “And by this law of sin I find that at every moment I am so taken captive that although I persist in my immovable longing around the law of God, yet in no way can I escape the power of this captivity, unless I always fly to the grace of the Saviour.”⁷⁴ Theonas was sufficiently attentive to the personal context of Paul in the inward struggle. At the beginning of this *Conferences*, he proposed to his audience a hermeneutic device to understand Paul’s words, “when we weigh the position and character of those by whom they were spoken, and are ourselves clothed with the same feelings (not in words but by experience), in accordance with the character of which most certainly all the thoughts are conceived and opinions uttered.”⁷⁵ The homogeneous context between author and expositor supports the view that his exegesis becomes truly Pauline. Theonas, then, demonstrates the way in which Paul dealt with the dilemma of sinfulness:

They continually ask of the Lord’s grace pardon for everything that day by day they commit when overcome by the weakness of the flesh... they betake themselves to the grace of God, “Who justifieth the ungodly,” [Rom. 4:5] and cry out with the Apostle: “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”[Rom. 7:24, 25]⁷⁶

⁷³ *Conferences* XXIII.13

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* XXIII.16

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* XXIII.2

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* XXIII.10

What he found in Christ was the rescuing present grace from “everything that day by day they commit.” Without Christ’s existing help one would have no hope at all. As humans are in bondage to their own sinfulness, to escape the power of this captivity the sinner must be liberated by the grace of Christ. Then he has to recourse to Christ to “be saved by the present redemption of His grace.”⁷⁷ To be freed from the slavery of sin is not a single propositional formality, but a continual experience. With the citation of Rom. 8:1, 2, the Abba comments that “the grace of Christ day by day frees all his saints from this law of sin and death, under which they are constantly reluctantly obliged to come, whenever they pray to the Lord for the forgiveness of their trespasses.”⁷⁸ Here the grace God offers to us is the grace we have to ask. The slaves of sin are unable to gain freedom, “unless I always fly to the grace of the Saviour.”⁷⁹ The term, “unless” refers to what we call a necessary condition. It means that man’s flight must happen before the operation of the grace of God. For a necessary condition, Theonas used three terms: “confess that they are sinners,” “pray to the Lord for the forgiveness of their trespasses”, and “fly to the grace of the Saviour”.

Can we understand these works as requiring human free will to be active, and to cooperate with God’s grace? If yes, it is the sinner’s initial step toward salvation and is decidedly synergistic with the Saviour. The common judgment that the leading spokesman of the semi-Pelagian party was John Cassian is, then, right. Nevertheless, attentive readers of his works might dismiss this claim as impetuous and the following reasons are suggested: In the case of the Fall, Adam used his free decision to become a slave of sin. After the Fall, God allowed him and his offspring to exercise the prerogative of the freedom he had received.⁸⁰ However, the will was

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* XXIII.15

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* XXIII.13

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* XXIII.16

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* XXIII.12

such that they could not return the primeval state of liberty until the Lord had redeemed them by His own blood. On the commencement of restoration of the liberty, Theonas did not offer a further rational demonstration as to how to use our will in some degree when the grace sets us free from slavery. He rather avoids at this stage using terms like will, free or freedom, and prefers instead terms like confess, pray and fly. Adopted after detecting the inability of the will, these terms were not used in the concept of merit, or the will. There is nothing in the text that suggests he conceives of free will as the means by which humans cooperate with grace. Throughout the whole of *Conferences*, we do not find a discussion of the grace of divine regeneration raising the sinner from unbelief to faith, which would lead us to an argument as to whether the will is spiritually infirm, or spiritually dead. Theonas jumped from the beginning of salvation on the Cross for all humans to the midway point in the whole process of rescuing the saints. The will's inability, he says, is not the will's moral inability to incline itself to God as in Augustine's view, but the will's inability to incline itself to good, which is contemplation.⁸¹ Augustine's view is at the starting point of salvation, while that of Theonas is on the way to perfection. Theonas' characters from the beginning are not unbelievers, but the saints who confess that they are sinners, "and yet by no means despair of their salvation, but look for full justification (which they do not hope that they cannot obtain by virtue of the state of human frailty) from the grace and mercy of the Lord."⁸² Their primary concern is to receive the grace for the "full justification" over salvation, and so the lack of a cohesive doctrine of the whole salvation would have been of little concern to them. Here it is worth noting that Eastern theology before the desert fathers was undivided between the doctrines and experiences of salvation and sanctification, which I will examine in the next chapter.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* XXIII.13

⁸² *Ibid.* XXIII.17

Theonas naturally confused the two experiences or doctrines. On the other hand, Augustine clearly distinguished the two, asserting that the will is spiritually dead, so that only the effectual grace of God can liberate the sinner to believe, or to regenerate.⁸³ Affected by his own conversion, he clearly had a strong desire to maintain the helplessness of man in his total depravity and then the primacy of divine grace and sovereignty at the beginning of salvation. The key difference between Augustine and Theonas is the difference between for whom, when, what kind of grace is needed, although both share common concerns on the necessity of grace.

We turn now to consider that Theonas' teachings were not entirely at one with that of *Conferences VIII*, which asserts the Sethians' righteousness. As we have seen, Serenus' perspective involved a definite idea that human nature is unitary and relatively immune to the damaging effects of the Fall. This inconsistency between Theonas' words and those of Serenus places Cassian's students in trouble and causes them to offer an unsatisfactory defence. For example, Pristas wrote:

Cassian's principal intent in *Conlatio VIII* is not to suggest there was a line of Adam's descendants who were preserved from the effects of his sin, but to vindicate God of the charge of short-sightedness in his dealing with human beings – a charge implicitly leveled by those who explained the span of time between creation and the promulgation of the Law of Moses by asserting that God created the world one way and later, seeing the need for improving upon or correcting the original arrangement, issued written commandments. Cassian's unambiguous insistence in *Conlatio XXIII* that all Adam's descendants were sold into slavery with him supports our reading of *Conlatio VIII*. *Conlatio VIII*, then, is

⁸³ Augustine, *The Enchiridion* 30, 32; *On Grace and Free Will* 29, 33, 41.

an example of Cassian's tendency to make, in passing, bolder anthropological claims when his real intention is to say something about God.⁸⁴

However, we can not endorse this proposal, because Serenus' view on human nature after the Fall is too different from that of Theonas to elucidate thoroughly the inconsistency. Both Abbas unfolded their entire conferences based on their respective views. Serenus' approach focused only on Genesis itself without consideration of Paul's anthropology in Romans, so that we do not find a general statement of the universal depravity in the Sethians at all, whereas Theonas concentrated his attention on Romans 7, accordingly all of Adam's descendants without exception are seen to be sold into slavery by the Fall. How can one author have two different standpoints on one issue in one book? The easiest explanation for the inconsistency is that Cassian repeated the subject unsystematically and inconsistently in his discussion with apparent contradictions. This solution might be dismissed by modern scholars, like Cappuyns, Leroy, who appraised highly Cassian's constitutional ability,⁸⁵ and even by Leo, later pope, who charged Cassian to write *On the Incarnation of the Lord against Nestorius*. Rea carefully proposed a possible answer in a passing allusion that Cassian "would adopt not only the spiritual methodology but also the thinking of those fathers. This, coupled with the fact that Cassian claims to express the points of view of different desert fathers who may in fact express differing points of view, may be enough to explain an apparent lack of concern for logical and systematic consistency."⁸⁶ In fact there is no way to understand properly the inconsistency except by believing Cassian's claim. The repetition, inconsistency and contradiction on several themes lend credence to that.

⁸⁴ Pristas, "The Theological Anthropology of John Cassian," 366-7.

⁸⁵ Rea, "Grace and Free Will," 50.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 51-2.

We have examined four different texts on the Fall and its results in Cassian's works. What has been said so far is represented in the following chart. (Figure 3)

Comparisons of the four texts have shown a great deal of the editorial arrangement, some parallelism in conceptions and terms, but we have found each of them to have different views on the same issue, and to complement each other. We may ask a question: can we say that the wide spectrum of views is derived from one person's ideas? Even if this may be assumed, do the different viewpoints between Serenus and others on human nature after the Fall have a common essence that can be captured in one concept? Hardly anyone would say yes. In order to be more convinced of this, we turn now to consider some other Cassian texts that teach of the present human nature without direct reference to the Fall. Moreover, the following analysis will help to see the wholeness of human essence after the Fall.

book & speaker	Character s	Scriptures	Main focus	Direct results of the Fall	Indirect results of the Fall on human race
<i>Institute XII:</i> Cassian	Lucifer	Ezekiel 28:11-18 Isaiah 14:12-14	-Lucifer' fall -pride	To Lucifer -ejection from heaven -adversary of God -lost his glory -expanded sins	-produced the weaknesses and all faults
<i>Conferences V:</i> Serapion	Adam Jesus (the second Adam)	Genesis 3	-gluttony -vainglory -pride	To Adam -destruction -death -condemnation	-the image and likeness of God marred -expelled virtues -death -condemnation on all humans -inherited sin -bondage of carnal lust
<i>Conferences VIII:</i> Serenus	Lucifer	Ezekiel 28:11-18 Isaiah 14:12-14 Genesis 3	-Lucifer's twice fall by pride & envy -watch on evil suggestions	To Lucifer -called a serpent -falling into the earth -everlasting curse -enmity with man -murder of Adam and Abel to Adam and Eve -toilsome labor -dependence on her husband	
<i>Conferences XXIII:</i> Theonas	Adam Serpent	Romans 7:19-23 Genesis 3	-interior struggle		-the law of sin implanted -incurable distractions -universal sinfulness -perpetual slavery to devil -bondage to death

Figure 3: Comparisons of the four texts on the Fall and its results

4.2 HUMAN NATURE AFTER THE FALL

In the general argument of the Fall, there is a tendency to pay attention to what man lost, or what the damages were, as we have seen. In addition to them, Cassian's texts went one step further by considering what was added to human nature, as it were, what God did for man after the Fall besides the judgment. To him, God was still working within humanity. In spite of the Fall, He initiated a saving process and directed it to its intended goal of man by providing new needs in the changed situation. Abba Chaeremon writes that "The Divine protection then is inseparably present with us, and so great is the kindness of the Creator towards His creatures, that His Providence not only accompanies it, but actually constantly precedes it."⁸⁷ We will then attempt to demonstrate what God did for fallen humanity.

4.2.1 *Institutes* VI and VII of Cassian: The Implanted Incitements to Sin

In *Institutes* VII, Cassian handles original sin carefully from a different angle and says "For the rest of the incitements to sin planted in human nature seem to have their commencement as it were congenital with us, and somehow being deeply rooted in our flesh, and almost coeval with our birth, anticipate our powers of discerning good and evil."⁸⁸ He verifies the existence of natural impulses in human

⁸⁷ *Conferences* XIII.8

⁸⁸ *Institutes* VII.1

nature by examples of innocent children and infants. Cassian points out that “For these carnal impulses, of which we spoke above, were with a useful purpose implanted in our bodies by the providence of the Creator.”⁸⁹ What belong to the useful ‘natural faults’ are anger enraged at our sins and mistakes, and the sexual impulses perpetuating the human race.

In *Institutes* VI, Cassian took up a topic of the sexual impulses that was a commonplace of monastic literature. These evidently caused anxiety for young monks unsure of their vocations and for older monks despairing of their progress toward perfect chastity. He classifies a feeling “the stings of the flesh in the form of a movement of nature,”⁹⁰ and nocturnal emissions during sleeping,⁹¹ as nature’s requirements. In relation to the male phenomenon of the latter, Cassian says, “Just as it is beyond nature to remove this completely and to cut it off permanently, so it is a scatter of the highest virtue to limit it to the unavoidable and very rare requirements of nature, which customarily strike the monk once every two months.”⁹² He points out that the number of times for seminal emission recedes from the view of the elder for monks of less experience. In *Conferences* II, allowing this discharge without perverse image as the law of nature, Abba Moses suggests doubly rigorous abstinence in the saying, “This pollution will not wet us more than three times a year.”⁹³ Abba Theonas in *Conferences* XII, attributes nocturnal emissions of monks in the state of purity to the needs of nature, or “nature is at work,” but declines comment on the number of times.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* VII.3

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* VI.4

⁹¹ *Ibid.* VI.20

⁹² *Ibid.* VI.20

⁹³ *Conferences* II.23

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* XII.8

Whereas Augustine regards sexual feeling as men now experience it to be a permanent penalty,⁹⁵ the Abbas jointly acknowledged that humans have certain natural desires that, at root, are indispensable and even mandatory, but legitimate. God has implanted the drives in each of us for fulfilling His intention. In *Institutes VII*, Cassian urges that the Planter cannot be blamed for human faults and that it is a human responsibility if that which is intended for good is turned to bad use, like the use of iron for either useful purposes, or for the murdering of the innocent.⁹⁶ Though calling them “faults”, he here reconciles them with the goodness of God’s creation. Moreover, he later defines the boundary between ‘the incitements to sin’ and ‘evil desires and actions’, that is to say, the possibility of sin and the performance of it. Through these attempts he might avoid facing a difficult question, as Augustine’s theory of total depravity does: ‘If we are born with ‘natural faults’, how can God hold us responsible for our sins?’

4.2.2 Conferences IV of Abba Daniel: The Implanted Conflict of Flesh and Spirit

In *Conferences IV* of Abba Daniel, the conflict of flesh and spirit derived from Galatians 5:17 is another useful act of Providence coming after the Fall. Firstly, he persuades his audience to believe the universality and origin of wrestling with two desires:

You have here too a contest as it were implanted in our bodies, by the action and arrangement of the Lord. For when a thing exists in everybody universally and

⁹⁵ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, pp. 388-9.

⁹⁶ *Institutes VII.4*

without the slightest exception, what else can you think about it except that it belongs to the substance of human nature, since the fall of the first man, as it were naturally: and when a thing is found to be congenial with everybody, and to grow with their growth, how can we help believing that it was implanted by the will of the Lord, not to injure them but to help them?⁹⁷

In the next breath, the audience is persuaded of the good function of this conflict: “the reason of this conflict; viz., of flesh and spirit, he tells us is this: “that ye should not do what ye would.” And so, if we fulfill what God arranged that we should not fulfill, i.e., that we should not do what we liked, how can we help believing that it is bad for us?”⁹⁸ Humanity after the Fall lies in the natural condition of not being able to work at one’s own will. Daniel draws a conclusion announcing its usefulness and God’s intention: “this conflict... is in a way useful to us, and calls and urges us on to a higher state: and if it ceased, most surely there would ensue on the other hand a peace that is fraught with danger.”⁹⁹ To Daniel, the concept of flesh means carnal will and evil desires, just as that of spirit refers to the good and spiritual desires of the soul.¹⁰⁰ Not only the former “dragged into unbridled licence,” but also the latter “drawn on to unreasonable aspirations after holiness” are dangerous for inclining to its own excess.¹⁰¹ As the result of the coexistence of two desires proceeding in opposite directions in one man, “there arises an internal warfare daily carried on within us.”¹⁰² In this conflict, the free will that Daniel pointed out as “what ye would” occupies an intermediate position

⁹⁷ *Conferences IV.7*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid. IV.7*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid. IV.11: uoluntatem carnis et desideria pessima; animae desideria bona et spiritalia.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid. IV.12*

¹⁰² *Ibid. IV.11*

between flesh and spirit. But he negatively describes the will in Chapter 12: “somewhat worthy of blame... more dangerous free will of the soul... the languid choice of our free will... this sluggish will.” Pursuing comfortably future blessings without a price, the will is effete and indecisive and then plunges us into a most miserable condition of lukewarmness, which makes one subject to the Lord’s rebuke in the Apocalypse 3:16: “But now thou art lukewarm, and I will forthwith spue thee out of my mouth.” To prevent and destroy this detestable condition, God wisely implanted the conflict of the flesh and the spirit in us. In addition to that, an additional result was to act an advantageous delay of what we want.¹⁰³ Through this daily struggle within us, we are finally driven most beneficially to come to that fourth stage in which “we should do what we would not” over “what we would”. In this stage, the conflicts are balanced between both dangerous excesses, then a due equilibrium “opens to us a safe and secure path of virtue between the two, and teaches the soldier of Christ ever to walk on the King’s highway.”¹⁰⁴ Later, for reaffirmation of the value of the conflict, Daniel demonstrates its extreme usefulness by pointing out a difference between the nature of man and that of devils. The reason that devils are in a worse plight than men is that they do not have a natural faculty of salutary second thoughts which delay the speedy carrying out of wicked intention.¹⁰⁵ Hence their depravity is said to be incurable.

As indicated above, Daniel’s teachings on human will and nature after the Fall are remarkable in the following points: The human will after the Fall is effete, sluggish, indecisive between the dangerous evil desires of the flesh and the good, but potentially dangerous desires of spirit. The will, Chadwick noted, possesses no perfect liberty of choice since it is affected continuously by the war of flesh and

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* IV.13

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* IV.12

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* IV.14

spirit.¹⁰⁶ Through these faculties the monks are helpless to sustain an ascetic way of life, which we do not always want. In order to support this inadequate condition God installs the conflict between the desires of flesh and spirit into human nature. Man's nature after the Fall has been created with a new faculty in addition to the desires of goodness and evil, and the will. Behind his assertion that the fourth stage resulted from the conflict, there lies a deep sense of movement of the human interior realm. Whence then did the Abba draw his teaching? If one expects to find anything corresponding to the Pelagian controversy in the West in Daniel's peculiar understanding of the human condition after the Fall, one comes to know that Daniel did not lean to any side of the dilemma, namely the side of Augustine and the side of Pelagius. And yet, his ideas decline to fall into a neutral zone, which we call the middle category in opposition to both Pelagius and Augustine. Both sides have one point in common: the character of human nature can not be metamorphosed, but fixed at particular times, to the former, on the condition of total disintegration of goodness immediately after the Fall, or to the latter, on the pure condition without congenital fault such as Adam before the Fall. In the theology of both, there is no suggestion that God inserts any special faculty into man's nature to choose the good by himself after the Fall. That his ideas were unaffected by the Pelagian controversy, is confirmed in the comparison between *Conference IV* and Rufinus' Latin translation of Origen's *De Principiis* III.4. Though there is no literal dependence between the two works, Haag wrote, the following ideas are basically common to both Origen and Cassian: the position of the will of the soul between the flesh and the spirit; the exegesis of Galatian 5:17; the meaning of flesh as evil desires; the three categories of men- spiritual, animal ("*homo animalis*"), and carnal; and the detestable state of the lukewarm man who

¹⁰⁶ Quoted from Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 114.

is worse off than the carnal man.¹⁰⁷ By all counts, the most credible, acceptable view is that Daniel developed Origen's exposition with his ascetical practices.

4.2.3 Conferences XIII of Abba Chaeremon: An Added Knowledge of Evil and the Implanted Nature *virtus*

We now arrive at the most controversial book in Cassian's works, *Conferences XIII* of Abba Chaeremon. His views on the consequences of the Fall are novel in comparison with the other Abbas', because of his particular assertion about free will. Before clarifying his views we need to make a few preliminary points, since his discourse cannot be rightly understood unless it is read as a whole, as I have sketched the context in Chapter 2, and moreover, without an understanding of the doctrinal position of the desert fathers within the Eastern theological milieu. Nevertheless, Chaeremon's views on free will and grace have not been studied from the perspective of their relation to other theologians in the East, but rather from their relation to Augustine and Pelagianism. In this regard, Cassian's position on the thirteenth *Conference* has for centuries been divided into three categories:

Firstly, it is semi-Pelagianist smelling heresy, 'a disguise dictated by reluctance to attack Augustine openly'. O. Chadwick comments on it; "a controversial piece of writing containing Cassian's famous opposition to Augustine."¹⁰⁸ The first registered critics on this *Conference* were two lay admirers of Augustine in Southern Gaul, Prosper of Aquitaine and Hilary. In 428, one or two years after Cassian composed his second set of *Conferences*, Augustine received two letters

¹⁰⁷ Modestus Haag, "A Precarious Balance: Flesh and Spirit in Cassian's Works," *American Benedictine Review* 19 (1968): 183.

¹⁰⁸ O. Chadwick, "Euladius of Arles," *Journal of Theological Studies* 46(1945), 201.

from both of them, complementing each other.¹⁰⁹ In the letters, what they reported are epitomised in the following way: (1) “Remainders of Pelagianism” at Marseilles and elsewhere in Southern Gaul accepted original sin and the necessity of grace, but asserted that men began their turning to God, and God helped their beginning. (2) They admit that all men are sinners, and that they derive their sin from Adam; that they can by no means recover themselves by their own free will, but need God’s assisting grace; and that this grace is gratuitous in the sense that men cannot really deserve it. (3) But they objected to the doctrines of prevenience and of irresistible grace; and asserted that man could initiate the process of salvation by turning first to God, that all men could resist God’s grace, and no grace could be given which they could not reject. (4) In particular, they denied that the gifts of grace came irrespective of merits, actual or foreseen.¹¹⁰

Extracting some expressions from Cassian’s *Conferences XIII*, Prosper and Hilary viewed them as a sufficiently dangerous challenge to Augustine’s predestinarian views. This hypothesis was put forward without any circumspection of the textual, and doctrinal context, and then has been repeated by everyone throughout the centuries as if they had been demonstrated.

Secondly, it is semi-Augustinianism giving a nuance of almost orthodox, that is, a mitigated Augustinianism,¹¹¹ or anti-Pelagianism directly attacking not Augustine’s, but Pelagian’s views. Markus, a proponent of this view, insists that it is not at all obvious that *Conferences XIII* is essentially an act within the theological controversy of semi-Pelagianism, but purports to be an attack on Pelagian views.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ *Epp.* 225 and 226.

¹¹⁰ See for the Augustine’s introduction on the teachings of them, *On the Predestination of the Saints* 2.

¹¹¹ A. Hamman suggested this position, “VIII. The Writers of Goal: John Cassian,” in *Patrology*, p. 522.

¹¹² Cf. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 177-9.

Thirdly, the last position is 'Cassianism,' or 'Massilianism,' the new terms suggested by Rea to convey Cassian's catholic position.¹¹³ He asserts that Cassian as an excellent critical theologian was trying to bring correctives to innovative abuses of both Pelagianism and Augustinianism by the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church.¹¹⁴

Were these beliefs, which are attributed to *Conferences XIII*, substantially correct or did they distort Cassian's position? The three categories have in common the fact that they link this *Conference* to the Pelagian controversy, and that their grounds are a lack of belief in Cassian's claim that his primary purpose was to propagate the teachings of the desert fathers, who had no connection with Pelagians appeared later. None of these positions, then, are coincidental with his assertion. This fact assigns a burdensome task to those of us who defend the authenticity of Cassian's works. I have not yet met anyone who takes Cassian's statement at face value, and simultaneously offers evidence that Chaeremon's discourse on free will and grace concurs, or at least is grounded in the Eastern pre-Augustinian tradition, since Cassian persisted in the delivery of the desert tradition, not his own theology. So far no one has attempted to consider the relationship of *Conferences XIII* with the Eastern theological context, because of, in my opinion, the absence of comparative materials. It is my intention here to take a look back over the desert context.

Firstly, we may consider here a question: Were the issues of original sin and predestinarianism the exclusive possessions of Western Augustinianism? In answer

¹¹³ Rea, "Grace and Free Will," 217-8.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 219. Rea notes that Cassian called Pelagianism "foolish and sacrilegious" (*Conferences III.16*) or "heresy" (*De. Inc. I.4*), and Augustinianism a "great sacrilege" (*Conferences XIII.7*).

to this, we should track an unpleasant history in Eastern Christianity with the Gnostic concepts of determinism, election, and the free will and grace for over two centuries before Augustine. According to Pétrement, the Gnostics opposed the idea of free will found in Stoicism and Judaism, in which the will of everyone suffices to be saved or lost according to every person's choice to obey the Law, the universal moral Law or the Mosaic Law. In this case, then, one does not need a savior.¹¹⁵ By contrast, like the Platonic idea, "the Gnostics almost always conclude that humanity is not naturally free; that it is not naturally capable of moving toward the good, nor above all of knowing it, unless one is enlightened by a supernatural revelation, which is a grace provided by the Savior." ¹¹⁶ Their thoughts on grace progressed to the notion that freed people are predestined to salvation, and as a necessary consequence of that, others are predestined to damnation, not by the free choice of their will, but as a result of the nature with which they were created. Langerbeck states, "Predestination and the problem of faith are not just a Gnostic theme, but the fundamental theme of Gnosticism."¹¹⁷ Among these Gnostic groups definitely to be thought of as the most popular and attractive Gnostic scheme Valentinianism should be mentioned. Valentinus, one of the most learned and imaginative of the Christian thinkers of the second century, born in Egypt and educated in Alexandria, definitely believed in election and predestination. He taught that "Therefore we are elected to salvation and redemption since we are predestined from the beginning not to fall into the foolishness of those who are without knowledge."¹¹⁸ The elect rely on grace and "knowledge", whose object is Christ, but the rest remain inescapably what they are. Valentinians distinguished three sorts of "natures": (1) the "pneumatic" nature,

¹¹⁵ Pétrement, *A Separate God*, p. 208.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 203. Quoted from *Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, 78.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 190. Quoted from Valentinus, *Treatise on the Resurrection* 46, 24-29.

that is the spiritual, of those who are the elect, the Gnostics had “knowledge” and are “sown” in the world by God or by Christ or the Spirit, and will necessarily be saved, whatever their acts; (2) the “psychical” nature, that of those who do not have “knowledge” but who at least have faith, a nature characterized by the soul breathed into Adam by the Demiurge [the creating sin], and will have free will and according to their choices and works might or might not be saved. In the *Tripartite Treatise* the psychics also seem to be as determined by their nature as the materials and the spirituals are. Depending on their origins, they are converted or not converted; and (3) the “hylic” nature, that is the carnal and material, of those who will be incapable of receiving knowledge or even faith, and cannot therefore be saved.¹¹⁹ The Marcionist, as Origen confuted, also asserts that a man’s nature is predestined either good, or a “spiritual nature,” or evil, or an “earthly nature.”¹²⁰ Rejecting this Gnostic stratification of humanity, Irenaeus insisted that “all men are of the same nature, able both to hold fast and to do what is good, and, on the other hand, having also the power to cast it from them and not to do it.”¹²¹ Following Irenaeus, Clement and Origen reproached the Gnostics for denying human freedom, Pagels notes, and “become instrumental in developing the counter-theory of *autexousia*, “free will,” along with philosophic arguments for the universality of human freedom, to contradict the Gnostics’ alleged ‘determinism’.”¹²² According to Jerome’s statement, a disciple of Valentinus called Candidus, in a dialogue with Origen, says that the devil is of a nature destined to damnation. Origen replies that it is not one’s nature that decides one’s salvation or

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 189, 196. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.6.1. For the outline of teachings of the Valentinians, see Introduction of Jean-Pierre Mahé, *Tertullien, La chair du Christ* (Sources Chrétiennes 216), Paris, 1975.

¹²⁰ Tsirpanlis, “Origen,” pp. 102-3.

¹²¹ Irenaeus, *Hear.* 4.37.2

¹²² Elaine H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon’s Commentary on John*, p. 110.

damnation, but the free choice of the will in accepting or refusing grace.¹²³ Origen often refuted predestination. He “could admit neither election nor reprobation. If, he argues, God predestines only those whom He foreknows, it follows that He does not foreknow whom He does not predestine. This is absurd. We are compelled therefore to drop the proposition.”¹²⁴ To Origen, “God’s action is always good and just, and it is our response to it which determines its action upon us and our perception of that action. This implies a relationship between God and man which allows for both a God of unchanging goodness, and a life of freedom for man.”¹²⁵

In the fourth century, Gnosticism was still in existence in the Egyptian monasteries, and its writings proliferated throughout the countries, as the Nag Hammadi library itself attests. It is now widely acknowledged that these codices were probably gathered, bound toward the middle of the fourth century, and ultimately buried by the Pachomian monks.¹²⁶ In a text by Abba Shenute of Atripe, who entered monastic life around 370, the abbot criticized unorthodox beliefs and practices, such as those of the Meletians, the Gnostic avoidance of the Eucharist, a heretical group mixing the Eucharist with an ordinary, profane meal, and the Manichaeans.¹²⁷ He paid special attention to the “bad faith of Manes”,¹²⁸ and erroneous opinions of local Christians, in particular their belief that the body does not rise, which was similar to that of certain Gnostics.¹²⁹ In the *Apophthegmata*,

¹²³ Crouzel, *Origen*, p. 21. Cf. Jerome, *Apology against Rufinus*, II.19. Jerome reproached of the interpretation of Scripture of Marcion and Basilides and other heretics in *Commentary on Galatians* 1.1.2 (PL 26.386).

¹²⁴ Charles Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, 1913, pp. 243-4. Cf. *First principles* III, 1, 13, 17, 20, 21.

¹²⁵ Tsirpanlis, “Origen,” p. 103.

¹²⁶ Cf. John Barns, “Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Covers of the Nag Hammadi Codices,” in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts*, 1975; James E. Goehring, “New Frontiers in Pachomian Studies”; Armand Veilleux, “Monasticism and Gnosis in Egypt,” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, (ed. Birger A. Pearson & James E. Goehring).

¹²⁷ Janet Timbie, “The State of Research on the Career of Shenoute of Atripe,” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, pp. 265-7.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 267.

¹²⁹ Veilleux, “Monasticism and Gnosis in Egypt,” pp. 282-3.

we find two anecdotes related to the Manichaeans: first, a monk acts to convert a Manichean to orthodoxy,¹³⁰ and second, according to Amma Theodora, a Christian advises a Manichean to correct the idea of body: “Give the body discipline and you will see that the body is for him who made it.”¹³¹ We must also add to the evidence Epiphanius’ testimony of the existence of the Coptic Gnostic communities,¹³² and the biblical commentaries of Didymus the Blind in which reference is made to the Valentinians. Some of his passages address the question of whether human action arises from one’s nature or constitution or from one’s purposive choice.¹³³ He was also preoccupied with writings on Manichaeism, one of the branches issuing from Gnosticism, in which determinism comes to the fore. In the tractate *Against the Manichaeans*, Didymus “argues with them about the nature of angels-and in particular the devil, whom he claims to have been created and to have become evil of his own will. Against them, he defends Providence, God’s creative activity, human freedom.”¹³⁴ In the same age, Abba Serapion of Thmuis, the friend of Athanasius and a favourite disciple of Antony, wrote a full-fledged refutation of Manichaean doctrine.¹³⁵ He asserts that the Manichaean ethical system eliminates or weakens moral responsibility by its assumption that evil like good has a real substantial existence and that its appearance in human life is due to the mixture of two dissimilar substances in the constitution of man.¹³⁶ Against this view Serapion repeatedly maintains throughout his treatise that man is by nature good and that

¹³⁰ The Greek anonymous series of *Apophthegmata Patrum*, 289.

¹³¹ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Theodora 4.

¹³² Cf. footnote 50.

¹³³ *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 20.30. Cf. Byard Bennett, “Didymus the Blind’s Knowledge of Manichacism,” in *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and its World*, ed. by Paul Mirecki & Jason Beduhn, 2001, pp. 60-2.

¹³⁴ Quoted from Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, “The Manichaean Challenge to Egyptian Christianity,” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, pp. 317-8.

¹³⁵ Stroumsa, *ibid.* p. 312; and cf. Robert Pierce Casey, ed., *Serapion of Thmuis, ‘Against the Manichees’*, 1931.

¹³⁶ Casey, *ibid.* Introduction, p. 21.

evil is behavior dictated by a free, voluntary assent given when the act is performed, so no man can escape from this responsibility and its consequences.¹³⁷ Like Augustine's milieu in northern Latin Africa, the above monastic criticism of the Gnostics and Manichaeism provides a clearer picture of their activity and constant threat to Egyptian orthodox Christianity in the fourth and fifth century. Taking the above into consideration, what I am proposing is that the underdeveloped Eastern doctrines on original sin, election, and predestination may be partly attributed to Gnostic determinism. As a natural reflex action, it seems that the fathers place the centre of gravity in free will rather than grace. Even though this opinion has rarely been suggested, it is not impossible that it may be right when one reflects on the way in which these doctrines were open to censure in the West. Composed about the turn to the fifth century, the unknown author of *De induratione cordis Pharaonis* refutes those who "try to introduce the teaching of fate under the color of grace" that is, Catholic Christians of a predestinarian ilk.¹³⁸ Later, Julian of Eclanum affixed the opprobrious name of Manicheans on those who asserted original sin, repeatedly accused Augustine, a repentant Manichee, of having borrowed his views on the theory from his former heresy.¹³⁹ Moreover, he argued that the corruption of nature, which Augustine taught, was nothing other than Manicheism; and his doctrine of predestination was mere fatalism.¹⁴⁰ Some Marseillians and Southern Gaulians also said that what Augustine taught as to the calling of God's elect according to His own purpose was tantamount to fatalism and was contrary to the teaching of the fathers and the true Church doctrine.¹⁴¹ The newly elaborated Augustinianism on election and

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, p. 212. Quoting *De induratione cordis Pharaonis* 53:2.

¹³⁹ *Sermon 153; Against Julian I; On Marriage and Concupiscence* ii. 34 ff.

¹⁴⁰ cf. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, iii.24

¹⁴¹ Augustine, *Epistle 225 and 226.*

predestination were a novelty for many Gallic monks who had been moulded by the tradition of the desert fathers, and who considered the Eastern tradition to be authoritative. Weaver points out that it “was not the same tradition to which Augustine had generally appealed; certainly it was not reconcilable with the one that he had attempted to construct.”¹⁴² While Augustine had a wrestling bout with novel forms of Pelagianism that inclined entirely toward human free will, he “had resolved the paradox of inevitability and responsibility at the expense of responsibility, and that he glorified grace by belittling nature and free will.”¹⁴³ On the other hand, the Eastern counterparts defended the traditional formulation against the Gnostics inclined toward fatalism. They coincidentally emphasized two options in the doctrine of salvation: that man depends absolutely upon divine providence, and that his will has responsibility for choice between good and evil. These truths appeared incompatible in Origen. In the *First principles*, he pointed out Paul’s contradicting statements concerning free will, such as II Timothy 2:21, which implied that all power was in man’s hands, and Romans 9:21 that all was in God’s hand. Origen advocated combining the statements, and drawing a single conclusion from the two, “that is, that we are not to think that the things which are in the power of our will can be performed without the help of God, nor those which are in God’s hands can be brought to completion apart from our acts and earnest endeavors and purpose.”¹⁴⁴ This is the position of *Conferences XIII*. In the closing chapter 18, to convince his readers of his orthodoxy, Chaeremon leads them to encounter and make a comparison with a summary of the tradition attributed to all the Catholic fathers:

¹⁴² Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*, p. 69.

¹⁴³ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, p. 320.

¹⁴⁴ *First principles*, III, 19, 24.

the first stage in the Divine gift is for each man to be inflamed with the desire of everything that is good, but in such a way that the choice of free will is open to either side: and that the second stage in Divine grace is for the aforesaid practices of virtue to be able to be performed, but in such a way that the possibilities of the will are not destroyed: the third stage also belongs to the gifts of God, so that it may be held by the persistence of the goodness already acquired, and in such a way that the liberty may not be surrendered and experience bondage.¹⁴⁵

Chaeremon was a protector of the tradition which kept the paradoxical truths of free will and grace in equilibrium without disparaging either. He closes his discourse by saying: “for how God works all things in us and yet everything can be ascribed to free will, cannot be fully grasped by the mind and reason of man.”¹⁴⁶ In this ending, he obviously reviews the point which he has endeavoured to avoid, forcing two side formulas within the confines of one. Chaeremon, then, strayed with respect to an inscrutable mystery, as he found it hard to convince his audience of the relationship between human responsibility and divine grace.

With a consideration of this theological milieu, we turn now to consider the thoughts of Chaeremon with regard to the results of the Fall. In the chapter 6, he says, “it can be shown that men always have need of God’s help, and that human weakness cannot accomplish anything that has to do with salvation by itself alone.”¹⁴⁷ Finally, he concludes the chapter by asserting that God internally inspires holy desires and externally grants opportunities for their execution. As a summary of chapters 1-8, it is an affirmation that all merit in this salvation is God’s and the believer has no right to glory in it. Being absolutely dependent upon

¹⁴⁵ *Conferences* XIII.18

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* XIII.18

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* XIII.6

grace, he never minimized the meaning of grace, and possessed its full Augustinian sense, which asserts an interior working of God within the soul. The same judgment has already been issued by Augustine himself in *On the Predestination of the Saints*. He begins with a careful discrimination of the position of his new Gallic opponents, and writes that they have made a right beginning in that God's grace leads men's wills, and without grace no one's good deeds can suffice.¹⁴⁸ Augustine points out that these things will provide a good starting-point for their progress toward an acceptance of predestination (1-2). The first question that needs discussion in such circumstances is whether God gives the very beginnings of faith (3 sq.), or man's initiative does. Augustine insists that the position of the latter is no other than the Pelagian assertion of grace according to merit (3). The principal criterion in Augustine's own doctrinal judgment rests precisely on the following point: Does fallen man, in and of himself have an initiative for salvation without the preparatory grace, as before one can find God, he must first desire to seek Him? If it is so, what is Chaeremon's view on the very beginnings of faith? The answer is connected directly with our judgment of his view on the human condition after the Fall. In chapter 3, he asserts:

the initiative not only of our actions but also of good thoughts comes from God, who inspires us with a good will to begin with, and supplies us with the opportunity of carrying out what we rightly desire: for "every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights," [James 1:17] who both begins what is good, and continues it and completes it in us.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ For this summary I am dependent upon B. B. Warfield, *Introductory Essay on Augustin and the Pelagian Controversy*.

¹⁴⁹ *Conferences XIII.3*

The origin of good acts, good thoughts and good will came from God. The initiative and opportunity for salvation lie within God's grace. Human weakness by itself can accomplish nothing for salvation. In chapter 7, Chaeremon claims that: "when His goodness sees in us even the very smallest spark of good will shining forth, which He Himself has struck as it were out of the hard flints of our hearts, He fans and fosters it and nurses it with His breath."¹⁵⁰ The good will is sparked in us by God, "even against our will"¹⁵¹ to return to God. In the following chapter, Chaeremon continues that God enlightens, implants the beginnings of a good will, inspires us with holy desires, creates opportunities for good results, and shows the direction of the way of salvation.¹⁵² Had he stopped here, Augustine's two works, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* and *the De dono perseverantiae* and the Semi-Pelagian controversy would not have existed in history. At this point, as Augustine pointed out, from this good starting-point to be able to proceed onto subjects like predestination or election, the Abba quickly moved to why God grants such great kindness towards His creatures, even against the human will. Citing and accepting at face value 1 Timothy 2:4 he states that God wills the salvation all without exception, and says, "if He willeth not that one of His little ones should perish [Matt. 18:14], how can we imagine without grievous blasphemy that He does not generally will all men, but only some instead of all to be saved? Those then who perish, perish against His will."¹⁵³ In this regard, Rea stated that Cassian clearly refutes Augustine's predestinarian view. Augustine was concerned to explain away these same passages several times, saying that:

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* XIII.7

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* XIII.7

¹⁵² *Ibid.* XIII.8

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* XIII.7

And what is written, that “He wills all men to be saved,” while yet all men are not saved, may be understood in many ways, some of which I have mentioned in other writings of mine; but here I will say one thing: “He wills all men to be saved,” is so said that all the predestinated may be understood by it, because every kind of men is among them.¹⁵⁴

In comparison with both hermeneutical principles, it is certain that Chaeremon’s is distinct from Augustine’s. If the former is consistent with the latter, his audience might view the thirteenth *Conferences* as a departure from the teaching of the fathers. Chaeremon’s reproach of “great sacrilegiousness” which God only wills the salvation of some, and eternal loss of the reprobate is a reasonable dialectic in the Eastern view. Here, one may raise the vexing question: Is this disdain aimed against Augustine, or others who generated a dispute with this issue in the East? An accurate comparison of the details of Augustine’s comment with Chaeremon’s is needed. Whereas the focus of the latter is on God, that of the former is on men, in particular, on the cause and effect at salvation. Moreover, Augustine mentioned a single predestination of the elect to eternal life. In this sense, Chaeremon’s reproach is not genuinely aimed against Augustine. It becomes more obvious by the following additional evidence. In order to refute the Valentinian myth of pre-cosmic double predestinarian election, Origen maintains that it is not the “will of God” to elect some and reject others¹⁵⁵ since God has created all beings equal and identical, and gives to them the power to constitute itself through free will. In this milieu, emphasis on it was fundamental to the preaching of salvation through Christ as open to all. In the concluding remark, Chaeremon declares in the same

¹⁵⁴ *De correptione et gratia*, 44. Cf. *The Enchiridion*, c. 103; *City of God*, xxii. 1, 2. *Against Julian*, iv. 8.

¹⁵⁵ Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis*, p. 111. Cf. Origen, *Commentarium in Johannis Frag.* 45.11.

manner that “God the Father of all things worketh indifferently all things in all”¹⁵⁶ He shrewdly supports his assertion in Christ’s universal calling in Matthew 11:28, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” If He did not call all, then there would be no equality with regard to heavy burdens, original or actual sin, and death did not pass on all men.¹⁵⁷ Here, Cassian’s readers might be again embarrassed by his quotations that seem to connote his opposition to Augustine. In fact, the term “*peccatum originale*”, which the Abba used in the sense of a sinful state which affects man from his origin, appears for the first time in Augustine’s writings, although it had many precedents in other terms.¹⁵⁸ Besides, he cites Romans 5:12 in which Augustine, during the Pelagian controversy, based his doctrine of original sin.¹⁵⁹ It might be irrational to place metaphysical weight on these words in passing, but we should resolve two issues for the judgment that Cassian was conscious of departing from Augustine’s views on Pelagianism. With regard to Romans 5:12 Chaeremon notes, without mention of Adam, only the phrase: “death passed on all men.” Universal mortality was an important issue in the Pelagian controversy. In *Institutes* III.3, Cassian asserts that death is a penalty attached to prohibition in Eden. One may question what God means by death. Surely not immediate dissolution of the body, for Adam lived many years after the Fall. To slip between the horns of the dilemma, there has been the consideration

¹⁵⁶ *Conferences* XIII.18

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* XIII.7

¹⁵⁸ *Questiones ad Simplicianum* I, 1, 10 (PL 40, 106). Cf. DTC 12.1.317-406.

¹⁵⁹ The meaning of the phrase εφ ω in Rom, 5:12 has been much debated. The debate is usually centered the question of whether it refers to an individual sin or to corporate sin in Adam. A decision still needs to be made whether it means (a) because all sinned personally or (b) because all sinned in Adam when he sinned. Augustine understood ‘εφ ω’, (because) ‘in quo’ of the Latin translation as meaning “in whom,” since the Latin mistranslated the Greek at this point. What is worse, Augustine did not find *mors* as the subject of *pertransiit* in his Bible. Consequently, he assumed that *peccatum* was the subject because such an emendation fitted beautifully into the opinion he already had formed.” Accordingly, his understanding of the final clause in verse 12 was that we were actually “in Adam,” and therefore Adam’s sin was ours as well. Cf. Herbert Haag, *Is Original Sin in Scripture?*, trans. by Dorothy Thompson, 101; Augustine, *A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and the Baptism of infants* 1:9; 3.14.

that they died spiritually but not physically on the day that they sinned. The Pelagian view is that humans were created mortal, and then the principle of death and decay is a part of the whole of creation.¹⁶⁰ Physical death is a natural part of being human, and therefore not within the power of any human being to choose or reject. For the Pelagius, the biblical references to death as a consequence of sin are understood as references to spiritual death, separation from God, rather than physical death. Later, his follower, Julian of Eclanum, says Adam began to die morally and spiritually from the day he chose to sin.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, Augustine refutes the other side, and asserts not only spiritual death, but also physical. In fact the Scriptures do not recognise the distinction, so common among controversialists, between a physical and a spiritual death. Treating the death as the result of the Fall in several places,¹⁶² Cassian does not discuss the issue against Pelagian's teachings, or in favour of Augustine's proposal. His references to death are to be understood as references to just death. He clearly did not have the doctrines of both sides on death in his mind when he wrote his works.

Another vexatious problem is whether the Eastern fathers used the term, original sin, or whether Cassian merely adopted it from Augustine. It is a widely accepted view that original sin is alien to the Eastern fathers. Nevertheless, two faithful followers of Origen's theology, Gregory of Nyssa and Didymus the Blind, provide important clues. In *The Life of Moses*, the former notes in passing that the human body was given as the result of original sin.¹⁶³ In the latter's case, in the context of anti-Manichaean polemics Didymus forced upon him a much more precise wording on original sin—a doctrine then in the making—than that of earlier

¹⁶⁰ Augustine, *A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and the Baptism of Infants*, 1.2-9.

¹⁶¹ Augustine, *Opus Imperfectum Contra Iulianum*, 4,40; 6,30.

¹⁶² *Institutes* III.3, *Conferences* V.6, VIII.25, and XVIII.16.

¹⁶³ *The Life of Moses*, II. 224.

theologians like Athanasius.¹⁶⁴ In *Against the Manichaeans*, annotating the phrase in Romans 8:3 that God sent his Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” Didymus used the phrase “sin by succession”:

Again, if [Jesus] had assumed a body from sexual intercourse, being in no way different, he would have thought to be liable to that sin to which are all who are from Adam by succession... since the sexual intercourse of Adam and Eve took place after the sin, therefore it is called sinful flesh.¹⁶⁵

For Didymus, because of the Fall, Adam had received a material body, which was then inherited by all men through his having had sexual intercourse with Eve. He points out that all marriages had been sinful before Christ, who removes sin from marriage.¹⁶⁶ Here, Didymus no longer unfolds the issue of the transmission of sin to babies born by the legitimacy of marriage in Christ. This case indicates that the desert monks were not unfamiliar with inherited sin. In comparison, Chaeremon’s view of original sin, distinct from the very Origenist idea of the second creation of the material body after the Fall, shares with Didymus the fact that it did not carry much speculative weight. Hence, if I am right in trying to link *Conferences XIII* to Eastern theology, then we might suggest that Chaeremon’s discourse reflects the desert fathers’ milieu against Manichaeism and Gnosticism, not later Western Augustinianism and Pelagianism.

¹⁶⁴ In the Athanasius’ writings, we meet expressions that bespeak a nearer approach to the doctrine of original sin. In one passage he says, “Before we were, we were subject to the curse of the law and to corruption.” (*C. Arian. II. 14*) Cf. F. R. Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, pp. 310-4.

¹⁶⁵ *Against the Manichaeans* 8.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; and cf. Didymus, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 5:8-11.

Turning to the details of who takes the initiative at the beginnings of a good will, we find that Chaeremon further specified that the beginning of the good will could have its source either in divine grace or in human effort alone, thus showing him to be estranged from the Augustinians. From the final part of chapter 8 to 11, Chaeremon juxtaposes Biblical passages that “the grace of God and free will seem opposed to each other.”¹⁶⁷ For him, the Scriptures teach both truths that sometimes God actually “calls those who resist and stand afar off, draws men against their will to salvation,”¹⁶⁸ sometimes He sees one asking, seeking, and knocking with antecedent good will, and then guides and strengthens towards salvation. Chaeremon presents the following age-old question to his readers, “does God have compassion upon us because we have shown the beginning of a good will, or does the beginning of a good will follow because God has had compassion upon us?”¹⁶⁹ He helps them toward the answer by showing the apparently contradictory materials; (1) For example in the conversion of Paul or of Matthew, the beginnings of a good will clearly come from God’s grace. (2) But in other cases, such as Zacchaeus or the thief on the cross, the beginning of salvation comes from good will arising prior to grace, then the attainment of saving grace. He concludes, “we ought to have both alike, lest if we withdraw one of them from man, we may seem to have broken the rule of the Church’s faith.”¹⁷⁰ Chaeremon’s attitude toward Biblical interpretation is analogous to that of Origen’s; as I have mentioned, they sought a balance between grace and human will. It presents a contrast to Augustine, who formulated his system of exegesis according to the principle of prevenient grace. With regard to Zacchaeus, Augustine says, “Zacchaeus was seen, and saw; but unless he had been seen, he would not have seen. For ‘whom He

¹⁶⁷ *Conferences* XIII.11

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* XIII.9

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* XIII.11

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* XIII.11

predestinated, them also He called.’ ”¹⁷¹ Pelikan notes that Cassian “did not want to reduce the complex and diverse operations of God to a single formula, such as Pelagian synergism or Augustinian predestinarianism. God’s calls were varied, as those whom called were varied.”¹⁷² In Chapter 12, Chaeremon objects that either “one can never will or be capable of what is good,”¹⁷³ or “our salvation rests with our faith, according to the profane notion of some who attribute everything to free will.”¹⁷⁴ He warns, “a good will should not always be attributed to grace, nor always to man himself... we must take care not to refer all the merits of the saints to the Lord in such a way as to ascribe nothing but what is evil and perverse to human nature.”¹⁷⁵ Chaeremon makes a conscious effort to harmonize two the propositions of free will and God’s grace within the Scriptures from Chapter 12 to 16, and tries to achieve his intended purpose in presenting the biblical grounds.

Chaeremon argues that after the Fall there still remained the capacity to initiate the will for salvation, saying, “it may be still clearer that through the excellence of nature which is granted by the goodness of the Creator, sometimes first beginnings of a good will arise.”¹⁷⁶ Citing Genesis 3:22: “Behold, Adam is become as one of us, knowing good and evil,” and Ecclesiastes 7:29: “God made man upright,” he asserts the following faculty of Adam after the Fall: “conceived a knowledge of evil which he had not previously, but did not lose the knowledge of good which he had before.”¹⁷⁷ His descendants too had not been deprived of the knowledge of good, but added a knowledge of evil the same as Adam. How can we square this statement of human good nature with his former assertion that man has original

¹⁷¹ *Sermon 174.*

¹⁷² Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, vol. 1*, p. 324.

¹⁷³ *Conferences XIII.12*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid. XIII.16*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid. XIII.12*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid. XIII.9*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid. XIII.12*

sin? How can we understand that both original sin and goodness, good and evil dwell in human nature? Though he asserts that the will has been injured by the Fall, Chaeremon does not take seriously the meaning of original sin, as Origen and Didymus did with inherited sin. Moreover, Chaeremon pronounces that fallen humanity has the capacity for free will:

That freedom of the will is to some degree in a man's own power is very clearly taught in the book termed the Shepherd of Hermas,¹⁷⁸ where two angels are said to be attached to each one of us, i.e., a good and a bad one, while it lies at a man's own option to choose which to follow. And therefore the will always remains free in man, and can either neglect or delight in the grace of God.¹⁷⁹

For Chaeremon, human free will has indeed been damaged by the Fall, at least to the degree that it is now feeble. The power of choice is not annihilated, nor is it completely impotent spiritually and morally to the degree that one is unable to turn to God, or to reject Christ. We have a natural faculty to judge between good and evil, and to choose between the contrary proposals of a good and a bad angel. Here Augustine's doctrines of total depravity, of the will's moral inability to incline itself to good or to God, and of irresistible grace are dismissed. He writes, "when man by his own free will sinned, then sin being victorious over him, the freedom of his will was lost."¹⁸⁰ Since the will is annihilated, spiritually dead, only the

¹⁷⁸ Athanasius says: "There are other books besides these not included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. The Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Ester, Judith, Tobit and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles and the Shepherd. (*Festal Letters, Syriac Text.* 39:7) He, then, classed "The Shepherd" as a secondary rank serving only for instructing the catechumens, but not as Scripture. (Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. IV, p. 54; *Defence of the Nicene Council* 4) The final settlement of the scriptural canon did not take place until 692 in the Eastern Church. Cf. Canon 2 of the Quinisext Council; an English text can be found in *NPNF*. 2d series, 14:361.

¹⁷⁹ *Conferences* XIII.12

¹⁸⁰ *The Enchiridion* 30.

sovereign grace, and the divine initiative is a necessary precondition for faith, so that the sinner comes to believe. In Chaeremon's view his key deference with Augustine was which of the two factors, the will and grace, takes the initiative at the beginning of salvation. Whereas the former asserts both monergism and synergism,¹⁸¹ the latter asserts only monergism. Augustine says, "He therefore, worketh the beginning of our belief who worketh all things; because faith itself does not precede that calling... For He chose us, not because we believed, but that we might believe."¹⁸² The grace of God should be poured into the heart to make the formerly unwilling unbeliever willing. God "makes the will of man righteous, and thus prepares it for assistance, and assists it when it is prepared."¹⁸³ Then, bad wills are voluntarily converted to good wills.¹⁸⁴

We remember that Augustine made a distinction in his thinking between will as a faculty and will in a broader sense, put another way, between free will, *liberum arbitrium*, and liberty, *libertas*.¹⁸⁵ Warfield states that "as a mere faculty, will is and always remains an indifferent thing, -after the fall, as before it."¹⁸⁶ Fallen man has not lost his ability to make choices according to his desires. But, because the sinning soul makes the whole nature including desires and the will corruptible, we are unable to do anything truly good by ourselves.¹⁸⁷ What was annihilated was the moral power to incline to the good. *Libertas* was annihilated, according to Augustine, not *liberum arbitrium*, or the faculty of willing. But, we cannot find this kind of distinction in Cassian's works, not even in any of the Eastern Fathers'.

¹⁸¹ Cassian's position has been always treated as only synergism from Prosper, Hilary, the Synod of Orange in 529, to modern scholars like Seeberg, Schaff and Adolph Harnack etc.

¹⁸² *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 38. Cf. *Ibid.*, 3; *On the Gift of Perseverance*, 52, 54.

¹⁸³ *The Enchiridion* 32.

¹⁸⁴ *On Grace and Free Will* 41.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, vol. 1, *History of Doctrines in the Ancient Church*, trans. Charles E. Hay, 1977, p. 344; Warfield, *Introductory Essay on Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy*.

¹⁸⁶ Warfield, *ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Against Julian*, IV. 3, 25, 26.

For our doctrinal judgment, it is worth surveying Origen's view of free will. He states its existence and purpose: "For the Creator granted to the minds created by Him the power of free and voluntary movement, in order that the good that was in them might become their own since it was preserved by their own free will."¹⁸⁸ Origen asserts that the ability and desire to return to God have been implanted within the soul by God from the beginning.¹⁸⁹ To him like other fathers, fallen man must make certain spiritual conditions in order to assure God's intervention. However, Origen delineates the soul's inability to attain ultimate communion with God, owing to the soul's unstable and changeable nature. "It is important for the soul to realize and acknowledge its limitations, that is, its instability and dependence, if it is to turn to God for that grace without which salvation is impossible."¹⁹⁰ Following Origen, the Eastern Fathers in the fourth century such as Athanasius, Cappadocians, and Chrysostom, laid great stress upon human freedom as an essential mark of human nature, and the indispensable synergism of the free will and grace. Athanasius affirms that, though the will remains idle, weak and poor, it can either co-operate with God's Grace, and bear the fruit of Sanctification, or reject it and run towards condemnation.¹⁹¹ Christ does not force man to something beyond the abilities of his will.¹⁹² Like the will, the image is also not so much annihilated as lost from sight, like a picture overlaid with dirt.¹⁹³ Gregory of Nyssa too shows a similar optimistic view of the free will and synergism. In *The Life of Moses*, he writes that:

¹⁸⁸ *First Principle* II. 4.

¹⁸⁹ Antonia Tripolitis, "Return to the Divine: Salvation in the Thought of Plotinus and Origen," in *Disciplina Nostra: Essays in Memory of Robert F. Evans*, ed. Donald F. Winslow, 1979, p. 175. Cf. *Ex. Martyr.* 47; *First Principle*, II. 11:4ff.

¹⁹⁰ Quoted from *ibid.*, 176. Cf. *Contra Celsum* VII.42 ff.

¹⁹¹ *Festal Letters, Syriac Text.* 3:2, 3.

¹⁹² *Ibid.* 10:4.

¹⁹³ *On the Incarnation* 14.

For truly the assistance which God gives to our nature is provided to those who correctly live the life of virtue. This assistance was already there at our birth, but it is manifested and made known whenever we apply ourselves to diligent training in the higher life and strip ourselves for the more vigorous contests.¹⁹⁴

Gregory of Nazianzus notes that “salvation must depend upon us as well as upon God.”¹⁹⁵ Later, John Chrysostom was so convinced the power of the human free,¹⁹⁶ and necessary co-operation of grace with it, saying that:

All is in God’s power but not in such a way as to infringe on our free will. . . It depends upon us as well as upon Him for we must beforehand choose the good and when we choose it, then God contributes what depends upon Him. He does not anticipate our desires, in order not to injure our will, and only after our choice He brings to us His great help.”¹⁹⁷

That God would respond to us when we begin to do the good attains prominence in the Eastern Church in the late fourth century. Synergism may raise inevitably the question, ‘How much does God’s grace contribute to our salvation and how much does our own will contribute?’ Gregory of Nazianzus said, with reference to conversion of his father: “I do not know which to praise more: the grace which called him, or his own choice. . . He belonged to those who anticipate faith by their disposition and, possessing the thing itself, lack only the name... he received faith

¹⁹⁴ *The Life of Moses*, II. 44, and cf. II. 3, 46, 80.

¹⁹⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.*, XXXVII, 13.

¹⁹⁶ John Chrysostom says that “good and evil do not originate from man’s nature itself, but from the will and choice alone.”(*In epist. ad Rom.*, *Hom.* XIX, 6) His defence of the power of the human free was taken up by many Pelagian writers. A Pelagian, Animus of Celeda translated Chrysostom’s sermons into Latin. Cf. *PL* 48.626-30.

¹⁹⁷ *Epist. ad Hebr. Hom.*, XII, 3.

itself as a reward for his virtue.”¹⁹⁸ He does not make clear their proportional mutual relations. If we try to answer this in mathematical terms for Augustine and the Eastern Fathers, we might suggest that at the former God 100 per cent and our will 0 per cent at the beginning of salvation, at the latter, perhaps we split the matter. It is obvious that the human will contributes in a some degree. If one regards one, who asserts God’s assistant grace cooperates with our moral endeavors, as a Pelagian, all above Fathers can be regarded as Pelagians before Pelagius. When Jerome engaged in the Pelagian controversy, he, who had acquired a competent knowledge of Greek literature unlike Augustine, traced Pelagians’ opinions to the school of Origen. Holmes notes, “there is, no doubt, extravagance in Jerome’s censure, but withal a foundation of truth.”¹⁹⁹ Affected by Alexandrian theology, the desert fathers’ position is necessarily synergistic. Thus, should Chaeremon’s view be judged as semi-Pelagianism, it is not a matter of one person, but that of the whole body of Alexandrian Fathers. That Chaeremon’s formulation on free will and grace displays almost similarities with the Alexandrians’ in a broad sense will be vindicated in the following points. The Abba affirms that the will is always necessary to God’s grace.

It cannot then be doubted that there are by nature some seeds of goodness in every soul implanted by the kindness of the Creator; but unless these are quickened by the assistance of God, they will not be able to attain to an increase of perfection, for, as the blessed Apostle says: “Neither is he that planteth anything nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. [1 Cor. 3:7]”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Quoted by Nicholas N. Gloubokowsky, “Grace in the Greek Fathers (to St. John of Damascus) and Inter-Church Union,” in *The Doctrine of Grace*, p. 78. From *Orat., XVIII-funebris in patrem suum*, 5, 6.

¹⁹⁹ Peter Holmes, *Preface to Volume I. Of the Edinburgh Edition*.

²⁰⁰ *Conferences XIII.12*

In relation to the implanted goodness in the soul, this is quite inconsistent with the teaching of Serapion in *Conferences V*, who says that man's virtues in the heart were taken over by vices upon Adam's fall. To Chaeremon, fallen humanity still has some seeds of the virtues as a natural capability. There is an important clue that allows us to track its source in the desert literature. Following Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, in *The Life of Antony*, asserts: "For it [virtue] is not distant from us, nor does it stand external to us, but its realization lies in us, and the task is easy if only we shall will it... All virtue needs, then, is our willing, since it is in us, and arises from us. For virtue exists when the soul maintains its intellectual part according to nature."²⁰¹ Expressing a similar view, the author of *The Letters of St. Antony* "sees the virtues as natural to man; they are laid down by the law of nature; a virtuous life is a life according to nature."²⁰² Evagrius also writes that "the seeds of good remain in fallen creatures; though they are capable of evil, there is nothing evil in their nature."²⁰³ For Athanasius, the virtues are natural, and need the power of human's will for arising. For Chaeremon, in chapter 12, God is the source of virtues, and not only the planter, but also the increaser. These seeds require additional help from God to grow. Although the human will is enabled to take the first step toward salvation by the natural workability originating from God's work, it is unable to proceed without the assistance of God's grace. God is responsible from beginning to perfection, but demands effort on the human side. In the next chapter, Chaeremon says of the relationship between will and grace that "so the grace of God always co-operates with our will for its advantage, and in all things assists, protects, and defends it"²⁰⁴ God's grace is given in order that one who has begun to will may be assisted and

²⁰¹ *The Life of Antony*, 20.

²⁰² Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony*, p. 73; and cf. Antonius, *Epistolae*, IV.13; VII.11, 49-51.

²⁰³ *Kephalaia Gnostika* i.39; *Letters* 30, 45.

²⁰⁴ *Conferences* XIII.13

defended because of the weak power of the human will. To point out its serious limitations and the necessity of dependence on grace, Chaeremon argues by making reference to three Biblical illustrations that God's grace cannot stand comparison with human effort: the faith of the thief on the cross, David's penitence about two grievous sins, and Paul's receipt of the status of the Apostolate by the grace of God. He indicates the point common to the three cases:

none the less does God's grace continue to be free grace while in return for some small and trivial efforts it bestows with priceless bounty such glory of immortality, and such gifts of eternal bliss... And what shall we say of this brief confession and of the incomparable infinity of Divine reward... However much then human weakness may strive, it cannot come up to the future reward, nor by its efforts so take off from Divine grace that it should not always remain a free gift.²⁰⁵

Chaeremon was aware of the insufficiency of the human will to attain salvation without God's supporting grace. Throughout all of his discourse, the focus of his teachings is mainly on God's saving activity for man and comparatively little on the operation of human will. His method of treatment reflects Origen's remarkable view on the portion of God's responsibility as compared to man: "So indeed with our salvation the effects of God's work are very much in excess of the effects of what we can do."²⁰⁶ Chaeremon emphasizes God's activities for man's salvation. It is significant to see that the doctrine of God appears in his exposition of will and grace, for his understanding of God as acting Protector and Saviour for the ignorant or unwilling, or Helper and Sponsor for those already striving,²⁰⁷ governs

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* XIII.13. In *Conferences* XI.9, Chaeremon have said on human weakness: "a weak and frail human nature."

²⁰⁶ *First Principles*, III, 19.

²⁰⁷ *Conferences* XIII.17

his whole discourse. In a concluding remark in the last chapter, Chaeremon says of God's activities:

God the Father of all things worketh indifferently all things in all, as the Apostle says, like some most kind father and most benign physician; and that now He puts into us the very beginnings of salvation, and gives to each the zeal of his free will; and now grants the carrying out of the work, and the perfecting of goodness; and now saves men, even against their will and without their knowledge, from ruin that is close at hand, and a headlong fall; and now affords them occasions and opportunities of salvation, and wards off headlong and violent attacks from purposes that would bring death; and assists some who are already willing and running, while He draws others who are unwilling and resisting, and forces them to a good will.²⁰⁸

For Chaeremon, God is in action for all of these things, because He fervently desires our salvation. He soon sums up God's doing, "For the God of all must be held to work in all, so as to incite, protect, and strengthen, but not to take away the freedom of the will which He Himself has once given."²⁰⁹ It must be apparent to the careful reader how he intentionally tries to maintain and vindicate man's free will even amidst the predominance of God's action for salvation. The present divine activities are performed in respect of His past gift given to man. Although free will is not the same as the fullness of Adam's free will in paradise, it permits the individual to prepare himself for a journey toward salvation with God's grace. The Father has already equipped the will from the beginning by grace.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* XIII.18

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* XIII.18

In the foregoing, we have attempted to demonstrate that the three positions of the thirteenth *Conference*, arising from the perspective of Augustinianism and Pelagianism, have intellectual hypermetropia. Prosper, Hilary and the following critics were quick to focus on Augustinianism, yet it is a matter for regret that they never looked beyond the Latin theological world. In the East, there is no problem about this *Conference*. Chaeremon's views on free will and grace, original sin, death, universal salvation, man's possession of virtue and goodness by nature after the Fall, were the very conceptions shared among the Eastern fathers such as Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Didymus. His teachings transmitted the ancient Eastern tradition. The problem is that all these subjects may encounter resistance from the pupils of Augustine. We realise that both sides are a great distance apart, "as far as the east is from the west" (Ps. 103:12).

4.3 CONCLUSIONS OF CHAPTER 4

The present study has investigated various elements of human nature after the Fall in the Cassian's works. Based on what has been said so far, I wish to conclude that it is impossible to formulate a single integrated doctrinal system of their views of the issues. Certainly the texts I have examined have revealed several incongruities and inconsistencies, in which the idea of the Fall and its results appear. All speakers offered their own hue in describing the same events related to the fall of Lucifer and Adam. In particular, Abba Serenus of *Conferences VIII* differed very much from others in respect of the goodness of human nature after the Fall, as much as he used non-biblical materials to relate his understanding of the continuance of evil, and Ham's wickedness after the Flood. While he appeals to the unwritten tradition in the explanation of the difficult passage, the others wish to

restrict their discussion to the biblical ground alone. In relation to man's virtues in the heart, whereas Serapion in *Conferences V* says that Adam's fall expelled them, Chaeremon in *Conferences XIII* asserts that fallen humanity still has some seeds of the virtues by nature. We must take account of these significant inconsistencies and divergences and not simplify doctrines. I am convinced that these inconsistencies originate in the divergences of the views of several Abbas, as Cassian himself promised that he would delivered only what he had seen and heard from the elders.

By way of conclusion, we ought also to take note of the following points of similarity between them.

Firstly, Cassian's Abbas have shown their dependence on the teachings of the Alexandrians who preceded them with regard to Adam, the Fall and its results. Particularly, the many close affinities with Origen already noted, not a literary dependence, suggest that Origen's teachings can be regarded as the background to their thinking. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the Abbas kept an immense distance from the metaphysical adventures of Origen, which appeared in his doctrine of pre-existence of the soul and the creation of material body after the Fall, later adopted by Evagrius. I also must note that even the general issues treated in this chapter were unaffected by Evagrius. These facts indicate that, although the uniqueness of Origen's tradition becomes most evident in the desert when it is compared to the alternative traditions that flourished at that time, it is obvious that not all of the monks of Egypt shared this admiration for Origen, nor did they embrace his whole theology to the same degree. Thus I wish to make a hesitant suggestion that Cassian's Abbas might be called "refined Origenists" holding the middle position between the rigorous Origenists, like the Evagrian school, and the anthropomorphites objected vehemently to Origen.

Secondly, the Abbas commonly thought of the fall of Lucifer and Adam as both historical examples and representatives. All narratives of Adam's fall appear in the texts treating monks' pride, gluttony and vainglory, and the origin of demons. Though it is not the centre of much interest to large measure, its accounts have the most significant pedagogical function. Cassian said that "If we look at the reason of our original fall... we may learn, either through the fall of the devil, or through the example of Christ, how to avoid so terrible a death from pride."²¹⁰ These historical accounts are not simply about the first humans who lived once and long ago, but are indeed still happening to each of his readers. For they always regarded the first parents in paradise as a model of what their heirs' life should not be like. The reference to the Adam as 'an example' is a following of the Athanasius's emphasis on the accounts of the Fall.²¹¹

Thirdly, the Abbas' anthropology is centred on the Scripture. A large part of the content of their thoughts is based on the spiritual, theological meanings in Scripture presented many times through allegory. Their real concern on the particular issues is always with the interpretation of Scripture and invocation of its authority. They, with the exception of Serenus' deviation on the account for Ham's wickedness, guard against reading a non-biblical presupposition into their understanding, as we have seen in Chaeremon's discussion of free will and grace. Finally, there are a number of defences of the goodness of God, a theodicy in the discourses of the Abbas. Serenus, quoting Genesis 1:31: "everything that God had made was very good," says that "we should in opposition to the view of the above quoted Scripture slander God as the Creator and author of evil."²¹² Theonas too cited the same verse.²¹³ While Cassian defended some natural impulses without

²¹⁰ *Institutes* XII.4, 8

²¹¹ A. Louth, "The concept of the soul in Athanasius' *Contra Gentes-De Incarnatione*," *Texte und Untersuchungen* 116 (Berlin, 1974) p, 228.

²¹² *Conferences* VIII.6

²¹³ *Ibid.* XXIII.3

wronging the Creator,²¹⁴ Daniel argued for the usefulness of the conflict of flesh and spirit, implanted by arrangement of the Creator.²¹⁵ Quoting Ecclesiastes 7:29 : “God made man upright,” Chaeremon contends that God has granted man a free will so that he can be capable of what is good, or be capable of evil.²¹⁶ He disavows any fatalism and insists upon our capacity for distinguishing good and evil. For the Abbas, evil came into the world by man’s liberty of choice by the free will, and so he was responsible for sin. However, God not only desires to care for His creatures but does not change even after the Fall. The Creator has never abandoned humanity, and has been in control in the face of what fallen humanity really needs. In particular, Serenus’ defence is reminiscent of Marcion’s belief in God as the author of evil.²¹⁷ Affected by Marcion, Manichaeism attempted to explain the existence of evil, and held that the reason for its existence is that God is not strong enough to prevent it; Good and Evil were two powers equally strong in the world. In the face of this dangerous Gnostic assertion, many early theologians have defended a theodicy by affirmation of the free will, and thereby seek to excuse God from responsibility for moral evil.²¹⁸ In this context, we come to understand why Cassian’s Abbas conspicuously emphasize the free will, of course, with caution to the monks who attribute all spiritual progresses to that. The next chapter will explore the continuation of what God does for fallen humanity, and the ultimate purpose in His doing.

²¹⁴ *Institutes* VII.4

²¹⁵ *Conferences* IV.7

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* XIII.12

²¹⁷ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 1.2.2-3.

²¹⁸ Cf. Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 1998, pp. 30-41.

CHAPTER 5. SOTERIOLOGY IN CASSIAN'S WORKS

Soteriology is a wide area, dealing with such subjects as atonement and forgiveness, reconciliation and adoption, justification and sanctification, predestination and perseverance, the law and the gospel, calling and conversion, faith and works, grace and free will, abandonment and assurance, eternal life and heaven, order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) and so forth. Before examining such conceptions of soteriology in Cassian's works, it will be helpful to look briefly at its constituent aspects as we analyse several soteriological views. The principal and fundamental questions related to salvation are: why does a human being need to be saved? What does salvation mean? How can I be saved? How many members of the human race will be saved? The first two questions relate to an objective aspect of salvation, namely, the reasons for divine provision, or the nature and locus of human need. The third and fourth questions relate to a subjective aspect, namely, the application and extent of salvation that is more important to the desert monks, who apply salvation, based on individual responses, to the grace of God. They

maintain that not all will respond affirmatively to God; consequently, some will be lost and some saved. Furthermore, the subjective factor raises an important issue with regard to the dimension of time. As the human response takes place within time, we must determine the kind of time that is involved. Generally, as intimated in the Pauline exhortation in Philippians 2:12: "with fear and trembling work out your own salvation," salvation is understood as occurring at three different times: as a single and complete occurrence upon the initiation into the Christian life, as the present continuing experience of being saved throughout the Christian life, and as something that will be received in the future. This matter is due deep consideration.

With regard to the above, this chapter will first explore the desert fathers' view on salvation as it relates to the way in which Cassian precisely transmits that tradition. It then focuses upon the contents of his works. In *Institutes*, with the exception of book XII, Cassian expresses the concept of salvation according to the dictates of the occasion and, thus, his reader has to group together the scattered descriptions in order to grasp his whole idea. In *Institutes* VI.32-43 and later in *Conferences* XX, as Cassian presents an exhortation of Abba Pinufius in relation to salvation, this part will be dealt with separately from Cassian's own teachings. On the other hand, in *Conferences*, three Abbas in books I-II, III and, XIII provide a fine picture of soteriology that is worth considering in a systematic fashion. As most soteriological representations in other books are fragmentary and offer no more insights than can be gained through a consideration of the previously mentioned books, I will confine my consideration to two Abbas' works. This is feasible in view of the fact that book XIII has already been considered in the preceding chapter. According to the results of the previous investigation, one may assume that there are several differing conceptions of salvation found among

Cassian's Abbas. By comparing each idea of the Abbas, it is hoped that a thorough investigation will be conducted.

5.1 SOTERIOLOGY OF THE DESERT FATHERS

We now investigate the desert fathers' popular view of salvation in other desert monastic literature, as Cassian had consulted those who represented an already established wisdom on the matter. As their concepts are assumed to have functioned essentially to shape Cassian's formulation, we can utilise them as the ground of judgement for our examination of Cassian's view of salvation.

The desert monks generally used the term 'salvation', or 'to be saved' as a single formula for appropriation of the complete saving work of God by the individual monk. The most central question with which the desert monks were concerned was, "How can I be saved?" This is reflected in the first anecdote of the *Apophthegmata*, beginning: "When the holy Abba Anthony lived in the desert he was beset by *accidie*, and attacked by many sinful thoughts. He said to God, 'Lord, I want to be saved but these thoughts do not leave me alone; what shall I do in my affliction? How can I be saved?' "¹ It was not only Anthony, but also a counselee who showed a similar concern: "the brethren came to the Abba Anthony and said to him, 'Speak word; how are we to be saved?' "² In another case, while still living in the palace, the Roman aristocrat Arsenius prayed to God in these words, "Lord, lead me in the way of salvation."³ Having withdrawn to solitary life in accordance

¹ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Anthony the Great 1.

² *Ibid.* 19.

³ *Ibid.* Arsenius 1.

with a voice from heaven, he made the same prayer again.⁴ We find a lot of other examples of concern with the same question in the *Apophthegmata*.⁵ In reply to the question of salvation, 'you will be saved' is always enunciated in asceticism.⁶ Thus, 'How can I be saved?' can be regarded as a synonym for another frequent question, 'What should I do?' The monks must do something through their asceticism to bring about the acceptance of God. Amma Synclaica said, "Just as one cannot build a ship unless one has some nails, so it is impossible to be saved without humility."⁷ For another instance, when Apollo sets out to do a piece of work, he joyfully says, "I am going to work with Christ today, for the salvation of my soul, for that is the reward He gives."⁸ There are a lot of other sayings that portray this idea.

Other monastic literature holds no different view from the *Apophthegmata*. In *The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, the author begins his travelogue with a citation of 1 Tim. 2:4: Blessed be God 'who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.' He proceeds by speaking of the goal and achievement of the journey in the following way: "He granted to us who desire to be saved both the foundation and the knowledge of salvation."⁹ Just as the author sets out on a journey on a rough road with this motive, many others come to Nitria with the same desire to attain salvation by joining the monks.¹⁰ He delivers an account of the Simple Paul, who came to Antony out of despair at the adultery of his wife.

⁴ *Ibid.* 2.

⁵ *Ibid.* Anthony 27; Ares 1; Biare 1; Euprepus 7; Hierax 1; Macarius the Great 23, 25, 41; Pambo 2; Sisoës 19; *The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers*, pp. 11, 34.

⁶ *Ibid.* Ammonas 1, 4; Apollo 1; Benjamin 4; Theodora 6; Isaac, Priest of the Cells 11; Joseph of Panephrisis 4; Isidore the Priest 6; John the Theban 1; Pambo 10; Pior 3; Syncletica 23, 25, 26; Hyperechius 5;

⁷ *Ibid.* Syncletica 26.

⁸ *Ibid.* Apollo 1.

⁹ *The Live of the Desert Fathers*, Prologue 1, p. 49.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* On the Monks of Nitria, 8, 9, 10, p. 106. Cf. On Abba Helle 12.

When Paul begged to live with him because he wished to be saved, Antony replied, "You can be saved if you have obedience; whatever I tell you, that is what you will do."¹¹ The author offers other cases showing that salvation is conditional upon ascetic effort.¹² Although it is difficult to judge their doctrine of salvation by the very condensed anecdotes, three controlling principles of their thought are affirmed.

Firstly, to the desert fathers, with regard to the dimension of time, salvation is an event that will occur in the future, as they still seek it after becoming monks.

Secondly, with regard to *ordo salutis*, to do good precedes the completion of salvation. Before being conferred salvation, the monks should prepare themselves for it. They attach conditions to salvation. Since good works are necessary to salvation, some may fall away and be lost forever.

Finally, there is no room for the grace that is of concern to us. This can be excused by the fact that the desert monastic literature naturally emphasizes human effort, because a central intention of the texts is the encouragement of the readers in their monastic vocations. While Antony, in *Vita S. Antoni*, urges ascetic discipline, he incites his listeners by saying that "For in it the Lord is our fellow-worker."¹³ He proceeds to stress human will in the following chapter: "virtue hath need at our hands of willingness alone, since it is in us and is formed from us."¹⁴ When Athanasius refers to the grace that God gave to Antony, it is related to *charismata* such as efficacious speaking, the discerning of spirits, the power conquering devil,

¹¹ *Ibid.* On Paul 1, p. 114.

¹² *Ibid.* On John of Lycopolis 36, 55; On John (XIII) 10.

¹³ *Vita S. Antoni* 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 20.

and benevolent countenance.¹⁵ The author of *The Historia Monachorum* is, too, in agreement with Athanasius. To him, divine grace means mostly supernatural charismatic gifts in the thirteen references, with the exception of two references to Communion and the office of deacon.¹⁶ Likewise, in the *Apophthegmata*, salvation by God's grace is not explicitly mentioned. Several cases referring to grace related to *charismata* such as the performing of miracles, divine safeguard, clairvoyance and the grace of word.¹⁷ This grace is given according to ascetic achievement by each individual monk. Only one quotation is worth recording in relation to the assistance of God's grace: "Abba Pambo said, "By the grace of God, since I left the world, I have not said one word of which I repented afterwards." "¹⁸ This case alone attests to the view that one is unable to do good without God's assistance. These tendencies are echoed in the words of Gloubokowsky, "In the East, during the whole of the patristic period, it was not so much speculation and teaching but rather appropriation and contemplation of the reality of grace that were predominant."¹⁹

Based on what has been said so far, if one evaluates the desert monks' theological position on salvation at face value, it can be said that the theological milieu encircling the Abbots in Cassian's works was one of semi-Pelagianism in the eye of later Augustinianism. This is not surprising when one thinks that the number of Fathers before Augustine, without distinction of Eastern and Western, were in "the

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 14, 24, 30, 41, 44, 67.

¹⁶ *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, On John of Lycopolis 15 (deacon office); On Apollo 2, 15, 40, 42, 54; On Copres 2; On Paternuthius 7, 8; On Eulogius 2 (Communion); On Macarius 3; On Paul 10; On John (XXVI).

¹⁷ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Ammonathas 1; Isaac, Priest of the Cells 11; Paul the Simple 1; Felix 1;

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Pambo 5.

¹⁹ Nicholas N. Gloubokowsky, "Grace in the Greek Fathers (to St. John of Damascus) and Inter-Church Union," in *The Doctrine of Grace*, ed. W.T. Whitley, 1932, p. 63.

semi-Pelagian camp". J. Tixeront begrudgingly concedes, "St. Hilary, St. Optatus and even St. Jerome have made a certain number of statements which now would be looked upon as semi-Pelagian."²⁰ If that is the case of the West, it goes without saying that Greek Fathers were semi-Pelagian and non-Augustinian in their soteriology. "In the problem of human salvation," Gloubokowsky comments, "Eastern theology, decisively and without exception, maintained the idea of the freedom of the will, which although considerably damaged by sin, is not destroyed entirely and not exchanged for slavery to an evil mind."²¹ Therefore, it is proper to conclude that if one, from the standpoint of the innovative Augustinianism, or the extremes of Pelagianism, points out the semi-Pelagian tendency in Cassian's works, it can be regarded as an inevitable natural consequence, unless he does not follow the desert tradition.

5.2 SOTERIOLOGY OF CASSIAN IN *INSTITUTES*

5.2.1 *Institutes III*

In *Institutes III. 3*, offering reasons from Scripture for daily hours of *terce*, *sext*, *none*, *vespers*, and *matins*, Cassian represents Christ's saving work with His death on the cross. How did this come about? He expresses Jesus' own attitude to the cross: "our Lord's death and passion were not undergone by the law of human nature, but of His own free will."²² The death of Jesus is viewed as a fact which He faced voluntarily with deliberate surrender. What was the nature of this more

²⁰ Tixeront, L. J. *History of Dogmas*, vol. 2, 1914, p. 280.

²¹ Gloubokowsky, "Grace in the Greek Fathers," p. 82.

²² *Institutes III.3*

inner compulsion which committed Jesus to this sacrificial self-giving on a cross?

Cassian writes:

Our Lord and Saviour, was offered up to the Father, and, ascending the cross for the salvation of the whole world, made atonement for the sins of mankind, and, “despoiling principalities and powers, he delivered them over publicly,” [Colossians 2:15] and all of us who were liable to death and bound by the debt of the handwriting that could not be paid, He freed, by taking it away out of the midst and affixing it to His cross for a trophy.²³

In this peculiar short paragraph, several terms appear most clearly to describe the work of Christ in liberating men from sin, death, and slavery under the power of the Devil. It is ultimately God Himself that is regarded as paying off our debts. Here is the atonement which wipes out our trespasses, but we contribute nothing to the saving process. Left to himself, no one will ever be freed from the bondage of death. Cassian's ways of describing the saving work of Jesus are derived from 1) the sacrificial system of ancient Israel, in which offerings or sacrifices were regarded as a means of expiation, 2) ransom theory, paying His precious blood to the devil to purchase us and grant us freedom from his dominion, which has already been mentioned in chapter 3, and 3) the conquest of the devil, which, Young pointed out, is in fact the most prominent theme of Origen's soteriology.²⁴ The quoted Colossians 2:15 was one of Origen's favourite verses, proving the trophy of Christ's victory over the devil.²⁵ Cassian continues to offer the description of Christ's work as a Priest spreading out his hands to the Lord in

²³ *Ibid.* III.3

²⁴ Frances M. Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom*, pp. 173ff. Cf. *De Principiis* 3:2; 1:5; 3:3; 3:5

²⁵ Origen, *Homilies on Jos.* 8:3, 29; *on Matt.* 12:40; *on Lev.* 10:2; *on Exodus* 4:6,7; 6:8; *on Genesis* 9:3; *on Jeremiah* 9:1.

sundown evening oblation and as a sacrificial offering at the same time. With the citation of Ps. 140:2, he notes that “evening sacrifice which He Himself offered up to the Father by the lifting up of His hands for the salvation of the whole world; which spreading forth of His hands on the Cross, is quite correctly called a “lifting up.”²⁶ Christ is a High Priest for all humans, and the cross is His altar. In this simile his emphasis on “lifting up” makes us recollect the words of Origen, “Jesus, when he had been exalted on the cross and was about to embrace the whole earth with his arms... He also lifts his hands who says, “The lifting up of my hands is as the evening sacrifice.” (Ps. 140:2)”²⁷ With regard to *sext* and *none*, Cassian comes to the issue of universal atonement: Christ died not merely for the Jews, but for the entire human race. Appealing to Scripture for support of the view that God intended the atonement to make salvation possible for all humans, he uses the episode between Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10, which turns upon the beginning of the Gentile mission. Shortly before his encounter with Cornelius, a Roman military centurion, Peter goes up to the flat roof of the house at the midday hour to pray. Suddenly he sees that the heaven opens and a strange vessel including pure and impure animals descends, held at four corners, which Cassian shows as symbolising the four Gospels. A heavenly voice commands Peter to kill some of these beasts and eat them. Being afraid of eating unclean foods, he comes to see later what the vision might mean. Cassian comments that:

In this vessel of the Gospels let down from heaven, that is written by the Holy Ghost, all the nations which were formerly outside the observance of the law and reckoned as unclean now flow together through belief in the faith that they may to their salvation be turned away from the worship of idols and be serviceable for

²⁶ *Institutes* III.3

²⁷ Origen, *Homilies on Exodus*. 11:4.

health-giving food, and are brought to Peter and cleansed by the voice of the Lord.²⁸

God has shown him the abolition of the barriers discriminating between Jews and Gentiles, and of restrictions on contact between them. God opened the door to all humans and commissioned His apostles to go to preach among all people.

One problem in the theory of universal atonement is the danger that their position on this matter might lead to belief in universal salvation. If Christ in fact atoned for all humans, all would come to salvation. However, Cassian's concept of universal atonement does not lead into the universal salvation trap. In the following book, *Institutes VI*, his assumption that Christ's death does not lead to forgiveness and salvation in every case, but only for those who accept him, will be highlighted.

5.2.2 *Institutes IX*

In *Institutes IX*, in his treatment of dejection, based on 2 Cor. 7:10, Cassian classifies two sorts of sorrow regarding salvation, when one comes to sin and fail: the godly sorrow that leads to repentance unto salvation; and in contrast, the bad sorrow which produces no correction of faults, and which leaves one attached to the most destructive despair, and even to death. The latter is reminiscent of Cain and Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Though both acknowledged intensely their guilt with a sorrowful heart and simple regret and remorse, nevertheless, no true repentance, which involves an actual alteration of behaviour, was brought about.

²⁸ *Institutes III.3*

It is important for the monks to understand the nature of both healthy and deadly sorrow because the criterion in discriminating between them lies in their character and effects. The former is obedient, civil, humble, kindly, gentle, and patient, as it springs from the love of God, and tirelessly extends itself from desire of perfection to every bodily grief and sorrow of spirit," whereas the latter is "rough, impatient, hard, full of rancour and useless grief and penal despair... as it is unreasonable, and hampers the efficacy of his prayers."²⁹ The good sorrow with a resolution to turn from one's sin has the power to overcome the destructive operation of sin, whereas the bad with awareness of sin leads only to despair and self-destruction under the burden. Cassian describes this good form of sorrow as springing up in three ways; "for the sake of saving penitence, or for the sake of aiming at perfection, or for the desire of the future."³⁰ If aimed at the future, it brings to the monks a persistent desire for perfection and future blessedness. The sorrow prior to saving penitence, thus, is not merely generated at the beginning of salvation, but throughout all the stages unto perfection. It appears that penitence is not instantaneously complete. Nothing in the descriptions of Cassian suggests that it is a single action rather than a process. Penitence should continue throughout one's lifetime.

As one examines this matter of penitence based on a feeling of godly sorrow for one's sin, one cannot avoid being impressed by its importance as a prerequisite for salvation. It is stressed that it is not optional, but indispensable.

²⁹ *Ibid.* IX.11

³⁰ *Ibid.* IX.12

5.2.3 *Institutes X*

Cassian paints a picture of the monk afflicted with *vitium* of acedia, in which we catch a glimpse of the conception of unaccomplished salvation. He describes the mental state of the monk tempted into boredom that often occurs at noon:

He cries up to distant monasteries and those which are a long way off, and describes such places as more profitable and better suited for salvation... Lastly he fancies that he will never be *saved* while he stays in that place, unless he leaves his cell (in which he is sure to die if he stops in it any longer) and takes himself off from thence as quickly as possible.³¹

The tempted monk, who is afraid of failing to attain salvation, thinks, 'what must I do to be saved?'. That the monk has no assurance means that he does not currently possess salvation. His only desire is salvation, and the manner of monastic life is the unique resource for attaining it. The monk seeks relief from the attacks of acedia either by falling asleep, by going around to visit the brethren, or his relatives, or religious women deprived of the support of their own kindred, or even leaving his cell. He is not convinced of the error in his own heart, but lays the fault at a source outside himself. Frequently, running away and changing surroundings is thought to be the best solution. Thus, the idea of stability in the cell appears repeatedly in the *Apophthegmata* as a favourite piece of advice given by the Abba's disciples.³² For example, 'A brother came to Scetis to visit Abba Moses and asked

³¹ *Ibid.* X.2. In *Institutes* VII.8, Cassian notes that the monk fallen into covetousness says a similar dangerous thought.

³² For the practice of sitting in the cell, see Graham Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*, pp. 150-7.

him for a word. The old man said to him, "Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything".³³ Benedicta Ward asks a question after the citation of this story: "Why is it that they saw this stability in the cell as vital in their training? It was because they could learn there, and only there, that God exists, because if God is not here and now in moment and in this place."³⁴ But we find that her answer could be a literary image, as we read the following story:

Someone said to Abba Arsenius, 'My thoughts trouble me, saying, "You can neither fast nor work; at least go and visit the sick, for that is also charity".' But the old man, recognizing the suggestions of the demons, said to him, 'Go, eat, drink, sleep, do no work, only do not leave your cell.' For he knew that steadfastness in the cell keeps a monk in the right way.³⁵

The consulter was attacked precisely by acedia. The temptation to leave his cell was regarded as coming from evil thoughts caused by demons. The tempted monk must root out acedia from the thoughts by staying in his own cell. That is a place of combat against the thoughts.³⁶

Cassian also affirms this traditional remedy through his own experience of being troubled by an attack of acedia. He notes that "a fit of acedia should not be evaded by running away from it, but overcome by resisting it."³⁷ Cassian places the responsibility for acedia, not on other matters, but on the heart. But his solution takes a step forward from that of Arsenius. He diagnoses the chief cause of this

³³ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Moses 6; Systematic Series 73.

³⁴ Benedicta Ward, "Spiritual Direction in the Desert Fathers," *The Way*, 24 (1984) : 64.

³⁵ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Arsenius 6.

³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, John the Dwarf 12; *The Greek anonymous series of Apophthegmata Patrum*, 198, 205.

³⁷ *Institutes* X.25

malady as leisure or idleness.³⁸ The remedy for this *vitium* is manual labour with perseverance in the cell. He devotes a large part of Book X.7-24 to an exhortation to work, and concludes that “without manual labour, a monk cannot stop (*perdurare*: to endure) in a place nor rise to the heights of perfection.”³⁹ As the result of work, the monk profits by “purifying his heart, and strengthening his thoughts, and persisting in his cell, and gaining a victory over accidia and driving it away.”⁴⁰ In his representation, one perceives the conditional character of the attainment of salvation and perfection. It is questioned whether the monks who have been converted will persist in that relationship. In other words, will a believer who becomes a monk always remain such? Dealing with the eight deadly vices, Cassian is especially vehement, calling his readers to attend, on several occasions, to the dangers of falling away and thus not attaining salvation. He asserts in Chapter 16 that it is highly possible to lose one's way in the journey to attain salvation by disobeying the apostolic commandments, or “to be restored to the way of salvation”⁴¹ after amendment. This idea protects the monks from a sort of lassitude or indifference to the moral and spiritual demands of the gospel, the result of which may even be libertinism.

5.2.4 *Institutes XII*

In discussing the diagnoses and remedies for pride, *Institutes XII* contains a lengthy treatment of salvation and the means for that. For the monks who must escape the snare of this most evil spirit, Cassian repeatedly emphasises that

³⁸ *Ibid.* X.7

³⁹ *Ibid.* X.24

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* X.24

⁴¹ *Ibid.* X.16

salvation comes from God's grace. He cites several biblical passages served to support man's total dependence on the grace of "the author of our salvation," as follows: John 15:5; Ps. 126:1, 2; Rom. 9:16.⁴² In the following chapter, Cassian continues to quote James 1:17; "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," upholding the absolute dependence upon divine compassion "to reach so great a prize of perfection, and the palm of uprightness and purity."⁴³ Here he moves his point from salvation to perfection. His 'toing and froing' between two ideas continues in the next chapter:

If we consider also the beginning of the call and salvation of mankind, in which, as the Apostle says, we are saved not of ourselves, nor of our works, but by the gift and grace of God, we can clearly see how the whole of perfection is "not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy," [Rom. 9:16] who makes us victorious over our faults, without any merits of works and life on our part to outweigh them, or any effort of our will availing to scale the difficult heights of perfection, or to subdue the flesh which we have to use.⁴⁴

Cassian asserts that there can be no conditions for salvation and perfection laid upon man, simply because both are entirely of God and never dependent on anything of man. Both are neither attained nor retained by human pious acts, but attributed to the grace of God. On the basis of all foregoing passages, it can be said that there are no points of difference between salvation and perfection in their source and characteristics. The problems surrounding the divine initiative of salvation have usually been treated with that of the perfection. Later, Cassian mentions them together again, saying, "He desires and looks for our perfection

⁴² *Ibid.* XII.9

⁴³ *Ibid.* XII.10

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* XII.11

and salvation far more than we do ourselves.”⁴⁵ The terms ‘salvation’ and ‘perfection’ might be even seen to be used interchangeably, though each has its own meaning. For him, both economies are the two aspects of God’s saving work, and the inseparable purpose of God. In his later saying, we find that Cassian includes the visitant, disciplinary and coercive acts of God in the divine saving work: “He visits us with His regard and chastens us to our soul's health; that even against our will we are sometimes drawn by Him to salvation.”⁴⁶ For Cassian, the conceptual sphere of salvation ranges from the beginning of the call to perfection through to sanctifying chastisement. Thus, we ought not to regard Cassian’s notion of salvation as a past fact that one has already attained, or as a progressive on-going process, rather as a prospective fact that one will receive on some unknown future occasion within the middle of the gradual transforming course over a lifetime. Surely salvation, in the eyes of the desert tradition, is not attained till death. His opinion on salvation is consistent with the tradition of the *Apophthegmata* and other desert monastic literature, as we have seen above. Following the desert tradition, Cassian provides us with a broad view of their teachings.

Prior to the long sentence quoted above, Cassian briefly provides two other examples of the good thief and David, to illustrate his affirmation that it is impossible for a man by his own efforts to gain entry into Paradise and pardon for such grievous sins. He asserts that the former did not win such bliss through any merits of his own confession, but by a gift of divine mercy. It is obviously too late then to do anything more than merely to depend on the mercy of God. At this point, Cassian does not ask how room was made in the thief’s soul for confession’s

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* XII.14

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* XII.18

appropriation of Christ. Next, in the same manner, Cassian insists that David did not efface his deadly sins by his penitence, but by the grace of God. Like the thief's confession, his begging forgiveness is not work, nor merit, nor condition. Although the king experienced a change turning from his sins before he had reached the place of pardon, Cassian stops short of asking what caused his conversion, or what brought David to repent. Cassian merely ascribes his receiving of remission to the grace of God. In both cases, the way of gaining salvation and remission is not through what they have done, but the gift of a merciful God. It seems that nothing is required of them. Here, a difficulty arises from this affirmation. How can we place their confessions, which might be seen as a preparation for salvation and remission? Cassian avoids metaphysical analysis, as he frequently confines his discussions to the experiential or practical level, as Pristas points out.⁴⁷ Cassian perceives that he has to steer a safe course between the twin faults, derived from the foregoing, uselessness of human pious acts on the one hand and single dependence on human good works on the other. From Chapters 13 to 19, Cassian presents his efforts to reconcile grace and free will, based upon the teachings and faith of the ancient fathers, "which still remains intact among their successors."⁴⁸ Illustrating the infirmity of man's will, He notes, "perfection cannot possibly be gained without these (human efforts), but that by these only, without the grace of God nobody can ever attain it."⁴⁹ The following passage contains a number of manifest points dangerously akin to semi-Pelagianism.

For when we say that human efforts cannot of themselves secure it without the aid of God, we thus insist that God's mercy and grace are bestowed only upon those who labour and exert themselves, and are granted (to use the Apostle's

⁴⁷ Pristas, "The Theological Anthropology of John Cassian," p. 352.

⁴⁸ *Institutes* XII.19

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* XII.14

expression) to them that “will” and “run,” according to that which is sung in the person of God in the eighty-eighth Psalm: “I have laid help upon one that is mighty, and have exalted one chosen out of my people.” [Ps. 89:20] For we say, in accordance with our Saviour’s words, that it is given to them that ask, and opened to them that knock and found by them that seek; [Matt. 7:7] but that the asking, the seeking, and the knocking on our part are insufficient unless the mercy of God gives what we ask, and opens that at which we knock, and enables us to find that which we seek. For He is at hand to bestow all these things, if only the opportunity is given to Him by our good will. For He desires and looks for our perfection and salvation far more than we do ourselves⁵⁰

Though Gazet condemns Cassian’s exegesis of the above passage as “*nimis libera*”,⁵¹ he reports the opinions of the desert fathers introduced by him. His fidelity to the received teachings of the fathers is justified in comparison with *Conferences XIII*, which is attributed to Abba Chaeremon. In both books, as we have seen in the last chapter, it is said that human acts in co-operation with the work of divine grace can actually participate in the way of their own salvation and perfection. As Cassian notes that God draws us toward salvation against our wills,⁵² he affirms the divine initiative. On the other hand, when he says here that “God’s grace is bestowed only upon those who labour and exert themselves,” he also affirms the value of a sinners’ own initiative. Salvation and its final purpose partially presuppose human synergism. It is a working together of God and man, a synergism of God’s grace and man’s efforts to receive and assume them.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* XII.14

⁵¹ *Ibid.* XII.14; PL 49, Gazet’s notes, cols. 447-8.

⁵² *Ibid.* XII.18; *Conferences VII.8*

However, Cassian always emphasises that the way and means of achieving them are through divine grace. How can we interpret Cassian's understanding of the two truths of the initiative, that man depends absolutely upon God's grace, and that it is demanded "the asking, the seeking, and the knocking on our part"? The key to the right understanding of salvation and perfection lies in the right understanding of the experiences of the desert elders attained to the crown of virtues in the inter-relation between human will and the divine grace. Cassian notes that the elders "show us the road by which we may arrive at it by a most sure pathway; and who also testify that they have themselves reached it by faith rather than by any merits of their efforts."⁵³ Why does Cassian suddenly adapt a new term 'by faith', not 'by grace'? What does it mean? For the answer, we have to read the following sentences:

And further, the purity of heart that they have acquired has taught them this above all; viz., to recognize more and more that they are burdened with sin (for their compunction for their faults increases day by day in proportion as their purity of soul advances), and to sigh continually from the bottom of their heart because they see that they cannot possibly avoid the spots and blemishes of those faults which are ingrained in them through the countless triflings of the thoughts. And therefore they declared that they looked for the reward of the future life, not from the merits of their works, but from the mercy of the Lord, taking no credit to themselves for their great circumspection of heart in comparison with others, since they ascribed this not to their own exertions, but to divine grace.⁵⁴

⁵³ *Institutes* XII.15

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* XII.15

This means that those who have endeavoured recognise that they are unable to avoid faults, that “they could not attain that purity of heart for which they yearned while weighed down by the burden of the flesh.”⁵⁵ Then, as they come to search, heavenly saving forces move down to meet their need. Cassian supposes that when the sigh of the human incapacity rises from the depths of one's heart, their need is faith, which, in the next chapter, he exhorts his readers to accept:

We ought to believe not merely that we cannot secure this actual perfection by our own efforts and exertions, but also that we cannot perform those things which we practise for its sake, viz., our efforts and exertions and desires, without the assistance of the divine protection, and the grace of His inspiration, chastisement, and exhortation, which He ordinarily sheds abroad in our hearts either through the instrumentality of another, or in His own person coming to visit us.⁵⁶

Cassian enforces the faith through which his readers depend upon the assistance of God's protection and grace given in their different forms. No bodily toil, no act of self-denial, no exercise of moral choice can achieve perfection without the aid of divine grace, so lavishly bestowed upon man's weak, puny will. This faith, however, does not devalue human effort, but coexists with them. They lead the ascetic labourer to have faith. Before this citation, Cassian begins this chapter by encouraging the necessary asceticism: “We ought, in accordance with their teaching and instruction, so to press towards it, and to be diligent in fastings, vigils, prayers, and contrition of heart and body, for fear lest all these things should be rendered useless by an attack of this malady [pride].”⁵⁷ In the same chapter, he

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* XII.15

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* XII.16

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* XII.16

simultaneously demands not only human effort, but also faith. To be careful is not the former, but the spiritual pride rising by them. In the following chapter, Cassian shows the complete dependence of the Son on the Father as the most obvious model for us:

The Author of our salvation teaches us what we ought not merely to think, but also to acknowledge in everything that we do. "I can," He says, "of mine own self do nothing, but the Father which abideth in me, He doeth the works." [John 14:10; 5:30] He says, speaking in the human nature which He had taken, that He could do nothing of Himself; and shall we, who are dust and ashes, think that we have no need of God's help in what pertains to our salvation?⁵⁸

In the various citations from Psalms,⁵⁹ the noun "salvation" occurs five times, and the verb "save" four times in this chapter. Like Christ, the psalmists are other examples depending upon God's protection, and professing His saving activity. These passages are used for instructing on the way in which the reader must pray for gaining that of God. In between the citations, Cassian explains in detail why, and for what, his reader prays:

Again, mindful of our own infirmity, and of the fact that while still burdened with the weak flesh we cannot without His assistance overcome such bitter foes as our sins are, let us say... let us cry to Him with the inmost feelings of our heart, for all these things, because we have fought, and have obtained from Him the light of knowledge, and self-control and discretion, and because He has furnished us with His own arms, and strengthened us with a girdle of virtue, and because He

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* XII.17

⁵⁹ Ps. 118:13, 14; 94:17-19; Ps. 35:2-4; 44:4-8; 18:2-4, 29-30, 33-41, 43.

has made our enemies turn their backs upon us, and has given us the power of scattering them like the dust before the wind.⁶⁰

Here, we understand his words, “what pertains to salvation”. For Cassian, to overcome the weakness of ourselves and the strength of our enemies, and then to gain the virtues are the aspects of salvation, which is fulfilled little by little in the interplay between human action, faith and prayer, and the responding grace of the divine. This text clearly points to a continued work of God in the life of the monks. God does not simply give them the beginning of salvation and then abandon them to their human self-efforts. Rather, the work begun in them is continued to completion by the divine’s strengthening grace. Cassian is convinced of God’s assistance, provided through human prayer. To grant a great source of encouragement concerning prayer, in the following chapter, he devises a plot to show what redemptive activity God bestows upon us by His daily providence:

He delivers us from the craft of our enemies; that He works with us so that we can overcome the sins of the flesh, that, even without our knowing it, He shields us from dangers; that He protects us from falling into sin; that He helps us and enlightens us, so that we can understand and recognize the actual help which He gives us, (which some will have it is what is meant by the law); that, when we are through His influence secretly struck with compunction for our sins and negligences, He visits us with His regard and chastens us to our soul's health; that even against our will we are sometimes drawn by Him to salvation; lastly that this very free will of ours, which is more readily inclined to sin, is turned by

⁶⁰ *Institutes* XII.17

Him to a better purpose, and by His prompting and suggestion, bent towards the way of virtue.⁶¹

Since He provides a way of coping with enemies and sins, we will be able to deal with and overcome whatever obstacles and temptations come our way on our road to salvation. But God's activity does not make void free will. We are able to make use of our free will in choosing to repent of our sins, and turn to the way of virtue in co-operation with God's aid. We naturally co-operate with Him in a consciousness of the divine help, or in an unconsciousness of that; and this is because it is He that is working in us the willing and the doing. However, not all salvation and achievement of virtues come through human actions, freely chosen in co-operation with the divine help, because of the possible non-cooperation of our will. In this case, nothing is left for us to do good, so that all things "drawn by Him to salvation" are in God's hands. Cassian affirms that His saving activity has two initiatives, which is sometimes synergetic, and at other times completely independent from the human side. If one takes into consideration what God does for us, human effort even in terms of synergism plays a small, certainly not the dominant, role.

In the following chapter, he closes this section by returning to the subject of faith. Repeating 'faith' five times, Cassian concludes, "the character of perfection is to be found in that faith (the simple faith of the Apostles) without which neither piety towards God, nor purification from sin, nor amendment of life, nor perfection of virtue can be secured."⁶² How is one to explain this statement of the relation between faith and human pious effort? Faith is at the very heart of perfection, for

⁶¹ *Ibid.* XII.18

⁶² *Ibid.* XII.19

it is the vehicle by which the monks, leaning upon the power and faithfulness of God, are empowered to receive the grace of God. Thus, Cassian declares that faith, in the sense of receiving certain divine aid, is indispensable to salvation and perfection.

On the basis of the foregoing considerations, we realise the relation of the four leading ideas in the section from Chapters 13 to 19, which start with the experience of the elders, and finishes with their faith. The quadripartite process toward perfection can be summarised in the following table.

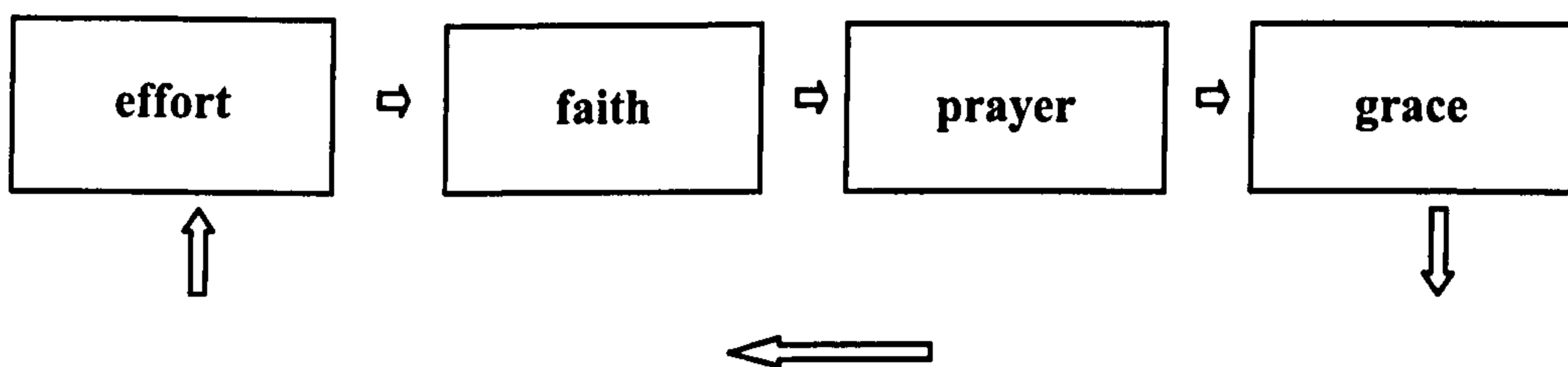


Figure 4: The process of the four leading ideas toward perfection in *Institutes* XII.13-19

In this circulating process, Cassian provides a safe way of avoiding pride, which is a denial of God's grace as the basis for all ascetic achievement, and of simultaneously emphasising human effort. He seems to insist upon a proper balance between the two.

5.3 THE SOTERIOLOGY OF ABBA PINUFIUS IN *INSTITUTES VI, CONFERENCES XX*

In *Institutes VI.32-43*, Cassian inserts a compressed exhortation, which Abba Pinufius gave in the presence of Cassian and Germanus to a brother whom he admitted into the monastery. Pinufius views the monks as “those who are longing to be converted to Christ,” and the monastic life “to secure one’s salvation.”⁶³ Conversion means separation from society and the world, or more precisely the entering of a monastic order. Presenting how one can mount up to the heights of perfection, he refers to a prerequisite for conversion: ““The beginning” of our salvation and the safeguard of it is, as I said, “the fear of the Lord.”(Prov. 9:10) For through this those who are trained in the way of perfection can gain a start in conversion as well as purification from vices and security in virtue.”⁶⁴ The fear of the Lord is a basic attitude of mortal beings before God to be put into a right relationship with Him, and to be able to avoid evil. This central concept that permeates the entire Bible functions as a good motive leading to conversion. Salvation consists of the growing steps from conversion by the fear of the Lord to perfection through purification. It is a complete change in our inward nature, our spiritual condition. Pinufius’ doctrine of salvation utilises a temporal scheme, in terms of its beginning, continuation, and completion, covering the whole experience of monastic life. What really is the ultimate goal of the saving process? What the monk is aiming at, what gives its final meaning to his life is expressed in his quotation of Acts 14:22: “through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.”⁶⁵ Pinufius did not explain what the kingdom means. In the

⁶³ *Ibid.* IV.33

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* IV.39

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* IV.38

following statement, he provides the complex Biblical conceptions involved in the doctrine of salvation:

For "trait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it." [Matt. 7:14] Consider therefore that you belong to the few and elect; and do not grow cold after the examples of the lukewarmness of many; but live as the few, that with the few you may be worthy of a place in the kingdom of God: for "many are called, but few chosen," [Matt. 22:14] and it is a "little flock to which it is the Father' good pleasure to give" [Luke 12:32] an inheritance.⁶⁶

The quoted Biblical passages combine an emphasis on the exclusiveness of God and the universality of his offer. He was referring to God's universal invitation. But everyone who has the opportunity will not respond; many who have heard will reject it. We should note the distinction here between calling and choosing, which needs the understanding of the context of quoted verses. Matthew's verse is the final saying that sums up the whole story in the parable of the wedding feast of a king's son (22:1-14). It appears after warning that the newly invited guests, who replaced those originally invited to the wedding banquet, must also meet the host's test of fitness. To enter the kingdom of God, expressed as a banquet, a mere acceptance of the king's invitation is not enough; an appropriate response is needed. To Matthew, in the understanding of Pinufius, the prepared participant by repentance and good works is the elect, worthy among the called. We can ask whether those who do respond do so because God has chosen them, or because of their own goodness. Rather than cause-and-effect, the notion of election here works together with the reality of human responsibility. In fact, Pinufius' emphasis is on the number, not the issue of God's choice. Quoting Luke 12:32 within Jesus

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* IV.38

teachings about wealth, he lays stress on the few in number who seek the kingdom (31), and are demanded to give their possessions in alms (33). Though Pinufius was not talking about temporal succession, we can arrange the logical order of the initial aspects of salvation: God firstly calls many, then few convert in the fear of the Lord, and finally God saves and transforms. They might be called the 'chosen few'.

After Pinufius' exhortation, the immediate responses of Cassian and Germanus appear in *Conferences XX.2*. They are cast down in despair by their inability to attain the degree of true renunciation that is set forth in the "difficult and elevated precepts". Germanus then consults Pinufius "with regard to the end of penitence and especially with regard to the marks of satisfaction, making us feel sure of the forgiveness of past sins, and spurring on the penitent to scale the heights of the perfection described above."⁶⁷ In his expressing of an assurance of forgiveness, Pinufius presents the means by which one can win pardon from God. The list of these means is classic, and very similar to those elucidated by Origen. These modes are seven in number: baptism, martyrdom, almsgiving, the forgiveness of others, the conversion of other sinners, a loving disposition, and the confession of sins, including tears and fasting.⁶⁸ But Pinufius intentionally makes twelve by adding five more to Origen's list: repentance, tears, self-imposed afflictions of heart and body, the intercession of holy persons, and the virtue of mercy and faith. As he says that "on the value and appeasing power of penitence many have published a great deal, not only in words but also in writing,"⁶⁹ the extended list seems to be a synthesis of his materials with well-founded Scriptural passages. With regard to the starting point, he states, "For eternal salvation is promised to the bare fact of

⁶⁷ *Conferences XX.3*

⁶⁸ *Homily on Leviticus 2.4*

⁶⁹ *Conferences XX.4*

penitence, of which the blessed Apostle Peter says: "Repent and be converted that your sins may be forgiven;" (Acts 3:19) and John the Baptist and the Lord Himself: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2)"⁷⁰ Salvation here is explicitly linked with the forgiveness of sins that is presupposed by repentance. It is brought forth for those in proper response to the required preparedness. At the end of the list, Pinufius concludes, "what great means of obtaining mercy the compassion of our Saviour has laid open to us, so that no one when longing for salvation need be crushed by despair, as he sees himself called to life by so many remedies."⁷¹ His emphasis on the mercy of Saviour is strengthened by the following saying:

Even if we have done all these things, they will not be able to expiate our offences, unless they are blotted out by the goodness and mercy of the Lord, who when He sees the service of pious efforts offered by us with a humble heart, supports our small and puny efforts with the utmost bounty.⁷²

The forgiveness of sins is not something that can be achieved by human effort and means. God provides not only the means for it for us, but also the expiation of our sins. The twelve modes of receiving forgiveness through human effort are not the trade provisos for God's absolution – the power of forgiveness lies firmly in the hands of God; there is no human initiative for it. When one accepts the principle that God's forgiveness is not an attainment, but an obtainment, there frequently is a tendency to overreact, even to deny the means by which the human being receives forgiveness. There is a tendency to insist that there must surely be some human initiative that lies between God's calling to the means and His absolution.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* XX.8

⁷¹ *Ibid.* XX.8

⁷² *Ibid.* XX.8

Pinufius, thus, propounds the dual aspects of human effort to his audience: (1) to fit oneself for the forgiveness by the twelve means, and then (2) to seek the grace of satisfaction by daily fasting and mortification of heart and body. To fit and to seek are not some good works that God must reward with absolution. They are not the cause of our remission, but the means by which we receive it.

5.4 THE SOTERIOLOGY OF ABBA MOSES IN CONFERENCES I, II

In Abba Moses' enumeration of the different forms of contemplation, there is a passing statement which makes us grasp something about salvation. He requires his listeners to contemplate what He has done at the very beginnings of salvation.

When we gaze in unbounded admiration on that ineffable mercy of His, which with unwearied patience endures countless sins which are every moment being committed under His very eyes, or the call with which from no antecedent merits of ours, but by the free grace of His pity He receives us; or again the numberless opportunities of salvation which He grants to those whom He is going to adopt--that He made us be born in such a way as that from our very cradles His grace and the knowledge of His law might be given to us, that He Himself, overcoming our enemy in us simply for the pleasure of His good will, rewards us with eternal bliss and everlasting rewards, when lastly He undertook the dispensation of His Incarnation for our salvation, and extended the marvels of His sacraments to all nations.⁷³

⁷³ *Ibid.* I.15.

One brings nothing when he is called by the grace. There can be no conditions for the calling laid upon man, simply because salvation is entirely of God and never dependent on anything of man. The grace which saves the sinner without any merit is completely preserved by this theological affirmation. To bring one into the status of an adopted child, He even arranges one's birthplace by divine Providence. God's saving activity is the one we rely upon entirely to save us. One might conclude from the preceding that salvation is completely a passive matter on the human part. This is not so, however. For Moses, salvation is not a static matter in which one is saved and then merely reposes in that knowledge. In Chapter 20, in which salvation and its final purpose is said to enter into the kingdom of heaven, he asserts that the monk without the means of discernment could not at some point reach his salvation. To attain salvation, the monk should discern his thoughts originating from three sources: God, himself, and the devil.⁷⁴ Moses wants to teach his listeners how to handle these thoughts. Particularly, they must cut off some thoughts made by the fraud of the devil in connection with pious and virtuous works that are brought to a bad end in the fire of Hell. In book II. 3, 5-8, the Abba is especially vehement in drawing his listeners' attention to several notable examples which came to a tragic death, or apostasy by the deception of the devil. These descriptions of the biblical and contemporary cases are apparently of genuinely called persons who later "deceived by some error and presumption," and became "involved in the darkness of still greater sins,"⁷⁵ thus lost their salvation. The result of these considerations is that there is a conditional character in Moses' thinking on salvation. As it is possible not to attain salvation even after being called, salvation is not an instantaneous occurrence, or complete in a moment as a

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* I.19

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* II.2

forensic or declarative matter, but an on-going process of monastic discipline throughout an entire lifetime. As it were, it is a continual salvation, or a being saved from calling to completion. This principle brings us to the questions of the human contribution in God's economy of salvation; what must we do to be saved? How do we enter the kingdom of God? In order to focus more sharply on the characteristics of the matter, we need to examine the whole framework on a large scale.

Cassian begins the first *Conference* by having Abba Moses provide a fundamental teaching of the goals: "All the arts and sciences have some goal or mark; and end or aim of their own, on which the diligent pursuer of each art has his eye, and so endures all sorts of toils and dangers and losses, cheerfully and with equanimity."⁷⁶ Representing some general examples, Moses says that "our profession too has its own goal and end," and asks them: "Wherefore, said he, answer and tell me what is the goal and end, which incite you to endure all these things so cheerfully."⁷⁷ Moses awakens his auditors to the fact that a distinct consciousness of their destination provides an important basis for the austere life. He distinguishes between the ultimate end (*finis*) and an immediate goal (*destinatio*, or *skopos*) of the monastic life. In reference to the *finis*, Cassian and Germanus respond that they endure all this for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, but admit that they do not know the *destinatio*. Agreeing to the proposal, Moses notes that "The end of our profession indeed, as I said, is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven: but the immediate aim or goal, is purity of heart, without which no one can gain that end."⁷⁸ What exactly does Moses understand by 'the kingdom of God'? In the following chapter, based on Rom. 6:22: "having indeed your fruit unto holiness,

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* I.2

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* I.2

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* I.4

and the end eternal life," he equates it with 'eternal life', and purity of heart with 'sanctification'.⁷⁹ A deliberate distinction is made between sanctification and eternal life. What then is the precise relationship of the former to the latter? Later, we find the answer when Moses gives his auditors a coherent account on the synonymousness of the kingdom of God and eternal life:

For as the kingdom of the devil is gained by consenting to sin, so the kingdom of God is attained by the practice of virtue in purity of heart and spiritual knowledge. But where the kingdom of God is, there most certainly eternal life is enjoyed, and where the kingdom of the devil is, there without doubt is death and the grave.⁸⁰

Moses affirms that the kingdom of God is the eternal world that is assigned to a sharer and an adherent who served and followed the Lord while in this life. The good works deserve the promised eternal place. The way of attaining to eternal life is open to those who achieve purity of heart through solitude, fastings, vigils, toils, bodily nakedness, meditation on Scripture, reading, and all other virtues.⁸¹ Moses states that these are restricted useful activities in this life only.⁸² On the other hand, there are two other works continuing without cease in the next world:

All men will pass from these manifold practical works to the love of God, and contemplation of heavenly things in continual purity of heart: to which those men who are urgent in devoting themselves to knowledge and purifying the heart, have chosen to give themselves up with all their might and main, betaking

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* I.5

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* I.14

⁸¹ *Ibid.* I.7

⁸² *Ibid.* I.10

themselves, while they are still in the flesh, to that duty, in which they are to continue, when they have laid aside corruption.⁸³

Richard Byrne expresses the strong future dimension of both love and contemplation: "Here we see again a realised eschatology: the present adaptation of our being to what we shall be hereafter."⁸⁴ The future is experienced here and now, not at the end of the world. In the following chapter, Moses, citing the famous Pauline passage in 1 Cor. 13:8, "Charity never faileth," states that charity alone remains to eternity.⁸⁵ Commenting on the priority of love over *charismata* like prophecies, tongues and knowledge, he demonstrates permanence and power of love: "it will continue in far greater vigour and excellence, and will never be weakened by any defect, but by means of its perpetual incorruption will cling to God more intently and earnestly."⁸⁶ Moses believes that the monk in love has a partial experience of the eschatological life; the full experience is still in the future. In the same sense, he evaluates the present degree of contemplation, which he has already described as the "main effort that the soul may ever cleave to God and to heavenly things"⁸⁷: "To cling to God continually, and as you say inseparably to hold fast to meditation on Him, is impossible for a man while still in this weak flesh of ours."⁸⁸ No one has sufficient basis for the uninterrupted contemplation of God in one's life-time. Later, Moses represents not only the matter of time, but also the differential feature of contents in contemplation this world and the next:

⁸³ *Ibid.* I.10

⁸⁴ Richard Byrne, "Cassian and the Goals of the Monastic Life," *Cistercian Studies* 22 (1987): 8.

⁸⁵ *Conferences* I.11

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* I.11

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* I.8

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* I.13

The contemplation of God is gained in a variety of ways. For we not only discover God by admiring His incomprehensible essence, a thing which still lies hid in the hope of the promise, but we see Him through the greatness of His creation, and the consideration of His justice, and the aid of His daily providence.⁸⁹

Moses continues by adding other sorts of contemplation. Although these are inferior to that of Heaven, they guide the contemplative to the place where "God is either seen by pure eyes or embraced."⁹⁰ Then, his former saying that "they come to that promise of the Lord the Saviour, which says "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" [Matt. 5:8],"⁹¹ becomes a reality in the present life, but not just an eschatological hope. The trilogy of purity of heart, love and contemplation leads the monk to the experience of the kingdom of God present in the midst, yet still to come. To Moses, the kingdom of God means not only a futuristic eschatological place reigned over by Christ, "when "all things are subdued unto Him," and God begins to be "all in all" [1 Cor. 15:28],"⁹² but also the invisible kingly rule, being experienced partially here and now in the monk's heart. Depending on his understanding of Jesus' dictum that "the kingdom of God is within you," [Luke 17:21] he says that "when the devil has been expelled from this [heart], and sins no longer reign in it, it follows that the kingdom of God is

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* I.15

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* I.15

⁹¹ *Ibid.* I.10

⁹² *Ibid.* I.13. The verse of 1 Cor. 15:28 were quoted four times in Cassian's whole works; *Institutes* V.4, *Conferences* I.13; VII.6; X.6. It is worth pointing out that "God is to be "all in all"" is used as an epitomised goal of monastic life except the Moses' citation here. In the three cases, it is the goal accomplished in the monks in the past already realized, or present being realizing, and to be accomplished in the future. On the other hand, Moses cites the verse only as a phenomenon in the final end. This is the very habitual use of Origen that at the end, all created things will eventually be brought into subjection to God, who will become "all in all" as at the beginning. (*De Principiis* 1:4, 6; 3:6; 4:4, *On Prayer* 25:2, *Commentary on John* 1:32) As the verse was particularly important for Origen's eschatology because of its implication of *apokatastasis*, we can not find any altered application like in the three quotations of Cassian's work.

founded in us.”⁹³ Until one submits to God’s kingship, his mind is actually the territory of the devil who rules and reigns there whether one is aware of it or not. Thus, it is vital to renew the heart that is turned away from God. He must take control of our mind. Moses now goes further to think primarily of this sense, accompanied by ascetic tasks. His listeners are commanded to prepare their heart as the present personal kingdom for Christ until arriving at the state of “true blessedness as constant calm and eternal joy.”⁹⁴ To stamp the authority of his assertion, Moses cites the various Biblical passages describing the character of the reign of God. This condition is epitomised in three Pauline terms:

Of this kingdom the Apostle describes the character, when he says “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” [Rom. 14:17] And so if the kingdom of God is within us, and the actual kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy, then the man who abides in these is most certainly in the kingdom of God.⁹⁵

That is the state of the mind of one in the kingdom of God. Three qualities are the signs of the presence of God’s kingdom. When humanity performs the features of heavenly life, the kingdom of God is a here-and-now experience.

In closing, the key point of Moses’ view might be summarised as follows. In the first of his *Conferences*, we find an explicit teaching that salvation is fully the work of God. However, we can not take it literally and apply it to the whole framework of his doctrine of salvation, since the passage in small part is inconsistent with his whole exposition. The monk’s ultimate goal is salvation, which equates to the

⁹³ *Ibid.* I.13

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* I.13

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* I.13

kingdom of God and eternal life. Purity of heart, namely, sanctification is the immediate way to the ultimate goal. Moses asserts that unless the monk keeps this with all diligence and persistence, he will never succeed in arriving at the ultimate aim which he desires.⁹⁶ In this sense, there is no guarantee that those who have received the grace of God's calling will persevere in the process of sanctification, and some may fall away and be lost forever. Thus, the monk must aspire to purity of heart in this life by giving themselves over to bodily austerities and contemplation. The moment the monk attains it, His kingdom is established in his heart, and salvation is secured. In the long run the monks will experience, in this life, the fulfilment of salvation.

5.5 THE SOTERIOLOGY OF ABBA PAPHNUTIUS IN CONFERENCES III

Abba Paphnutius, called *Kephalas*, exhibits a coherent theological erudition. At one point, Palladius praises him highly as the most learned man and a possessor of the gift of divine knowledge of Scripture,⁹⁷ Cassian also presents the Abba as the most intellectual representative in the desert of Scete; "like some great luminary shining with the brightness of knowledge."⁹⁸ His theological perception is revealed when he plays a great role as protector of orthodox doctrines in the Anthropomorphite controversy.⁹⁹ In consideration of his great standing and his

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* I.4

⁹⁷ Palladius, *The Lausiatic History*, 47.3,5.

⁹⁸ *Conferences* III.1

⁹⁹ For further details, see *ibid.* X.2, 3.

direct relationship to Cassian as “the presbyter of our congregation”¹⁰⁰, one can hypothesise that Paphnutius provides a theological framework for the formation of Cassian's thought.

The whole discourse of *Conferences III* is apparently related to our investigation, which considers the doctrine of salvation alone. This book is divided into two main parts. In Chapters 1-10, three different sorts of God's calling at the beginning of salvation, the three sequent renunciations and final end of salvation are all discussed. Paphnutius' assertion that the beginning and completion of salvation result from the grace of God, was questioned by Germanus: “Where then is there room for free will, and how is it ascribed to our efforts that we are worthy of praise, if God both begins and ends everything in us which concerns our salvation?”¹⁰¹ The latter part in Chapters 12-22 discusses the necessities and roles of grace and free will from the beginning to the end of salvation.

In the previous section, even though Moses' teaching related to salvation are considerable, the details are rather less satisfying. However, that of Paphnutius is more excellent in content. He is extremely logical in stating his views on the order of salvation. He asserts that there is a middle phase of co-operation between human free will and God's help between the beginning and the end of salvation.¹⁰² We shall therefore examine Paphnutius' scheme of salvation in terms of its beginning, process, and completion, namely in *ordo salutis*.

¹⁰⁰ *Conferences X.2*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid. III.11*

¹⁰² *Ibid. III.12*

5.5.1 The Movement from Monergism to Synergism

The Abba points out that before salvation, man is in a devastating condition. We are “by nature children of wrath”(Eph. 2:3), and of the devil (John 8:44) from our very birth.¹⁰³ He believes that no one is exempt from sin, and sin is transmitted by procreation. It connotes the sinfulness of human nature and its corollaries, human inability for salvation. It is apparent that human nature is in need of some radical change or metamorphosis by supernatural work, rather than by mere modification or adjustment achieved by human effort. Passing over to deal with an alteration of the substance of the soul like the new birth, or adoption, Paphnutius refers to the call as God’s first act of salvation. By the grace of God man is called to move from the house of our former father to the new house of the true Father.¹⁰⁴ Paphnutius classifies callings, by which one enters into the monastic life, into three kinds, and ranks them in order of excellence, from God, through man, and from necessity of life. He offers the inducement, emerging phenomena, and biblical and monastic examples of each calling. The evidence of the first is that “whenever some inspiration has taken possession of our heart, and even while we are asleep stirs in us a desire for eternal life and salvation, and bids us follow God and cleave to His commandments with life-giving contrition”¹⁰⁵. It is God’s internal work in us, which brings about a very bright, noble conversion. He is at work before we desire salvation. Examples of this are the call of Abraham and the Apostles, and Antony’s conversion. The second occurs “through man; viz., when we are stirred up by the example of some of the saints, and their advice, and thus inflamed with the desire of salvation.”¹⁰⁶ We are called through God’s servants, standing ready to bring

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* III.7

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* III.7

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* III.4

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

people to Him. Paphnutius ascribes this calling to the grace of God, because calling is His sovereign act, whether He uses an intermediate or not. The examples of this calling are the children of Israel, called from Egyptian bondage by Moses, and Paphnutius himself and his listeners. The third comes from compulsion, or out of necessity by painful calamity when one is in the riches and pleasures of this life. Temptations suddenly threaten with peril of death, or death of those dear to him, or cause financial loss. Consequently, "at length even against our will we are driven to turn to God, whom we scorned to follow in the days of our wealth."¹⁰⁷ It is a case of God's chastening what is outward, physical, and material as a result of His displeasure with us. He uses the misfortune as the means for calling: "in as much as the loving kindness of the Lord secured for them the opportunity for repentance."¹⁰⁸ Paphnutius offers a few examples of this calling from the stories of Israel abandoned to the enemies. Two other personal examples are Paul, who "was suddenly blinded, and seemed to be drawn against his will into the way of salvation,"¹⁰⁹ and Abba Moses, who was compelled by fear of the death penalty for a murder to adopt the monastic life.¹¹⁰ Paphnutius closes this discussion with a comparison between a calling and its end. The nature of a call, whether it be more or less noble, does not determine the next phase. As in the case of Judas, a splendid beginning is not in itself a guarantee of a successful end. All depends on co-operation in one's voluntary response to God's grace.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* III.5

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Moses is not the author of the first two Conferences. This description that he took monastic asylum in an attempt to avoid punishment for his crime and rigorous asceticism, accords with the accounts of Ethiopian Moses. For the four ancient sources of him, see Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, "Ethiopian Moses(Collected Sources)" in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, pp. 329-48.

The threefold framework is repeated in Chapter 19, where Paphnutius deals with the beginning of our good will and its completion:

The beginning of our good will is given to us by the inspiration of the Lord, when He draws us towards the way of salvation either by His own act, or by the exhortations of some man, or by compulsion; and that the consummation of our good deeds is granted by Him in the same way.¹¹¹

The beginning of good will varies directly with the sort of calling. Calling is logically prior to having good will. When God calls us, it is injected into us by Him “Who is the unseen ruler of the human heart.”¹¹² There is a difference between God’s chosen means for the infusion, but not in quality of the will. Paphnutius asserts that the divine initiative is a necessary precondition for good will. Without this grace no one will ever begin the spiritual journey. His view is clearly monergistic at the initial point of one’s movement towards the way of salvation. It explains why the Abba overlooks whether man has the ability to accept, or refuse God’s calling. This important point escapes the generalising glance of most scholars who regard *Conferences* as Cassian’s single discourse. For example, Adolph Harnack summarises Cassian’s view in the following way: “Hence grace is absolutely necessary in order to reach final salvation [perfection], but not so much so in order to make a start.”¹¹³ Reinhold Seeberg comments on Cassian’s idea that grace is given “in order that he who has begun to will may be assisted,” not to give “the power to will.”¹¹⁴ These quite imprecise observations with respect to the beginning of salvation are unavoidable for those who are unable to find many

¹¹¹ *Conferences* III.19

¹¹² *Ibid.* III.12

¹¹³ Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma, part 2, book 2*, trans. James Millar, 1961, p. 247.

¹¹⁴ Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines, vol. 1, History of Doctrines in the Ancient Church*, p. 369.

points of difference among the discoursing Abbas in *Conferences*. Their opinion could be in accord with the viewpoint of Abba Chaeremon of *Conferences XIII*: “when He sees in us some beginnings of a good will, He at once enlightens it and strengthens it and urges it on towards salvation,”¹¹⁵ but not that of Paphnutius. He has a different point of view of the beginning of salvation. To Paphnutius, with the assistance of divine grace, to will and to do what is good takes place after God alone has infused good will. It flows from a divine initiative. Let's have a look at the following passage to substantiate his idea:

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do according to good will.” [Phil. 2:13] What could well be clearer than the assertion that both our good will and the completion of our work are fully wrought in us by the Lord? And again “For it is granted to you for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for Him.” [Phil. 1:29] Here also he declares that the beginning of our conversion and faith, and the endurance of suffering is a gift to us from the Lord.¹¹⁶

We must remember that the Abba distinguishes the beginning of good will from its use afterward, as he does the beginning of salvation from the intermediate process. Whereas the former is monergistic, the latter is synergistic. After the dispensation of good will, God gives the commission of the right and responsibility of its use to us. In the opening chapter of the discussion of divine grace and free will, Paphnutius notes, “as we know that God creates opportunities of salvation in various ways, it is in our power to make use of the opportunities granted to us by heaven more or less earnestly.”¹¹⁷ It is his conviction that we are responsible for

¹¹⁵ *Conferences XIII.8*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid. III.15*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid. III.12*

our actions, as it is in our power whether we act in such a manner or not. In the closing chapter, he repeats this point after ascribing good will and deed to God's grace:

But that it is in our own power to follow up the encouragement and assistance of God with more or less zeal, and that accordingly we are rightly visited either with reward or with punishment, because we have been either careless or careful to correspond to His design and providential arrangement made for us with such kindly regard.¹¹⁸

In the middle of the above two citations from Chapters 12 to 18, Paphnutius is deeply concerned about how God assists human efforts and free will in various aspects: (1) advance and perfection of virtue in Chapter 13, (2) understanding and performance of God's law in Chapters 14-5, (3) endurance in several kinds of suffering in Chapter 15, (4) perseverance in faith and strengthening faith in Chapter 16, (5) endurance in temptation in Chapter 17, (6) making fit our souls for every good work in Chapter 17, (7) the continual fear of the Lord in the heart holding fast to Him in Chapter 18. Each article has its biblical ground. When we consider the above list, we discover how dependent we are upon Him in every detail of our spiritual lives. It points to the fact that we really need God, and it is the need of grace that Paphnutius brings out. The human will is not the driving force in the completion of salvation. There is sufficient grace to solve all our problems in going to God. Before Paphnutius views Him as the Judge who is ready to punish us for failure, or to pay reward, God is illustrated as He who furnishes sufficient requirements in the hopes of improving us. Paphnutius thus declares that "everything which concerns salvation was given them by the Lord...

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* III.19

everything which is good is brought to perfection by the aid of the Lord.”¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Abba takes great care not to apply his assertion unnecessarily and foolishly to slighting our zeal and efforts.¹²⁰ Once good will is given by God, the rest of the saving process is synergistic. We must co-operate with the assistance of grace, providing the needed power to do good. In consequence of the fruits of one's labour, “we are rightly visited either with reward or with punishment.” Without the real validity of the free choice of the will, any moral demand or judgement is without objective foundation. Paphnutius provides two biblical examples that present monergism at the beginning of salvation, then synergism throughout the rest of the process. The first is quoted from Deut. 7:1-3:

“When,” says he, “the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which thou art going to possess, and shall have destroyed many nations before thee, the Hittite, and the Gergeshite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations much more numerous than thou art and stronger than thou, and the Lord thy God shall have delivered them to thee, thou shalt utterly destroy them. Thou shalt make no league with them. Neither shalt thou make marriage with them.” So then Scripture declares that it is the free gift of God that they are brought into the land of promise, that many nations are destroyed before them, that nations more numerous and mightier than the people of Israel are given up into their hands. But whether Israel utterly destroys them, or whether it preserves them alive and spares them, and whether or not it makes a league with them, and makes marriages with them or not, it declares, lies in their own power. And by this testimony we can clearly see what we ought to ascribe to free will, and what to the design and daily assistance of the Lord, and

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* III.16

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* III.15

that it belongs to divine grace to give us opportunities of salvation and prosperous undertakings and victory: but that it is ours to follow up the blessings which God gives us with earnestness or indifference.¹²¹

The Israelites, first of all, received the free gift of God, then were compelled to act in obedience to the divine instructions. In this way, Paphnutius' point is that they must fulfil the commandments with the help of the Lord. That "God shall have delivered them to thee" is the synergistic grace of God, whereas that "thou shalt utterly destroy them" is the obligation of the free will. The second example comes from two blended healing accounts of the blind men and the ten lepers:

The fact that Jesus passed by them, was a free gift of Divine providence and condescension. But the fact that they cried out and said "Have mercy on us, Lord, thou son of David," [Matt. 20:31] was an act of their own faith and belief. That they received the sight of their eyes was a gift of Divine pity. But that after the reception of any blessing, the grace of God, and the use of free will both remain, the case of the ten lepers, who were all healed alike, shows us. For when one of them through goodness of will returned thanks, the Lord looking for the nine, and praising the one, showed that He was ever anxious to help even those who were unmindful of His kindness. For even this is a gift of His visitation; viz., that he receives and commends the grateful one, and looks for and censures those who are thankless.¹²²

¹²¹ *Ibid.* III.19

¹²² *Ibid.*

As in the former case, Paphnutius again stresses the entity and working of both grace and free will after the receipt of a free gift.¹²³ By free choice, the responsiveness of the blind men and the only thankful one plays a decisive role in the reception of further grace. Not only to them, but also to the nine out of ten who did not respond in the same way, Christ's grace still operates upon them in looking for, helping and censuring. There is no reason obliging Lord to be gracious to such ingrates. Paphnutius tacitly shows How He is merciful to the undeserved. At this point, one is left with the question whether He will force their free will to be willing, when they are not willing to seek grace. In contrast to the beginning of good will, God does not violate human freedom in the middle phase of salvation. Instead of coercion, God decides to allow us to suffer abandonment for our responsibility of disobedience and hardness of heart. In the following chapter, which concludes the discussion of the above examples, Paphnutius presents God's reaction to the working of free will:

We must believe that whatever is good is carried out by the will of God and by His aid, and whatever is the reverse is done by His permission, when the Divine Protection is withdrawn from us for our sins and the hardness of our hearts, and suffers the devil and the shameful passions of the body to lord it over us.¹²⁴

¹²³ In *The Lausiatic History* 47, Palladius gives a similar teaching of Paphnutius with citation of Rom. 1:26, 28, which was delivered when he with Evagrius and Albanus consult him. Driscoll, following Butler, says that "This is perhaps best explained a dependence by Cassian on Palladius' text." Yet this judgment is perhaps too simplistic, when one considers more sophisticated, frequent teaching on abandonment in Evagrius works. In his *The Gnostikos* 28, Evagrius shows five causes of abandonment by God, while Paphnutius gives two reasons. It may indicate that Evagrius later developed himself the Abba's teaching. If the reports by Palladius and Cassian can not be an abbreviated form of Evagrius' teaching, we are convinced that all three consultants reflect direct influence from the same consultant, Paphnutius. Cf. Jeremy Driscoll, "Evagrius and Paphnutius on the Causes for Abandonment by God," *Studia monastica* 39 (1997): 259-286; C. Butler, *The Lausiatic History of Palladius II*, pp. 224-225.

¹²⁴ *Conferences* III.20. In *Conferences* VI.11, Abba Theodore notes on God's abandonment: "Wherefore like a skilful physician, who has tried all saving cures, and sees there is no remedy left which can be applied to their disease, the Lord is in a manner overcome by their iniquities and is obliged to desist from that kindly chastisement of His, and so

In reference to abandonment, Paphnutius further substantiates his point by citing Rom. 1:26, 28 and Ps. 81:12, 13. Germanus, repeating the same quotation of the Psalms: "But My people did not hear My voice and Israel did not obey me: Wherefore I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts. They shall walk after their own inventions,"¹²⁵ interrupts the Abba with a question: "How then is it true that our salvation does not depend upon ourselves, if God Himself has given us the power either to hearken or not to hearken?"¹²⁶ He could not reconcile divine sovereign grace with human freedom in hearing his discourse. Paphnutius firstly gives a second caution to his listeners against a misunderstanding in the opposite direction: "Let no one then try by a false interpretation to twist that which we brought forward to prove that nothing can be done without the Lord, nor take it in support of free will, in such a way as to try to take away from man the grace of God and His daily oversight."¹²⁷ He, then, answers him with the same typical framework of synergism, and attempts to show that they are not contradictory:

The Lord was wont to do not only by means of the written law, but also by daily exhortations, as this which is given by Isaiah: "All day long have I stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and gain-saying people." [Is. 65:2] Both points then can be supported from this passage, where it says: "If My people would have hearkened, and if Israel had walked in My ways, I should soon have put down their enemies, and laid My hand on those that trouble them." [Ps. 81:15] For just as free will is shown by the disobedience of the people, so the government of God and His assistance is made clear by the beginning and end of the verse, where He

denounces them saying : "I will no longer be angry with thee, and thy jealousy has departed from thee." (Ezek. 16:42) "

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* III.20

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* III.21

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* III.22

implies that He had spoken to them before, and that afterwards He would put down their enemies, if they would have hearkened unto Him.¹²⁸

While the existence of free will is proved by the disobedience of Israel, the grace and assistance of God by guidance of the law, advance warning, daily exhortations, and guarantee of victory. Then he dismisses his entire discourse with the final sentence, showing the epitome of his intention: “we have no wish to do away with man's free will by what we have said, but only to establish the fact that the assistance and grace of God are necessary to it every day and hour.”¹²⁹

In the spiritual journey, the will plays perhaps a small, but not the only role. There is a big exterior divine supporter. It is a profound sense of the frailty of the human will, “which is more readily inclined to vice”¹³⁰ that forces Paphnutius to reiterate the need for God's help. For that reason, Paphnutius urges his listeners, “so we ought every moment to pray.”¹³¹ That is the only demand between Chapters 12-19. Prayer is the best way to overcome the weakness of free will. That “they prayed,” or “he prayed” are repeated nine times within the eight chapters. Paphnutius is convinced that prayer is a powerful and effective means of attaining the following results: “the Lord's help is always joined to it, and by this, that we may not be altogether destroyed by our free will, when He sees that we have stumbled, He sustains and supports us, as it were by stretching out His hand.”¹³² The concept of responsibility is necessarily tied to the concept of prayer that brings divine cooperation and direction that is always ready to assist the feeble free will. Without the foundation of divine unseen grace upholding the will, there is no progress. It

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* III.12

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

grows in strength and efficiency as its prayer life develops. In the Chapters 6-10, there is another requirement obligatory upon all monks. It is not work in addition to prayer, but work simultaneous with prayer.

5.5.2 The Movement from Synergism to Monergism

Although calling is instantaneously complete, it is not an end in itself. After being called to go to the Father, to enter the eternal house, the monk must pass through three progressive renunciations, which finally lead to the perfection of the highest heavenly bliss. Cassian's early definition of the monk as the "renunciant"¹³³ is strengthened with Paphnutius' teaching that the whole of monastic life consists of a series of renunciatory acts.

The first is that by which as far as the body is concerned we make light of all the wealth and goods of this world; the second, that by which we reject the fashions and vices and former affections of soul and flesh; the third, that by which we detach our soul from all present and visible things, and contemplate only things to come, and set our heart on what is invisible.¹³⁴

He proceeds to a model of this renunciation. It is the divine command of Gen. 12:1 spoken to Abraham that he should depart his homeland, forsake his old network of kinship, and embark for an unknown land, about which he knows only that God will show it to him. Abraham's threefold abandonment of land, kindred, and home lays a foundation for the voyage of the renunciant. He also goes on to apply this

¹³³ *Institutes* IV.1

¹³⁴ *Conferences* III.6

distinction to the three books of Wisdom ascribed to Solomon: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. In this, Paphnutius follows Origen, who presents the soul's successive ascent according to a basic triple pattern of Greek pedagogy:¹³⁵ ethics, assigned to Proverbs, which teaches the proper manner of virtuous living, physics, assigned to Ecclesiastes, which presents knowledge of the nature of things and of how they are to be used as the Creator intended, and enoptics, assigned to the Song of Songs, which teaches the communion with God by the paths of charity between the Bride and Bridegroom. Louth states, "we have then a threefold division of the soul's ascent." To Origen, when the soul has completed the first two courses of study, then it ascends to contemplation of God: "it is ready to come to dogmatic and mystical matters and to arise to the contemplation of divinity with pure spiritual love."¹³⁶ Like Origen, Paphnutius relates the three progressive stages to the three books of Wisdom, but does not harp on the same string at the representation of the second renunciation: "to the second Ecclesiastes corresponds, as there everything which is done under the sun is declared to be vanity."¹³⁷ In all of his ideas, there is no natural contemplation that is further developed by Evagrius, who distinguishes two stages: the second is of the worlds and bodies, the first is of the incorporeal things.¹³⁸ Paphnutius later co-ordinates the second renunciation with "to attain to that love of the Lord which is patient, which is "kind, which envieth not, is not puffed up, is not soon angry, dealeth not perversely, seeketh not her own, thinketh no evil," which "beareth all things, endureth all things". (1 Cor. 13:4-7)"¹³⁹ It is a stage of the movement from

¹³⁵ For the Origen's idea on three sciences and ascendant stages, see Louth, *The Origins*, pp. 56-61.

¹³⁶ *Commentary. On Song of Songs*, 78.17-19; Lawson, p. 44.

¹³⁷ *Conferences* III.6

¹³⁸ For the systematic understanding of Evagrius' contemplation, see O'Laughlin, "Origenism in the Desert," 135-7.

¹³⁹ *Conferences* III.7

evil to virtues. At the time of the second achievement, the renunciant is ready to turn from present and visible things to future and invisible ones. Paphnutius makes some general statements about the third.

By constant meditation on things Divine, and spiritual contemplation has so far passed on to things unseen, that in its earnest seeking after things above and things spiritual it no longer feels that it is prisoned in this fragile flesh, and bodily form, but is caught up into such an ecstasy as not only to hear no words with the outward ear, or to busy itself with gazing on the forms of things present, but not even to see things close at hand, or large objects straight before the very eyes.¹⁴⁰

He refers explicitly to his own personal mystical experiences in which the world and the self are absolutely denied.¹⁴¹ In the introductory chapter Cassian has already witnessed the monks' belief in Paphnutius that "he enjoyed and delighted in the daily society of angels".¹⁴² According to Abba John of *Conferences XIX*, the anchorites were often caught up in the celestial ecstasies through contemplation, which can only be compared to the bliss of the angels.¹⁴³ They would have to hand it down without any changes so that the next generation might follow their pattern as a principle. Paphnutius constructs the general aspects of the third renunciation mainly from the peculiarities of their experiences. Contemplation transports the renunciant in ecstasy to the non-material realm. God can be known here and now through utterly transcendent, direct personal experience, beyond recognition of sound and images, beyond all human understanding. For giving a biblical example of a life lived in intimate communion with God, Paphnutius illustrates that the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ He in the same chapter notes that "no one can understand the truth and force, except one who has made trial of what has been said, under the teaching of experience."

¹⁴² *Conferences III.1*

¹⁴³ *Ibid. XIX.3, 4.*

perfect renunciant is “like Enoch, “walking with God,” and “translated” (Gen. 5:24) from human life and fashions, not to “be found” amid the vanities of this life.”¹⁴⁴ His quotation from Heb. 11:5: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death”, is paralleled with another from John 11:26: “He that liveth and believeth in me shall not die eternally.”¹⁴⁵ Just as in Enoch, there is no death notice to the renunciant. Eternal life is now available. Thus, Paphnutius instructs his listeners to forsake all- parents, home, the riches, pleasures of the world, and inward desires of all these things- in order to attain true perfection. In the following chapter, he warns that to cling to one’s possessions leads to the punishment of eternal death.¹⁴⁶ The central metaphor Paphnutius uses for a failure in renunciation is that of Israel’s backslide in wandering through the desert from the Egypt of this world to the promised heavenly land.¹⁴⁷ He reminds his listeners that among the multitudes coming out of Egypt under Moses, only two entered the land of promise. This repeatedly takes place in the monks’ desert. The verse (Matt. 22:14) has been offered as proof that only a minority of people will be saved: ““Many are called but few” are said to be “chosen”.”¹⁴⁸ In *Institutes* IV.38, Abba Pinufius uses the word in the same precise manner. This also means that a person could lose his gift of the calling. To the Abbas, to be called and chosen are not synonymous. The call is not the end but the beginning of God’s purposes. What “chosen” means therefore is that anyone who is called by God must persevere until the final end. When this call no longer follows a renunciative life, it has vanished without a trace. A question of eternal life and eternal death seems to be determined by the degree of renunciation. When the monk has attained the third

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* III.7

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* III.8

¹⁴⁷ In Homily on Numbers 27, Origen presents a more complicated itinerary figuring in the forty-two stages.

¹⁴⁸ *Conferences* III.7

renunciation with all the ardour of his mind, he has not yet reached perfection. There is one step more, the fourth. Before we advance to this issue, let us turn our attention to the source of the three renunciations, as Evagrius also left the teaching of these in his *Kephalaia gnostica*. The full text is very concise:

The first renunciation is the abandonment of the objects of this world, which happens in the will because of the knowledge of God. The second renunciation is the abandonment of evil, which happens by the grace of God and by the diligence of the person. The third renunciation is the separation from ignorance, which is naturally made to appear to persons according to the degree of their conditions.¹⁴⁹

This text could stir suspicion about the authenticity of Paphnutius' presentation in *Conferences III*. It is questioned whether Evagrius abbreviated what he received from one of his advisors, whether Paphnutius, or Cassian later developed himself what was received from Evagrius, and assigned the work to Paphnutius, or whether Cassian conveyed the thinking of Paphnutius without doubt, as he asserts. If one can be convinced of the second assumption, as Marsili attempted in his comparison of the two texts,¹⁵⁰ Cassian should be praised highly as a very creative, imaginative author. But we encounter obstacles in accepting the proposal. In a comparison of the teaching of Evagrius with that of Paphnutius, Evagrius gives three renunciations that are meagre in content, while Paphnutius gives four in very great detail. Although the basic framework and first two renunciations are parallel, Evagrius' description of the third gives us a different sense. Driver comments, "Since both authors described true knowledge as knowledge of the

¹⁴⁹ *Kephalaia gnostica* 78-80.

¹⁵⁰ Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico*, pp. 94-5.

invisible mysteries and of God, their third renunciations are also alike.”¹⁵¹ To uphold his point, it is necessary to ask what the metaphysical term, ignorance, means. Ousley explains that “Ignorance, often associated with evil in the *Kephalaia gnostica*, in some ways was more fundamental than evil. The rational creatures fell from knowledge into ignorance, and thence evil. In the spiritual life, first evil is overcome in the ascetic life, and then ignorance in the contemplative.”¹⁵² For Evagrius, ignorance is the term opposing the knowledge of God, which the rational creatures shared from their creation. Dealing with Evagrius’ teaching, O’Laughlin comments, “The third renunciation is the departure from ignorance; this could correspond to the movement from impassibility to the second natural contemplation, since contemplation is a gnostic activity.”¹⁵³ Through both scholars’ observations, it is revealed that ignorance is related to contemplation, and indicates the ontological condition of the fallen creatures. At the same time, we see that Evagrius’ scheme of the three renunciations reflects some important parts of his intellectual metaphysical system on anthropology. The renunciations serve as the restoration of a fallen intellect “to come back to his primitive stage, that is, a state of purely intellectual activity”.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, in the teaching of Paphnutius there is no sign of such intellectualism that is accepted among Origenists.¹⁵⁵ Besides, in connection with the second renunciation, although Evagrius shows grace as an essential ingredient in the struggle against evil, we can hardly see space dealing with it anywhere in his

¹⁵¹ Steven D. Driver, *The Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture in John Cassian*, p. 236

¹⁵² David Alan Ousley, “Evagrius’ Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1979), 140-1; and cf. 251.

¹⁵³ Michael Wallace O’Laughlin, *Origenism in the Desert: Anthropology and Integration in Evagrius Ponticus*, (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1987), 137.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted from *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁵ For Evagrius’ intellectualism, see Ousley, “Evagrius’ Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life,” 165-7.

works.¹⁵⁶ For reasons such as these I have been sceptical about the view that Cassian took the teaching of three renunciations out of *Kephalaia gnostica*. It seems to me to be more reasonable to trace other ancient literature as its source. As we have seen above, the most famous exponent of the spiritual journey through various stages was Origen. His influence on Paphnutius would rather clearly appear when he says:

If then a man has completed his course in the first subject, as taught in Proverbs, by amending his behaviour and keeping the commandments, and thereafter, having seen how empty is the world and realized the brittleness of transitory things, has come to renounce the world and all that is therein, he will follow on from that point to contemplate and to desire 'the things that are not seen', and 'that are eternal'. To attain to these, however, we need God's mercy.¹⁵⁷

The soul's journey moves from the renunciation of the world to the contemplation of invisible beings. Here, we see the similarities between Origen's project and that of Paphnutius. Origen's twenty-seventh homily on Numbers also supports the establishing of a textual relationship between both. He says at the end that when a person has overcome temptations one by one, he attains the final stage, "which is the summit of the virtues, and the river of God is crossed and the promised inheritance is received."¹⁵⁸ Paphnutius too lays out the same terminus, which can not be found in Evagrius. We turn now to consider the details of the fourth renunciation, which he describes in the following way:

¹⁵⁶ See for Evagrius' teaching on the grace, *ibid.* 197-203

¹⁵⁷ Quoted from Louth, *The Origins*, p. 58. (Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, 79)

¹⁵⁸ *Homily on Numbers 27.5.*

This fourth, which is granted as a reward and privilege to one whose renunciation is perfect, that he may be found worthy to enter the land of promise which no longer bears for him the thorns and thistles of sins; which after all the passions have been driven out is acquired by purity of heart even in the body, and which no good deeds or exertions of man's efforts [can gain], but which the Lord Himself promises to show, saying "And come into the land which I will show to thee" [Gen. 12:1]¹⁵⁹

Subduing the power of sin, perfect renunciation gives the monk the meetness for the promised land and the preparation necessary to enjoy it. There is going to be reward for their works, the entrance into the promised land, namely a return to Paradise.¹⁶⁰ Paphnutius entitles the successful renunciant to nothing less than the immaculate land. In this fourth stage, salvation is subjectively experienced, rather than a forensic declaration or pronouncement associated with legal status. He seems to assert that salvation is earned by the monk's deeds. Nevertheless, changing his tack, Paphnutius abruptly enters on a new phase of salvation. The monk is necessitated to negate all self-merits, and to become aware of divine grace. Even though he stands ready to enter the promised land, he should leave his case in the hands of the Owner, while trusting simply and supremely in God's display. Paphnutius draws a conclusion based on that spoken to Abraham:

The beginning of our salvation results from the call of the Lord, Who says "Get thee out from thy country," and that the completion of perfection and purity is His gift in the same way, as He says "And come into the land which I will show thee," i.e., not one you yourself can know or discover by your own efforts, but one

¹⁵⁹ *Conferences* III.10

¹⁶⁰ This is a common idea in early monastic literature. See Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, 1985, pp. 151-153.

which I will show not only to one who is ignorant of it, but even to one who is not looking for it. And from this we clearly gather that as we hasten to the way of salvation through being stirred up by the inspiration of the Lord, so too it is under the guidance of His direction and illumination that we attain to the perfection of the highest bliss.¹⁶¹

The departure for and arrival at the promised land is completely through the grace of God, not through the obedience of Abraham. Anyone who attains salvation does so by grace alone, apart from any merit in any and all of his own works of renunciation. The bare fact of attribution of salvation to God's sovereign grace raises a trite question. If it is so, where does human effort come in? How is grace related to human effort? This is Germanus' repeated question in Chapters 11 and 21. It indicates that Paphnutius' listeners, who have difficulty grasping his whole structure of salvation, can be exposed to danger in taking a side view of his standpoint. In fact, he keeps both God's sovereign grace and human effort in his own logical harmony as if they are not contradictory. The knowledge of the former encourages the latter to "hasten to the way of salvation." To the Abba, to show the promised land is God's sovereign activity. It is His authority to give admission to the land. Only through human effort, in which the monk co-operates with the grace of His direction and illumination, can the first three stages be attained. The attainment of the renunciant's part is the completion of preparation in waiting for admittance into the land. When this mission is accomplished, the Supervisor again becomes the Operator. Now God's monergistic business is commenced for the ascent to the fourth.

¹⁶¹ *Conferences* III.10

I wish to conclude this examination with the following brief outline that attempts to demonstrate the structure and the key points of the Paphnutius' doctrine of salvation:

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3
The beginning of salvation	The middle process of salvation	The completion of salvation
Monergism - operative grace	Synergism - co-operative grace and free will	Monergism - operative grace
<p>1) Man's original position: children of the devil</p> <p>2) Three sorts of divine calling: the granting of opportunities for salvation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from God - through man - from the necessity of life <p>3) The fruits of calling: the beginning of good will, conversion and faith</p>	<p>1) Man's efforts by free will</p> <p>(1) three progressive renunciations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - first renunciation : all earthly riches - second renunciation : vices and former associations - third renunciation : all recollection of this world for contemplation <p>(2) prayer for the attainment of God's upholding grace</p> <p>2) The contents of upholding the grace of God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advance and perfection of virtue - understanding and performance of God's law - endurance of suffering - perseverance in faith - endurance in temptation - being made fit for good - the continual fear of the Lord <p>3) The consequence of synergism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - divine visitation with reward: the Chosen for the gift of perfection and purity - divine visitation with punishment: abandonment 	<p>The presentation of the fourth renunciation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the entrance into the promised land - the attainment of perfection of the highest bliss

Figure 5: The Saving Process of Abba Paphnutius

This outline shows the attainment of Cassian's wish to learn of "perfection, which we had known from many evidences to exist in him."¹⁶² Paphnutius quenched the consulter's thirst with the presentation of a blueprint for perfection. His structure replies to our question: 'what precisely does salvation mean?' It indicates that salvation is a move from corruptible, mortal inhabitancy to the incorruptible, immortal promised land. He provides a panoramic view of salvation. The central conception is the attainment of perfection, for it is the ultimate purpose of God. The calling and ensuing conversion are a single occurrence that takes place at the beginning of a saving process that continues throughout one's lifetime. Paphnutius definitely does not regard salvation as basically complete at the beginning of the Christian life. Being called is not an irrevocable gift of God. Being converted is not an unchangeable position. The beginning is not sufficient to constitute being saved. It is just the beginning. The remaining other aspects of salvation, namely, sanctification by the progressive renunciation and perfection, should come together in the following times. To Paphnutius, there is no distinction between the doctrines of salvation, sanctification and perfection.

Throughout the saving process, every aspect of human effort is accompanied at every turn by God's daily co-operative grace. Paphnutius presents a clear synergism between the grace of God and human responsibility that avails ourselves of the grace. Because of its feebleness, free will must depend on this grace for progress. This point accords with the teaching of *Institutes* XII, in which Cassian gives considerable space to the issues of grace and free will. Since pride attacks those who have conquered certain vices, the achievement of human effort should be ascribed to God's grace to have humility. On the other hand, in *Conferences* III, the reason for Paphnutius' emphasis on grace is based on his

¹⁶² *Ibid.* III.2

erudition by keen observation of the Scriptures and his experience of the limitations of human faculties. To the Abba, the beginning of salvation is formed by operative grace, the middle process of salvation is built up by co-operative grace, and the completion of salvation is realised by operative grace. His scheme for salvation comes to nothing without grace. In this sense, he clearly rejects salvation by merit.

Before we close our discussion, there is one last topic to which our attention should be turned; the strong suspicion that Cassian was directly addressing Augustine's teaching on salvation. Our investigation points to a major difference in perspective in the theological posture of the theology of Paphnutius and that of Augustine. Augustine's *Confessions* provides us with a microcosm of his thought on the way to salvation. He emphasises that God freely grants salvation to sinners by faith. Faith is an instrument, or a means by which divine grace is received through Christ's passion: "He was made known to the ancient saints so that they could be saved through faith by his future passion, just as we are saved through faith in his passion now that it is past. It is as man that he is mediator."¹⁶³ For him, salvation is not a lifelong process, but an instantaneous matter actualised with faith. He distinguishes between the doctrines and experiences of salvation and sanctification. Augustine asserts that he has already attained salvation: "Your only Son... had 'redeemed me by his blood' (Rev. 5:9)."¹⁶⁴ Robert Marcus sums up his idea on salvation: "Salvation is no longer an ordered progression towards a distant goal, but a sustained miracle of divine initiative; confidence in human resources, moral and intellectual, is the chief of the obstacles man can place in its way."¹⁶⁵ Augustine's own soteriology is forged largely from concepts developed in his anti-

¹⁶³ *Saint Augustine Confessions*, 10.43(68), trans. by Henry Chadwick, p.219.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 10.43(70), p. 220.

¹⁶⁵ R. A. Marcus, *Sacred and Secular*, 1994, pp. 22-3.

Pelagian writings, coupled with his constant emphasis on God's initiative through grace. Carol Harrison notes, "It is the Augustine of the Pelagian controversy arguing from experience for the unavoidable vitiation of human nature and the unattainability of perfection in this life."¹⁶⁶ To him, a process of sanctification is never completed in one's lifetime. Accordingly, we have arrived at the conclusion that there is a fundamental difference between not only the conception of salvation, but also *ordo salutis* in Paphnutius and Augustine. It is too simplistic to think that a satisfactory settlement in the controversy of grace and free will could reduce their theological gap. Although the difference between Paphnutius and Augustine is great, it is possible to find one point on which they might agree; that is, the monergism at the beginning of salvation. Related to the semi-Pelagianism of Cassian, it has been assumed, through his main thought, that the will, crippled by the Fall, still has power freely either to accept or to refuse grace when offered, thus one must co-operate with divine grace for salvation. In this context, Paphnutius' monergism allures Cassian's students to harmonise his teaching with the Augustinian orthodoxy. In *On Predestination of the Saints*, published one or two years after *Conferences III*, Augustine reveals his monergism:

He, therefore, worketh the beginning of our belief who works all things; because faith itself does not precede that calling... For He chose us, not because we believed, but that we might believe... Neither are we called because we believed, but that we may believe; and by that calling which is without repentance, it is effected and carried through that we should believe.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Carol Harrison, *Augustine : Christian truth and fractured humanity*, p. 135.

¹⁶⁷ Augustine, *On Predestination of the Saints* 38.

Augustine's view of the beginning of faith is linked to his view of predestination and of the preceding grace converting bad will to good will. He, in his anti-Pelagian writings, provides the rational explanations of how this can be within man's interior realm. On the other hand, Paphnutius describes simply rather than attempting to analyse the beginning of good will. There is no allowance for theological speculative abstractions. It cannot bear comparison with the elaborate idea of Augustine. Augustine asserts that the faith given by God completes salvation regardless of its advance and supplement,¹⁶⁸ and later says that "the grace of God, which both begins a man's faith and which enables it to persevere unto the end, is not given according to our merits, but is given according to His own most secret and at the same time most righteous, wise, and beneficent will."¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, Paphnutius states that the beginning of faith initiated by God requires the upholding of grace for perseverance, and should wait for the attainment of salvation. Hence, when one ignores the differences in their views, and attempts to reconcile each other, little profit is gained. Vice versa, to create confrontation between two Fathers in the context of the Pelagian controversy seems to be an equally meaningless venture. Augustine is who he is, just as Paphnutius is who he is.

5.6 CONCLUSIONS OF CHAPTER 5

Now that we have come to the end of this chapter, I shall formulate some brief key statements following from this study.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 3-5.

¹⁶⁹ *A Treatise on the Gift of Perseverance* 33.

Firstly, the Abbas have little concern about the objective factor of salvation. Only Cassian treats such a theme as the atonement of Christ; a universal atonement with a purpose for encouraging the monks in ascetic life.

Secondly, we come to recognise some divergences in the details of the various stages in attaining salvation according to each Abba. They are too complex for us clearly to formulate a united system. Furthermore, even Cassian's texts store two conflicting views. For example, in *Conferences* III, Abba Paphnutius asserts monergism at the beginning and end of human salvation. God is entirely responsible for two stages. In *Conferences* XIII, however, Abba Chaeremon affirms both monergism and synergism at the beginning of salvation. God sometimes draws individuals against their will, and sometimes waits for them first to make some detectable move toward God. Thus, we can say that there is no apparent development in Cassian's position on salvation, grace and free will in his related texts, such as *Institutes* XII, *Conferences* I-II, III, XIII.

Thirdly, although salvation is expressed in several ways in Cassian's works, including the idea of eternal life, the kingdom of Heaven, union with God, adoption, divine sonship, atonement and perfection, there is one favourite word which embraces the purpose and activity of ascetic life, and contains within itself the various meanings which these other terms express. That is perfection. Salvation and perfection have the same meaning for the Abbas. In this regard, salvation is divided into three levels within the dimension of time, the beginning, the middle, and the completion. The Abbas made salvation the experience attainable in the present life and placed perfection within the reach of all. Yet, Pinufius and Paphnutius believed only a few attained it.

Fourthly, there are synergistic tendencies in the teaching of all Abbas. Man is responsible for his own salvation. All should endeavour to attain it. Cassian accurately transmitted this to the Latin world without changing the theology of the desert fathers.

Finally, while other Abbas were not clear on the relation between the beginning of salvation and the initiating grace, Paphnutius clearly states that salvation begins with the grace of God. However, one can not claim that he is at one with Augustine on grace, since the graciously enabled man must work out the completion of salvation in co-operation with the continual support of grace. As one would have been lost without this grace, Paphnutius asserts that all human efforts toward his own salvation are of grace. In this sense, overall, his system cannot stand comparison with Augustinian formation.

In the understanding of the desert monasticism, the great contribution of Cassian's texts is found in his stress upon divine grace. Cassian's Abbas assert the absolute necessity of grace for all stages of salvation from divine calling to perfection, and admit that human will is totally insufficient to secure salvation and perfection. This could be their intention to speak to contemporary monks who excessively lay stress upon human effort. Their emphasis on divine grace shows a quite different view from the desert monastic literature, such as *Vita Antonii*, the *Apophthegmata*, the *Historia Monachorum*, and the Evagrian sources. The teachings of Cassian's Abbas stood outside the desert tradition that the above materials convey. This fact requires a revision of the traditional view of desert monasticism that depends on the sources. Cassian's Abbas were neither illiterate peasants, nor Origenists, but the intellectual monastic theologian in the Alexandrian tradition who produced a systematic theory that is a match for Augustinianism.

CHAPTER 6.

CONCLUSION

Owing to the unavoidable question as to how they could become perfect here and now, Cassian and Germanus undertook a journey to Egypt to find the answer. They repeatedly asked Egyptian Abbas, whom they met during their lengthy monastic sojourn, what, in theory, the goal of the monastic life really was, and, in practice, what would be the appropriate way of achieving it. The answers were to be found in the tranquil desert. The elders depicted them in terms of the ascetic disciplines and ends which they had adopted and pursued. More than twenty years later, the answers were also to be found by his Gallic readers in Cassian's works, because he transmitted in raw form what he had seen and heard from the expert elders who could address methodically a particular issue at length. In fact, before his works came out, he anticipated that the term, perfection, and its way might be resented by his Latin readers. In the Preface 1 to *Conferences*, showing concern for his readers' response, Cassian commented that, "if any one is anxious to try (*test*) whether such perfection can be attained, let him first endeavour to make his

purpose their own, with the same zeal and the same mode of life.” And then he promised his readers, “in the end he will find that those things which used to seem beyond the powers of men, are not only possible, but really delightful.” However, his forecast of criticism, resulting from his transmission of the Eastern monastic theology to Latin speaking Christianity, went wide of the mark.

In an entirely different direction, Cassian’s texts have been plagued by a critical mind-set without warrant. His itineraries have been regarded as mere literary fabrication, and his *Conferences* have been described as “dramatic dialogues than actual records,”¹ containing the semi-Pelagian doctrine of grace and free will. After Marsili’s presentation in the 1930s, which most scholars have relied upon without question, the assertion of Cassian’s moderate attachment to the Evagrian legacy has reigned supreme without a doubt. In all criticisms, from his contemporary, Prosper of Aquitaine, to modern scholars, one point that is shared is the discredit of his authenticity.

Saving Cassian’s authenticity from vast criticisms of historians and patrologists has been the chief aim of this thesis. Our task has led us to investigations of desert monastic literature, the Evagrian sources, the Alexandian theological works, Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings, and a vast range of references related to our present concerns. Finally, the most important records which produce much evidence of Cassian’s authenticity, challenging the above criticisms, were his texts themselves. We have tried to demonstrate that Cassian transmits the desert traditions just as he received them from the elders, and keeps his loyalty to the original promise made to the Gallic requesters. Raising some doubt of the critics who eye Cassian’s works with unveiled suspicion, the result equates mostly with

¹ Nora K. Chadwick, *Poetry and Letters in Early Christian Gaul*, p. 225.

my hypothesis. Therefore, I wish to draw together the concluding key points and highlight the originality of my contribution, as well as to suggest lines for further thought on the research into the thinking of Cassian.

(1) In Chapter One, while surveying Cassian's biographical and chronological portraits, I, for the first time, discovered that Cassian articulated two stages of his monastic life in Egypt: the first in the Nile Delta, written in *Conferences XI-XX*, and the second in Scete, revealed in *Conferences I-X*. His monastic itineraries on the upgrade to Scete were accompanied by the representation of a higher grade of ascetic theology. From Chapters Three to Five, while we discussed the anthropological issues in Cassian's texts with a new systematic approach that compared each text that treated the overlapping subjects, I exposed a diversity of perspectives on a single issue, according to each speaker. These accurate and distinctive reports lead us to assume the literary sources that Cassian relied, and, at the same time, to show inconsistency with the modern presupposition of his embellishment, resulting from the time lapse of between 20 and 40 years between the interviews in the desert and the records in Gaul. In fact, the denial of any direct monastic sources comes from Cassian himself, when he expresses manifold difficulties and embarrassments with regard to Castor's request for the writing of the *Institutes*:

Because that which we either tried to do or learnt or saw when from our earliest youth we lived among them and were urged on by their daily exhortations and examples, this we can scarcely retain in its entirety when we have been for so many years withdrawn from intercourse with them and from following their mode of life.²

² *Institutes I, Preface.*

Cassian's reference to memory in relation to the elapsed time leads us to suppose that he traced back, and embellished his memory in order to write the *Institutes*. The problem is that this assumption has an influence on the judgment of *Conferences*. Yet, we meet a contrasting statement in *Conferences* IX.1 which has puzzled us:

the length of the book in its earlier part may be excused, though, in spite of our endeavour not only to compress what had to be told into a brief discourse, but also to pass over very many points in silence, it has been extended to a greater length than we intended.

Here, it is revealed that Cassian already had a lot of material that he could use in this conference, without needing to make a difficult recall from his memory. One more piece of evidence showing the use he made of his large store of material is the insertion of Abba Pinufius' discourse at length in *Institutes* IV.32-43. Later Cassian notes in *Conferences* XX.2, "he had delivered to one of the brethren who was submitting to the rule of the monastery sufficiently difficult and elevated precepts, which as we said, I summarised as briefly as I could in the fourth book of the *Institutes*." In this context, we should carefully reconsider Castor's request and Cassian's reply in the Preface of *Institutes*. The demand to write "the customs of the monasteries which we have seen observed throughout Egypt and Palestine" was a novel task synthesising two monastic cultures that Cassian had not yet thought of until that very moment. On the other hand, to record the *Conferences* was a voluntary devotion that Cassian had already prepared himself for, as he makes repeated reference to his intention to write the elders' conferences within the *Institutes*.³

³ *Institutes* II,1, 9, 18.

Thus I propose that we should not identify the *Institutes* with the *Conferences* as similar monastic works produced by a fading memory of the past, but regard the former as Cassian's own integration of the various monastic rules in Egypt and Palestine, and the latter as a series of collections of the Coptic elders' discourses that may have been based on his written sources, which had been laid aside for future use. We might add that his thoughtful editorial skill, which he employs to cover all that the monks need to know, should not be ignored.

(2) In Chapters Two and Three, I treated a firm belief in Cassian's reliance on the written sources of Evagrius by making a comparison of key terms and concepts for monastic discipline that both of them shared. This examination was the first attempt after Marsili's comparative study. Our survey revealed that even though Cassian's texts preserved a few echoes of the anthropological terminology and ascetic conceptions that corroborate his closeness to Evagrius, there is no proof, in terms of direct citation of texts or statements, to claim that Cassian had definitely read Evagrius. Cassian's texts departed in numerous ways from the intellectual speculative ascetic theology of Evagrius and it is impossible to discover the extent to which Cassian knew of Evagrius. Neither does he deserve to be described as demonstrating a theological system, labelled Origenism, which intermingled the experience and wisdom of the desert Fathers with the cultivated Greek speculative philosophical doctrines. While Evagrian teachings about human nature and soul are so largely dominated by a Platonic view that we find hardly any trace of the distinctive biblical anthropology, Cassian's texts repeatedly criticise the use of philosophical rhetorical technique, and keep a sharply defined focus by remaining fully committed to the Scriptures. Besides, for Cassian, there was no need to have gone to great lengths to truncate, or simplify several Evagrian metaphysical conceptualisations, such as *apatheia*, *praktikē* and *theologikē*, *nous*, *thymos* and *epithymia*, to make them compatible with Biblical truth, since the core notions

were already shared among the desert elders. We, thus, should hesitate or even decline to follow Marsili's confidence in the close similarity between Cassian's and Evagrius' monastic formation, which still dominates in Stewart's recent suggestion that "Evagrius was the single most important influence on Cassian's monastic theology."⁴ Is it, therefore, time to review the relationship between Cassian and Evagrius held in most textbooks?

The separation of two authors leads us to a question: where are we to place the anthropology of Cassian's elders? The overall expression of Cassian's texts leads them to be placed within the broader Alexandrian tradition. Yet, this study has clearly established that Cassian's circles were widely separate from both those of the Origenists, and of the anthropomorphites. If we have to provide a name for Cassian's circles, I would call them the intelligent desert moderatists. They stand in the middle position, adapting in a discriminating and prudent way the intellectual Alexandrian theological tradition exemplified by Origen. On the other hand, they guarded against ignorance and simplicity, eliminating theological speculation and education in the desert ascetical practices. This fact serves as evidence that is rather stronger than Rubenson's proposal, based on Antony's *Epistulae*, to erode the traditional view of Egyptian monks, classifying them into two groups: illiterate peasants and educated Origenists.

(3) In Chapters Four and Five, I attempted to expound the doctrine of free will and grace, which is bound inseparably to soteriology, as the views of the authentic elders that were shaped by the Eastern theological tradition emphasised the reality of both human corruption and moral responsibility, and the combination of both grace and free will as cooperating harmoniously with each other in salvation.

⁴ Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, p. 11.

Moreover, I verified that the doctrines reflect the theological milieu in the Coptic Church against Stoic and Gnostic determinism, and the desert monastic watchfulness of the monks' excessive self-determination. The desert elders were exhorting their hearers to be better monks. Within that context, they stressed, on the one hand, the free will of the individual to encourage the monks to do better, and on the other hand, divine grace in order not to attribute spiritual achievement to their own efforts. Cassian's texts provide abundant detailed analysis of grace and free will, since these two means must interact to ascend to the stage of perfection.

What is at the very heart of the issue of grace and free will was the question as to when the believers obtain God's grace, as Abba Chaeremon in *Conferences* XIII.11 asked. We saw clearly how through the passages of Cassian's texts the initiative is taken sometimes by the human will, sometimes by God's grace. In relation to the beginning of salvation, there was the affirmation of monergism without compromising the human will: the universal corruption of human nature, the transmission of sin as a consequence of the Fall, utter reliance on God' saving grace, and vice versa with the conception of synergism: the ability of the human will to cooperate with the divine grace that is given to all men. The three Books treated at length the two issues: *Institutes* XII, *Conferences* III and XIII. *Conferences* III distinctly offered the more logical, systematic order of the salvation process. Yet, Abba Paphnutius with two speakers never present us with as coherent an account of the theory of grace and free will as that offered by Augustine and consequently, certain ambiguities that surround their teachings have never been resolved. The exact relation between free will and grace is not capable of definition. The reason why their doctrines cannot be fully contained or comprehended within as logical a frame as that of Augustine must be explained in connection with their view of *ordo salutis*, at a minimum, divided into three stages: the beginning, the middle, and perfection. It is striking that the relationship

between *ordo salutis* and free will and grace has not attracted the attention of scholars.

Whereas Augustine discriminates between the doctrines of salvation and sanctification, the desert elders, following the Eastern tradition, equate the two doctrines and two experiences. For the elders, as we surveyed in Chapter Five, they were consistent with each other that salvation is gradual, from the beginning by God's gracious calling to its consummation in perfection. The attainment of complete perfection was identical with the coming of full salvation. In this process, salvation gradually comes close to fulfillment after concurrent interaction between human ascetic effort and divine grace. Because of the weakness of free will, divine grace is absolutely necessary for every phase, every day from the beginning of salvation to perfection. Their common assertion that everything of theirs which had to do with salvation was a gift to them from God, leads the monks to seek and rely on divine grace as the vital part of human *ascesis*. Through the synergistic process, the monks reach the ultimate goal of monastic practice, that is, experience of actual salvation. On the other hand, for Augustine, since the doctrines of Original sin and the will's moral inability are so predominant, irresistible grace must be the cause of the virtuous acts of the free will. In this context, grace was understood without free will, and so monergism is self-sufficient for completion of human salvation. In this way, God is ultimately responsible for salvation. Augustine developed his logic with the doctrine of limited atonement, election, predestination, and perseverance. Consequently, salvation is distinct from sanctification, the development of which Augustine asserts is synergistic.

It is almost inevitable that there is a fundamentally different outlook between the two parties, the one representing intellectual speculative reflection of God's sovereign saving act in a moment, and the other representing experimental salvation by interacting divine grace with human *ascesis* throughout the whole life.

It is impossible for one to meet the other without a reformation that abandons its position, even though we can trace some points of agreement between the two parties.

Without the whole prospect of the functions between grace and free will, according to *ordo salutis* in the Eastern tradition, the Latin Augustinians could judge Cassian to be intensely aware of a need of to fly a flag at half-mast against the Augustinian orthodoxy. The first striking example of this judgement was Prosper, who persisted in seeking to interpret Cassian's transmission of the fourth century desert ascetic theory in terms of a fifth century Latin Pelagian controversy. He easily dismissed the position of the *Conferences* as being semi-Pelagian, which was "in harmony neither with the heretics nor with the catholics."⁵ Indeed, this impression was not a badly mistaken judgement, but undoubtedly true from the Augustinian viewpoint. This judgement was an unavoidable consequence of Cassian's East meeting the Augustinian West. *Conferences XIII* boldly presents convincing evidence for the charge of semi-Pelagianism. Because of its doctrinal content, no circumstances seem to protect him from the accusation of heresy. Cassian's use of the term, "*peccatum originale*" in particular, demonstrates that Augustine had some influence over Cassian's theology. Our consideration of the historical context in vindication of Cassian's authenticity is faced with the lack of evidence. Thus, the verdict on Cassian's theological position still remains open.

(4) Our survey from Chapters Three to Five has shown, through textual evidence, Cassian's elders to be authentic figures in the desert. They presented different perspectives for each subject, in which sometimes all were mutually enriching and complementary, sometimes incompatible. This result has shown that it is a wrong presupposition that all teachings could be synthesised. It is necessary that whoever

⁵ Prosper, *Contra collatorem* 3.1 (PL 51:221).

intends to reproduce the teachings of Cassian's texts should be conscious of the particular danger of generalising the accumulated material, which lurks in the systematic and synthetic approaches. The appropriate method of interpretation that has to be employed in relation to Cassian's texts, which ought to guide ongoing research, is to treat each speaker independently, as we do with the *Apophthegmata*. It is a return to the old way, as it were, Cassian's way that he might well have wished for his readers, as he did not attempt the inappropriate synthesis of all of the teachings of the Abbas.

In closing, Cassian's works are really books about monastic life. His hope is that through them his Gallic monastic readers may find the way to satisfy their holy thirst in their own spiritual ascent toward perfection. At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned Cassian's concern that his Latin readers would meet entirely different ascetic practices with the unfamiliar and impossible goal, perfection. This was my first impression when encountering Cassian before this study. To motivate myself in new pursuits, I still recite a verse of St John of the Cross on the way of perfection:

"To come to the knowledge you have not you must go by a way in which you know not... to come to be what you are not you must go by a way in which you are not."⁶

The Ascent of Mount Carmel, I.13.11.

⁶ St John of the Cross, *The collected works of St. John of the Cross*, K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez's tr., 1966, p. 67.

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CCSL	<i>Corpus christianorum. Series latina</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum</i>
DHGE	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et géographie ecclésiastique</i>
DSp	<i>Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique</i>
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
NPNF	<i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia graeca</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia latina</i>
PO	<i>Patrologia orientalis</i>
SC	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i>
SP	<i>Studia patristica</i>
TU	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen</i>

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