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TRADITION AND
THEOLOGY IN
ST JOHN CASSIAN

A. M. C. Casiday

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FOR MY WIFE AND CHILDREN

‘Καὶ Κασσιανοῦ τοῦ πνέοντος κασσίαν...’

Anonymous, ‘Iambos on the Sayings of the Holy Fathers’, l. 28 (ed. G. C. Amaduzzi, *Anecdota litteraria ex mss codicibus eruta* (Rome: Fulgonio, 1773): 28)

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Preface

Though the monastic writings of St John Cassian have been enduringly popular, his reputation (not least as a theological author) has been seriously compromised. The present work begins with an evaluation of conventional ideas about Cassian and, finding them seriously flawed, offers the first sustained attempt at re-reading Cassian's works without deference to the categories of outdated polemics. Specific attention is called to the Christological aspects of Cassian's monastic anthropology. Throughout, reference is made to Cassian's contemporaries—both well-known figures like Augustine of Hippo, Evagrius Ponticus, Vincent of Lérins, and Nestorius, and lesser-known figures such as Prosper of Aquitaine, Valerian of Cimiez, and Paul of Tamma—in order to offer an analysis of Cassian's writings and their significance that is unencumbered by anachronism.

Acknowledgements

This book is based on my doctoral thesis (University of Durham, Department of Theology, 2002). Whilst writing the thesis, I received support from the Overseas Research Council, in the form of an Overseas Research Studentship; from the University of Durham and the Department of Theology, in the form of a grant from the Dean's Fund, a De Bury Scholarship and an Evans Scholarship; from two anonymous donations administered by Fr. J. Trenham; and from the Virginia H. Farah Foundation, in the form of a generous grant. This was administered by His Grace, the Rt Revd Basil (Essey), Bishop of Wichita and the Diocese of Mid-America of the Antiochian Christian Archdiocese of North America. Sayedna Basil has been unstinting in his support of my work, and his encouragement has been invaluable. It was my great privilege to carry out my doctoral research under the supervision of Prof. Andrew Louth. I have also benefited in ways past counting from a number of scholars, friends and colleagues: Rt Revd Dr Kallistos (Ware); Prof. Gerald Bonner; Prof. Peter Brown; Revd Fr Gabriel Bunge, OSB; Prof. Patout Burns; Revd Fr. Constantin Chirila; Revd Dr Adam Cooper; Dr Mary B. Cunningham; Dr Carol Harrison; Prof. C. T. R. Hayward; Ms Anastasia Neubauer; Dr Glenn Peers; Revd Prof. Mark Sheridan, OSB; Revd Dr Tim Vivian; Dr Stuart Weeks; and certainly not least, Dr Mika Törönen. Adam and Mika in particular were the best comrades a person writing a thesis could hope for, and I learnt a great deal from them both.

After completing my thesis, I had the good fortune to work for a year as a post-doctoral research associate in the University of Cambridge's Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, contributing to the *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* project. My colleagues in the department were unfailingly gracious and hospitable to the patrologist in their midst. In addition to fostering my fledgling interests in the circulation of Cassian's works in the British Isles and in the monasticism of the Anglo-Saxon period, they also allowed me ample time to revise and expand the thesis (which, given access to the Special

Collections at the University Library, was an extraordinary opportunity). I would be remiss if I failed to thank by name Professors D. N. Dumville and S. D. Keynes, Dr Rosalind Love, and Miss Laura Hill.

The final revisions to this script were, in the event, made back in Durham Theology, where I currently hold a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship.

My greatest debt is owed to my family, especially to my long-suffering wife, Rachel, who has endured countless boring sessions upon asking how my work was going, and to our children, Helen, Beata, Anthony, and Alexander whose very presence constantly reminds me that there is more to life than books. To them this book is lovingly dedicated.

28 February 2005,
The Orthodox feast of
St Cassian the Roman,
Durham

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Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
Aug	Augustinianum
CCL	Corpus Christianorum Scriptorum Latinorum
CPG	<i>Clavis Patrum Graecorum</i> (ed. M. Geerard [1974])
CPL	<i>Clavis Patrum Latinorum</i> (ed. E. Dekkers [1995])
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DSp	<i>Dictionnaire de Spiritualité</i> (ed. M. Viller <i>et al.</i> [1932–95])
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni Opera
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
Mus	<i>Le Muséon. Revue d'études orientales</i>
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
PLS	Patrologia Latina Supplementum
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
SA	Studia Anselmiana
SC	Sources Chrésiennes
SEA	Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum
SM	<i>Studia Monastica</i>
SO	Spiritualité orientale
SP	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
SVF	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> (ed. von Arnim [1903–24])

TU

Texte und Untersuchungen

VC

Vigiliae Christianae

Introduction

1 ST JOHN CASSIAN'S PROFILE IN HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

Interest in the writings of St John Cassian (c.360–435) has never waned. This is attributable in large measure to Cassian's attractive balance of vivid narration and penetrating insight, not least into human psychology. He exercised a great influence on the development of Western asceticism through his published accounts of time spent in the company of the Desert Fathers during two trips from Palestine to Egypt, c.385–99/400. His *Institutes* (in full, *On the institutes of the coenobia, and on the eight deadly thoughts*) and *Conferences* (*The conferences of the fathers in twenty-four books*) were copied and studied for centuries. They became normative accounts of the Desert Fathers, particularly as Westerners found themselves separated from Egypt by political and, eventually, theological circumstances.

One mark of how great an impact Cassian's writings had is that they earned him an honour that he and St Jerome are (to the best of my knowledge) the only Latin ascetic authors to share: several of his books circulated in Greek and were thus absorbed into the corpus of Greek ascetic literature. In addition, extracts from Cassian's writings were disseminated in the form of apophthegmata almost as broadly as Christianity itself.¹ Quotations—and, in some instances, lengthy

¹ This claim is qualified because, as yet, I have failed to find any traces of Cassian in the Georgian or Old Sogdian.

passages—from ‘Cassian the Roman’ are to be found in Greek,² Coptic,³ Syriac,⁴ Armenian,⁵ Arabic,⁶ Ethiopic,⁷ and Slavonic⁸ literature.

And yet, in this expurgated format, Cassian’s writings have necessarily had a limited impact. It is typical of his unassuming style that the apophthegmata ascribed to him in the Eastern and Oriental traditions are consistently his recollections of what other people did or said. As for the tracts that occasionally come to light—for example, in Greek, Arabic, or Slavonic—they tend to corroborate other works in the larger corpus of monastic and ascetic literature without being particularly distinctive. Cassian himself tends to vanish.

This problem (for it is a problem) is compounded by the fact that we know relatively little about Cassian’s life: for instance, his dates of birth and death are reasonable approximations, but approximations only, and the places of his birth and death are subjects of scholarly controversy. We do not know what took him to Gaul, where he wrote his works. Some scholars have argued that he was originally from the area and was simply returning home; others have argued, just as credibly, that Cassian was from modern-day Dobrudja, Romania.⁹ (It should be noted that Cassian’s arrival in Marseilles does not militate against an Eastern European origin. Marseilles was a major port of call for Mediterranean vessels and this would have made it quite simple to travel there from any of a number of places.)¹⁰ Most of

² e.g. Nicodemus (1782): 61–87; Dyovouniotis (1913); Marsili (1934); cf. Photius, *cod* 197 (ed. Henry [1959–91]: 3: 92–5).

³ e.g. *apoph* copt 26 (ed. Chaîne [1960]: 5).

⁴ See Sauget (1987): 97, 173.

⁵ Cf. *pater* armen 4.18R, 5.54A–B, 6.8R, 11.18R, 13.14A–B, 13.15R, 18.73B (CSCO 335: 198; 361: 54–6, 137–8; 371: 137, 182–3, 193; 379: 102–3).

⁶ e.g. in the Arabic translation of ‘Enānišō, *paradisus partum*: see Sauget (1987): 133; see also Graf (1944–53): 1: 380–8 (Arabic apophthegmata), 401 (Arabic extracts from Cassian’s works).

⁷ e.g. *ascet* 5, 20, 22, 32, 38 (CSCO 458: 5, 23–4, 25–8, 37–8, 40 [text]; 459: 3–4, 16–19, 25–6, 28 [trans.]); *pater* aeth 34 (28) (CSCO 277: 10–11 [text]; 278: 9 [trans.]); *coll mon* 16.7 (CSCO 238: 133–4 [text]; 239: 98 [trans.]).

⁸ e.g. in Paissy Velichkovsky, *Dobrotolyubiya* (ed. Zamfiresco [1990]: 1075–1114).

⁹ A thorough discussion of this debate is available in Vannier (1999): 23–7. For my part, I am persuaded that Cassian was from modern-day Romania.

¹⁰ Rougé (1966): 141–2; Bats (1992); Hermary (1999). Paulinus, *car* 24 (PL 61: 621), relates the travels of Martinian, who departing from Narbonne was shipwrecked near Marseilles, ‘daughter of the Greeks, planted on Gallic soil’ (ll. 305–6), and was

what we know about Cassian's life has been extrapolated from his writings, as for example that his forename was John, that he benefited from a reasonable education in classical literature, and that he moved in the same circles in Egypt as did Evagrius Ponticus.¹¹ There is hardly enough here to work up a full-scale biography, and certainly a biography is impossible without relying heavily upon information taken from contemporary sources to fill in the numerous gaps as plausibly as one can.

2 THE SELF-EFFACING AUTHOR AND THE TRADITION OF MONASTIC THEOLOGY

Whilst one can easily imagine that Cassian would have been happy enough to disappear behind his writings, I suggest that we ought to be reluctant to allow him to do so. As this study will demonstrate, Cassian was a creative and synthetic thinker who was perfectly capable of developing the themes that he learnt in one place, in order to deploy them in a subtly different form somewhere else; as such, he was an adept promoter of a monastic tradition of theology. One of the purposes of this study will therefore be to address and evaluate the ways in which Cassian develops aspects of contemporary teaching in distinctive ways. But there are other reasons for us to want to avoid being complicit in Cassian's habit of disappearing as the author of his works, and it is important to draw attention to them at the start.

If we lose sight of Cassian's authorial contributions to the monastic works we are all the more susceptible to asking ill-considered questions about them. An example may help: recently scholars have roundly criticized Cassian's reliability as a source for historical details concerning Egyptian monasticism¹²—which is in a limited way a salutary reminder of the need for critical attention in our approach

cared for there by the brethren. Cf. the travels of Posthumian from Alexandria to Narbonne, who similarly ended up in Marseilles: Sulpicius Severus, *dial* 1.1.3 (CSEL 1: 152–3).

¹¹ These points, and others, have been established by Chadwick, Cristiani, Hammett, Tibletti, and the other scholars mentioned below.

¹² Several examples will be discussed in ch. 3, below.

to ancient literature; but all the same it is largely unnecessary for any reader who takes seriously the prefaces to his works in which he clearly flags up his intention to present his material in a way that will be useful to those clergymen who were trying to promote monasticism in the West. Cassian did not set out to write a ‘History of the Monks of Egypt’; he set out to influence the history of the monks of Gaul. In other words, Cassian acknowledged that in his writings he aimed to propagate a certain tradition. It is therefore largely through the negligence of his subsequent readers that a corrective to reading *Conferences* as a straightforward bit of reportage is needed—but it is conspicuously the case that, once Cassian’s credibility has been attacked in this way, suspicion sets in and spreads with results that would be amusing if they were not so disadvantageous for the serious study of Cassian and his writings.¹³

In what follows, I shall propose (as an alternative strategy for reading Cassian’s works) that we need to focus on the tradition that Cassian is attempting to graft in to Gallic monasticism. By doing so, we can certainly take into account the limits of Cassian’s reliability as an historian, but we can also situate his project within the context of Nitrian monasticism and thus come to an enriched understanding of his works.¹⁴ This book, then, will present Cassian as a monastic theologian of competence and sophistication.

3 CASSIAN’S ADVOCACY OF THE ASCETIC CULTIVATION OF CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING

In the Christian East and Far East, it is not surprising that Cassian vanishes: he is, after all, a relatively minor figure whose fragmentary works share a huge field with the writings of far more celebrated authorities. But even in the West, where Cassian’s writings are preserved entire, he similarly disappears. In part, this disappearance can be put down to his habit of portraying himself in the *Conferences*

¹³ A good example of what results when one’s suspicion about Cassian’s reliability is unrestrained can be found in Frank (1996).

¹⁴ See esp. ch. 4, below.

as little other than Germanus' loyal and taciturn travelling companion. But this is only a partial explanation. Cassian's disappearance must also be recognized as a consequence of a far more interesting phenomenon that goes right to the heart of the present study. Despite initial appearances to the contrary, Cassian did not write his books simply in order to edify their readers. They are undoubtedly edifying works, and have for that very reason been cherished for generations; but they are also theologically informed to their foundations. That point may seem bland, particularly to those who believe that edification does not (and perhaps cannot) occur in a theologically neutral environment and who would think it genuinely astounding to find an author from the patristic age who tried to cultivate the spirit without simultaneously directing the mind.

But it is exactly at this point that persistent troubles enter the scene for Cassian's modern readers, because the mental formation that he constantly urges (even in something as banal as his interpretive description of the monastic habit) is something he shared with another monastic theologian whom Cassian never mentions by name: Evagrius Ponticus. We are not in a position to say very much about Evagrius' reputation amongst Latin Christians: although he had been attacked by no less a controversialist than Jerome himself,¹⁵ he also had an admirer in Gennadius of Marseilles who, along with Rufinus of Aquileia, translated some of Evagrius' works into Latin. So it is precipitous to assert that Cassian was deliberately hiding Evagrius' name and influence (much as it is precipitous to characterize Evagrius as Cassian's 'master' or 'teacher'). The first systematic exploration of Cassian's indebtedness to Evagrius was written before the significant contemporary advances in the study of Evagrian works that have tended to suggest that Evagrius himself belonged to a widespread theological tradition; consequently, that earlier monograph tends to allow Cassian to be overshadowed by Evagrius' supposed influence.¹⁶ This is not to deny that Evagrius' writings influenced Cassian (in fact, as we shall see in the chapter on Cassian's

¹⁵ See Jerome, *ep* 133.3 (ed. Labourt [1949–54]: 8: 53).

¹⁶ Marsili (1936); subsequent scholars have taken Marsili's perspective for granted (e.g. Munz [1960], Stewart [1998]). For the relevant scholarship on Evagrius in context, see esp. Bunge (1983) and Driscoll (1995) and (1997).

teaching about prayer, Evagrius' works provide numerous helpful points of comparison). Rather, it is to suggest that Cassian was not in thrall to Evagrius' supposed system—whatever that might have been—and in fact was perfectly capable of making independent contributions to the tradition to which they both belonged.

4 THE PROBLEM OF ANACHRONISTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF CASSIAN: PROSPER'S RED HERRING

Probably the greatest irony in the historical reception of Cassian's work is that, having promoted broadly Origenian views about prayer and understanding without causing a furor, Cassian was waylaid on charges of being theologically defective on a different front altogether. Within his own lifetime, Cassian was attacked by St Prosper of Aquitaine, who understood that Cassian's popular books reflected a particular theological perspective concerning divine grace. In what one must regard as a singularly ill-considered and regrettably influential interpretation of Cassian's writings, Prosper diagnosed Cassian's perspective as one opposed to St Augustine's teachings about grace and then denounced it as a bridgehead of Pelagianism within the Catholic Church. Though we must wait a further thousand years for the advent of the term itself,¹⁷ the accusation of Semipelagianism was born with Prosper's treatise against Cassian, the *Contra collatorem*. Modern scholars have begun retreating from the term 'Semipelagian,' and this is all to the good: it is unclear what value the term adds to our discussion of fifth-century ecclesiastical history and theology, it is unclear what exactly the term means, and in fact one of the few things clear about the term at all is that it originated in debates that were twice as far removed from the time of Cassian, Augustine, Prosper, and Pelagius as those four were from the time of Jesus Christ!

But because of the enormous historical momentum of this claim, it is insufficient simply to denounce the term 'Semipelagian'; in fact,

¹⁷ See Jacquin (1907).

it is positively dangerous simply to denounce a single word. As we shall have ample opportunities to note in the course of this study, the network of ideas that was labelled Semipelagianism by Francisco Suarez in the early seventeenth century was in fact already ancient by that time.¹⁸ Since the configuration of ideas antedates the term by over a millennium, there is no reason whatever to suppose that repudiating the term somehow frees us from thinking in those categories: the description of what constitutes Semipelagianism endured for nearly twelve hundred years before the term is documented, so it is hardly likely that fifty years of avoiding the use of it will have somehow eliminated the habit of thinking in terms of that description. For instance, even with the anachronism bracketed in scholarly discussions about Cassian and the fifth century, one still hears with disquieting regularity statements made to the effect that the default position of the Desert Fathers is Semipelagian.¹⁹

Apart from the dubious conceptual coherence of those statements, the term itself needs serious rethinking because it typically means nothing more than anti-Augustinianism²⁰—and it is far from obvious what constitutes anti-Augustinianism in Late Antiquity or even, with the exception of Julian of Eclanum and perhaps a few others, who these anti-Augustinians were supposed to be. For that matter, apart from the ringing claims of Prosper himself, we have no real evidence for ‘Augustinianism’ for another seven centuries and consequently we have no real reason to suppose that there was a monolithic, theological juggernaut (‘Augustinian theology’) that attracted systematic opposition during this period. What is often

¹⁸ Suarez (1620): 164: ‘Dicti sunt semipelagiani, uel *reliquiae Pelagianorum*, quia partim a Pelagio discedebant, partim cum illo sentiebant, et ita ab illo exorti sunt, quia particulam erroris eius retinuerant.’ To this, cf. Prosper, *ep ad Aug 7* (PL 51: 68): ‘in istis *pelagianae reliquis prauitatis* non mediocris uirulentiae fibra nutritur.’

¹⁹ Such a view is endorsed, e.g. in Palladius, ed. Butler (1898–1904): 1: 205–6; but one gathers from discussions, seminars, papers presented at conferences, and informal conversation with academic colleagues that the view endures to the present day.

²⁰ Amann provides an excellent example (*DSp* 14: 1796–7): ‘Pour nous, le semipélagianisme est essentiellement un antiaugustinisme exacerbé, qui, s’effrayant à tort ou à raison de certaines affirmations du docteur d’Hippone sur le gouvernement divin des volontés humaines, sur la distribution des secours célestes, sur l’action de la grace, essaie de ménager dans l’œuvre du salut un part, plus ou moins considérable, plus ou moins exclusive aussi, à l’effort humain.’

taken as evidence for that view—in particular, Cassian’s *Conference* 13 and the later Gallic Semipelagians—will be subject to examination below and will be found to be far, far less conclusive than scholarly conventions would lead us to suppose.

Indeed, another major purpose of the study in hand is to undermine Prosper’s pretence of speaking on behalf of a normative Augustinian orthodoxy, by demonstrating that Prosper’s theological arguments fail to inspire confidence in the even more circumspect matter of accurately evaluating and responding to Cassian’s *Conference* 13. If he cannot be trusted to evaluate a single contemporary document, then a fortiori he cannot be trusted to synthesize the numerous works of Augustine.

5 ALLEGATIONS OF ANTI-AUGUSTINIANISM AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR READING CASSIAN

Even though the term ‘Semipelagian’ has been abandoned, a number of problems that are associated with using that term for analytic purposes still vex the study of Cassian’s works.²¹ To be specific, there is in the recent scholarship on Cassian no discernible recognition of the illegitimacy of reducing ‘anti-Pelagianism’ to Augustine and his adherents, which is a crucial move in making the Pelagian controversy into a bipolar affair, and thus in construing every text that does not easily fit into one camp or the other as a ‘middle way’. As we shall see, there is in fact no reason to suppose that there were ever only two options. There has been no attempt to catalogue the putative ‘anti-Augustinian’ remarks in *Conference* 13 and evaluate them with reference to Augustine’s writings; it is simply taken for granted that the remarks are to be found there, and that they are direct responses to Augustine. There has been no effort to grapple with the numerous similarities shared by Cassian and Augustine and consider whether they might have a bearing on the question in hand—even though their similarities provide the indispensable context for a sober

²¹ The following examples will be documented in the appropriate chapters below.

evaluation of their differences. There has been no serious resistance to Prosper's preferred method of proof-texting, excerpting and thus taking out of context a number of claims from Cassian that he then structures as he sees fit and describes as Cassian's view. (In fact it seems that many latter-day readers of Cassian have found this methodology most congenial—as though the anecdotal form of Cassian's monastic writings is a matter of indifference and his principles can be strip-mined from them.) And there has been absolutely no critical engagement at all with Prosper's *Contra collatorem*: in fact every scholar who has made explicit reference to that work has astonishingly accepted it as a serious and probative evaluation of Cassian's purpose and limitations.

It is a major contention of this work that, because those acutely problematic assumptions have not yet been brought into view and criticized, the forms of thought that are implied by the word 'Semi-pelagian' have continued to circulate even in quarters where the term itself enjoys no favour.

This is the first study of Cassian to begin with an articulate statement and evaluation of the foundational critique of Cassian. The first chapter studies closely Prosper's *Contra collatorem*, with the aim of clearing the ground for subsequent chapters. By beginning in this way, the study directs attention to two important problems in the study of Cassian that have not been satisfactorily addressed (namely, his relationship to Pelagianism, and his relationship to Augustine), and it attempts to put research into those questions on a firm foundation. In the first case, it demonstrates that in no sense of the term can Cassian be described as a Pelagian and that, to the contrary, he objected to the Pelagians' preaching on the basis of several deeply held principles. Thinking of Cassian as in any sense a 'Semipelagian' is therefore not only fatuous and misleadingly anachronistic, it is demonstrably wrong and it has a deleterious effect on how Cassian's writings are evaluated.

Second, this study shows that the principles on which Cassian based his objections were hardly foreign to Augustine's own polemic against Pelagius and Caelestius. We have already noted that Cassian's edifying tales about monks are implicated in his theological views. In much the same way, Augustine's monastic life is implicated in his rejection of Pelagianism. The implications of Augustine's monastic

vocation are seldom considered.²² What this study will show, then, is that Cassian and Augustine *as monks* could have had shared reasons for objecting to Pelagianism, and indeed they did so.

At this point, a problem can be anticipated: it should be noted that Cassian's writings will *not* be assimilated to Augustine's position in this study; that is, the purpose here is *not* to argue that Cassian was a misunderstood Augustinian. To reiterate a theme, matters are more complicated than the Prosperian dichotomy ('Augustine the orthodox v. Pelagius the heretic') suggests. Cassian's writings demonstrate that it is assuredly possible to be opposed to Pelagius without therefore being 'Augustinian'. And, at the risk of repetition, it is unclear what (if anything) Augustinian orthodoxy might have been in the fifth century.

The reason it is worth devoting such a large portion of this research to Cassian's relationship to Augustine is quite straightforward. Marsili's research into Evagrius' influence on Cassian could well suggest that Cassian is simply an epigone of Evagrius—and if second hand, then second rate. Similarly, Prosper's allegations about the normativity of Augustine's views have the express purpose of making him seem like a hypocritical Augustinian *manqué*, with the same results. Both suggestions probably give undue weight to the significance for Cassian of other figures about whom we know rather more. As we shall see, there are abundant reasons for thinking that Cassian sought and found inspiration elsewhere. And even this is to say nothing of Cassian's potential for independent development. But since a great deal of information is available about Augustine, using it in describing and evaluating Cassian is only prudent, even though it is necessary to use it in a way that is free from (because aware of) the interpretive pressures exerted on the unwary by commonsensical anachronism.

6 THE STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENT MONOGRAPH

This book explores Cassian's writings under several rubrics, by way of making the case for the need of a full-scale revisionist approach.

²² e.g. my research has identified no study of Augustine's anti-Pelagianism in the light of his monasticism.

The first chapter revisits the classic (and enormously influential) argument for Cassian's incompetence—Prosper's *Against the Conferencer*—and, subjecting it to scrutiny, finds it seriously and irredeemably defective. The chapter then advances an alternative strategy for reading Cassian: he will be presented as a fifth-century monastic theologian, whose understanding of, approach to, and account of Christian redemption are permeated by the concerns, experiences, and perspectives that were his as a monk. As a monastic theologian, Cassian will be compared to other monks whose theological writings come down to us, not least Augustine of Hippo and the 'Provençal Masters' (the collective term that is used in these pages in place of the opprobrious 'Semipelagians').²³ This interpretation of Cassian resists the temptation of anachronism that contrasts the monk-theologians of Gaul to the bishop-theologian of Africa against the backdrop of Prosper's robust Augustinianism. This chapter is important not least for debunking the recrudescing belief that monks were predisposed to squeamishness about Augustine's writings and that 'Semipelagianism' represented a realistic, ascetically informed working doctrine of the balance of grace and freedom in the Christian life.

The second chapter will centre on the claim that Cassian objected to Pelagianism on the basis of serious principles and will explore his case against Pelagianism in detail. Obviously, this will necessitate a serious consideration of Pelagianism, not just in terms of what Pelagianism was, but also in terms of what it means to describe something as 'Pelagian'. The central argument that I advance in this chapter is that, if we want to understand how Cassian differed from Pelagius *et al.*, we need to direct our attention away from the concept of grace and on to the concept of will. By attending to the way Cassian presents his monastic teachings as aimed at rehabilitating the will (amongst other things), we will be able to appreciate the coherence of his theological objections to Pelagius' teaching. In other words, we will see how the specifically monastic aspects of Cassian's thinking are directly relevant to his dogmatic position in regard to human salvation and the divine economy.

But Cassian's emphasis on the inconstancy of the will is just one topic for which his monastic preoccupations are determinative. In

²³ I owe this term to the excellent work of Carlo Tibiletti.

order to appreciate the profundity of Cassian's work as a monastic theologian and the skill with which he executed it, we will need to turn our attention from the situation in which he wrote to the tradition to which those writings belong (and which they seek to perpetuate). The theme of tradition itself is central to what follows and therefore the third chapter will be dedicated to it. This chapter will situate Cassian's monastic programme within the milieu of Nitrian asceticism and, along the way, redress the arguments that have recently been advanced against Cassian's reliability as an historian. It will bring to bear in the study of Cassian's works the significant results from contemporary scholarship that have effectively demonstrated that the Fathers of the Egyptian desert were possessed of a theological culture of considerable vitality—and that stereotypes about the pursuit of intellectual activity (not least allegorical interpretation of Scripture in the manner of Philo, Origen, and others) cleaving along ethnic lines are simply unsound.

Considering Cassian's place within a tradition provides a convenient point of departure for evaluating his teaching on prayer, since prayer was regarded in that tradition as the very font of theology. Accordingly, chapter 4 will explore the ways in which Cassian related the monastic experience of prayer to his theological project as a whole. It will be useful in this discussion to make occasional comparisons to others who propagated the tradition evident in Cassian's teaching, not least Evagrius Ponticus. But what calls for sustained attention in Cassian's description of prayer is not the similarities it may have to earlier authors; instead, it is Cassian's emphasis on the Christological and Pneumatological dimensions of Christian prayer. For Cassian conceives of prayer as an encounter with God and, in this context, he conceives of God in explicitly Trinitarian terms.

In the event, Cassian devotes more attention to Christ's place in Christian prayer than to the Spirit's place. But this is consistent with his regular return to Christ in his works as a whole. One can justifiably describe Cassian's theological programme as being Christocentric. The final chapter of the book will examine this Christocentrism with specific reference to the monastic character of Cassian's theology. In this chapter, Cassian's treatise *On the Incarnation of the Lord, against Nestorius the heretic* (hereinafter, *Incarnation*) will be chiefly in evidence. Following Victor Codina, I will argue that

Cassian's Christological treatise is an indispensable part of his theological oeuvre. Against several detractors of Cassian's treatise, I will argue that it is a work of genuine interest, not simply for the light it throws on Cassian's other works, but in its own right as well. Indeed, it may fittingly be considered the apex of Cassian's literary career. In much the same way that Cassian's reputation as a spiritual teacher has suffered from being eclipsed by the (much, much later) advent of medieval Augustinianism, his reputation as a dogmatic theologian has similarly suffered from being eclipsed by the anachronistic emphasis on Chalcedonian Christology that is commonplace in most patristic scholarship (as is spectacularly evident in the work of A. Grillmeier, as we shall have occasion to note).

7 OTHER MAJOR TOPICS

So much for what this book attempts; it is as well from the outset to say a few words about what it does *not* attempt. I noted at the beginning of this introduction that interest in Cassian has never really waned. In fact, one could justifiably say that over the last century or so interest in Cassian has reached a new level of intensity. This is apparent from the number of monographs and essays about him that have been published. These studies have rendered the detailed consideration of a number of topics otiose. For example, Léon Cristiani's massive study of Cassian provides a thorough orientation to Cassian's life and works.²⁴ Sir Owen Chadwick's monograph, though far more concise, remains the standard treatment in English of Cassian's life as a whole—though, of course, some scholars would dissent from particular claims found therein.²⁵ There are also readily available analyses of Cassian in his socio-political context,²⁶ his ecclesiastical context,²⁷ and, most recently, his monastic context.²⁸ Somewhat less readily available, but still indispensable, is H. G. Evelyn White's massive examination of the monasteries that Cassian visited during his sojourn in Egypt.²⁹ Otto

²⁴ Cristiani (1946).

²⁶ Mathisen (1989).

²⁸ Stewart (1998).

²⁵ O. Chadwick (1950) and (1968).

²⁷ Rousseau (1978).

²⁹ Evelyn White (1932).

Abel and Nora Chadwick have studied Cassian's writings from a literary point of view,³⁰ whilst Claudio Leonardi has explained in some detail his place in the development of medieval Latin Christianity.³¹ Hans Hammer and Carlo Tibiletti have surveyed Cassian's intellectual formation.³² Ludwig Wrzoł has published in serial form the equivalent of a monograph on Cassian's psychology.³³ The reader interested in those aspects of Cassian's life and works is referred to them.

On the matter of Cassian's theology, in addition to references scattered throughout the works just mentioned, there are several important works. Peter Munz has described Cassian's affiliation to Origenian theology.³⁴ Alfons Kemmer has argued that Cassian's descriptions of prayer show the imprint of Messalian and Syrian influences.³⁵ Kemmer's provocative thesis will be considered in due course, but in passing I may say that a recent effort to rehabilitate it is inconclusive. More fruitful has been the study of Cassian's debts to Evagrius Ponticus. Here, the work of Salvatore Marsili is of the utmost importance.³⁶ Other modern studies have focused, not on Cassian's debts, but on his developments. Topics like Cassian's teaching on humility,³⁷ grace,³⁸ and 'theological anthropology'³⁹ are convenient examples—but these works have had very little impact on the current study.

Far more influential have been three recent discussions of Cassian's Christology. Victor Codina has argued compellingly that Cassian's neglected (or despised) treatise *Incarnation* is a valuable key to his monastic works.⁴⁰ A quarter of a century later, Lorenzo Dattrino in introducing his Italian translation of that work vindicated Cassian against his legion of detractors.⁴¹ Finally, Donald Fairbairn has

³⁰ Abel (1904); N. Chadwick (1955).

³¹ Leonardi (1978).

³² Hammer (1930); Tibiletti (1977).

³³ Wrzoł (1918–22).

³⁴ Munz (1960); it is worth just noting that this article takes a definite line on what makes for Origenism that is increasingly under fire.

³⁵ Kemmer (1938), (1948), and (1955).

³⁶ Marsili (1936).

³⁷ Beaudry (1967).

³⁸ Hoch (1895).

³⁹ Pristas (1993).

⁴⁰ Codina (1966).

⁴¹ Dattrino (1991); this can be contrasted to the otherwise comparable introduction to the recent French translation of *Incarnation* by Marie-Anne Vannier (1999). Dr Vannier is doubtful of the theological and historical value of that treatise and her research basically extrapolates information from it that is peripheral to Cassian's avowed doctrinal and theological purpose; see Vannier (1993).

decisively shown that Cassian's Christology is the vehicle for his most refined statements about God's relationship to man. In other words, Fairbairn has shown it to be the foundation for Cassian's teachings about grace.⁴²

The results of Codina's, Fairbairn's, Marsili's, and Stewart's research suggest that a re-evaluation of Cassian as a theologian is timely. The extensive use that continues to be made of Cassian for a variety of non-theological ends (as noted above) also motivates a new look at the theological purpose of Cassian's work. Cassian's testimony about the 'Angelic Rule', about the baptismal creed of Antioch, about the Anthropomorphite–Origenist controversy, about 'pre-Nestorianism' in the West, about the reception of Augustine's works in southern Gaul, and about a host of other topics simply cannot be divorced from his theological orientation. Scholars attempt to do so at their peril. Cassian's writings are informed—that is, they are *shaped*—by his theology. Whilst it is an overstatement to imply that their value stands or falls with the value of his theology, it is nevertheless true to say that ignoring or making mistakes about their theological framework is a certain way of increasing one's odds of getting things badly wrong. It is therefore hoped that a sympathetic examination of Cassian's tradition of theology will be useful beyond the narrow circle of patrologists.

⁴² Fairbairn (2003).

Monastic theology in fifth-century southern Gaul

Theology, like any other expression of culture, bears the imprint of the circumstances from which it emerges. It is therefore to be expected that, when the theologian in question is a Christian monk, the theological writings will bear the imprint of Christian monasticism. Such, in brief, is monastic theology. In response to the exigencies and experiences of monastic life, these theologians tend to favour particular genres, to return to certain themes, and to employ conventional idioms. Thus, for example, monks often pen exhortations, letters and rules, and collect aphorisms; they regularly emphasize the importance of Christian practice and moral behaviour as the foundation of orthodox thinking; they tend freely to interpret Scripture as applying to their life of prayer. Some awareness of the lineaments of monastic theology is prerequisite to a meaningful evaluation of the theological vision of late ancient Christian monks. Lacking such awareness is frequently the first step towards breaking theological writings on the rack of anachronism.

It is a major contention of this book that the theological vision of John Cassian has been subjected precisely to such interpretive abuse. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, it offers an analysis of the foundational interpretation of Cassian that criticizes his works with recourse to a highly specific set of theological propositions and that has supported almost every subsequent interpretation, directly or indirectly; second, it advances a counter-interpretation of Cassian's works by drawing attention to the conventions of monastic theology as reflected in the works of his contemporaries.

1 FIFTH-CENTURY ALLEGATIONS OF 'SEMIPELAGIANISM' AND THEIR AFTERMATH

Even the best modern studies of Cassian concede, without serious analysis, that Cassian's writings are theologically defective—and this, despite the fact that such studies are on the whole sympathetic to Cassian's position.¹ It is sometimes implied that Cassian's defect comes from his supposed attempt to find a middle course between Augustine and Pelagius.² This suggestion rests upon two suppositions that I will call into question in these pages: first, that the Pelagian controversy was basically a matter of Augustine v. Pelagius and that any other position is to be located at some point on a continuum stretching from Augustine to Pelagius; second, that Cassian rejected Augustine as definitely as he rejected Pelagius.

As regards the former supposition, in the present chapter it will be shown that the standard typology fits the evidence badly. Opposition to Pelagianism can more fruitfully be approached as the variegated responses of monastic theologians at work within the emergent catholic tradition. As for the latter supposition, we will begin to see how Cassian and Augustine were kindred spirits in this chapter; in the following chapter, we will focus on Cassian's polemic against Pelagius.

The analysis of Cassian's position that this study seeks to overturn ultimately derives from the efforts of Prosper of Aquitaine, Cassian's contemporary in southern Gaul, to vindicate Augustine and smear Augustine's presumed detractors. Prosper focused on Cassian's account of how divine grace and human effort are related, suggesting that Cassian was quietly propagating the 'remnants of Pelagian depravity' by his teaching. He also implied that Cassian, and others,

¹ e.g. Cristiani (1946): 2: 237–8, 267–8; O. Chadwick (1950): 110–12 and (1968): 110–17.

² e.g. Cristiani (1946): 2: 261: 'De même que des hommes par ailleurs fort distingués avaient cru pouvoir découvrir un "juste milieu" entre Arius et Athanase, de même Cassien se faisait fort d'ouvrir un chemin à l'égalité de distance de Pélage et d'Augustin.' Cf. Stewart (1998): 81: 'For the monks of Gaul seeking theological understanding of their monastic experience the middle path of what later historians call Semi-Pelagianism was the prudent one to take.'

praised Augustine's works publicly whilst privately undermining Augustine's teachings. This implication points to perhaps the most striking perpetuation of Prosper's campaign: the tendency to find in Cassian (and his peers) tacit condemnations of Augustine where there are no explicit references to or citations of Augustine's writings at all. These 'veiled' references serve to distance Cassian from Augustine and simultaneously reinforce the belief that, in the debates about Pelagius, there were only two sides from which to choose: Pelagius' on the one hand, and Augustine's—and Prosper's—on the other.

But there are good reasons for rejecting that schematization of the Pelagian controversy, and indeed for questioning the applicability of Prosper's standards. This is all the more important in that Prosper's claims have been astonishingly influential. An example provided by Cassiodorus is illustrative: although he unstintingly admires Cassian's insight into matters of psychology and monastic custom, he nevertheless defers to Prosper by name and urges caution in reading Cassian on matters of free will and related topics.³ Admittedly, few subsequent references are as explicit about Prosper's influence as Cassiodorus' was, but it is clear from generations of chance remarks about Cassian that Prosper's concerns were pervasive.

Cassiodorus' misgivings demonstrate what I have elsewhere called the 'theoretical'—or, perhaps better, 'theoretically informed'—tradition about Cassian, which explicitly measures his works against the standards set by Prosper. Alongside it, there is a 'practical' tradition that eschews theological considerations altogether and commends Cassian for the importance of his contributions to Western monasticism.⁴ (The fact that admirers of Cassian's monastic

³ Cassiodorus, *inst diu lit* 29 (PL 70: 1144): 'Cassianum presbyterum, qui scripsit de Institutione fidelium monachorum, sedulo legite, frequenter audite; qui inter ipsa sancti propositi initia, octo principalia vitia dicit esse fugienda. Hic noxios motus animorum ita competenter insinuat, ut excessus suos hominem prius videre faciat, et vitare compellat, quos antea confusione caliginis ignorabat: *qui tamen de libero arbitrio a B. Prospero jure culpatus est. Unde monemus ut in rebus talibus excedentem sub cautela legere debeatis*' (emphasis added). Leslie Jones (1945): 435 observes that this work spread broadly in the Middle Ages, taking (we may note) its judgement of Cassian with it.

⁴ See Casiday (2001a).

contributions have left the theological field to his detractors is surely important.) All earlier serious engagements with Cassian have taken ('Prosperian' or medieval) Augustinianism as the basis for their evaluation and, inevitably, criticism of Cassian's works, as is evident over several centuries and across the major languages of Western Europe.⁵ This approach not only colours the scholarship on Cassian, it also colours the scholarship of fifth-century Gallic Christianity as a whole, because Prosper's version of the events has been used not only to fill in the gaps of history, it has even been used to identify where certain gaps are supposed to be.⁶

The original case made by Prosper against Cassian remains the most articulate and comprehensive statement of dissatisfaction with Cassian's theology vis-à-vis Augustine's writings ever produced and can therefore be more readily assessed than can some of the inchoate expressions that are encountered in subsequent literature. Without suggesting that every denunciation of Cassian is directly dependent upon Prosper's, I submit that redressing Prosper's claims will have the salutary effect of explicitly confronting the charges that have faded over the centuries into common sense and prejudice. Once we have seen how defective Prosper's analysis of Cassian is,⁷ we will be able thereafter to appreciate Cassian's writings without apology or sheepishness. In this chapter we shall therefore direct our attention to Prosper's analysis, and much of this study will return to his analysis by way of redressing misapprehensions that have come of it (notwithstanding my desire to avoid giving too much credit to Prosper's frankly wobbly polemic). An unashamed evaluation of Cassian's writings can only properly begin by assessing and (as I will show) rejecting Prosper's accusations.

⁵ Several references are given in Appendix 1, 'Prosper's influence on modern scholarship', below.

⁶ e.g. Chéné (1953); Amann (1937–95). We shall see the process clearly at work in the case of Valerian of Cimiez, a hapless preacher who has subsequently been drawn into the controversy simply because many Church historians over the centuries have been so committed to Prosper's version of the events that they cannot bear to leave a Gallic Christian of the fifth century unaffiliated to Pelagius or to Augustine.

⁷ Stewart (1998): 77 very rightly says that Prosper creates 'a virtual parody of Cassian's teaching'; see further, Casiday (2005a).

Prosper's campaign on behalf of Augustine

What little we know about Prosper's personal life derives chiefly from his works and from Gennadius' note on Prosper.⁸ Some have conjectured that Prosper belonged to Cassian's monastery,⁹ but this cannot be established. One's perspective hinges on how one reads Prosper's claim that the problems are emerging from 'our own' or 'among us'—that is, whether he is thought to refer generally to the Christian community in Marseilles or specifically to the Monastery of St Victor.¹⁰

In any event, it would appear that he did not remain in Gaul and that he ultimately settled in Rome. According to Gennadius, Prosper reportedly had a hand in writing Leo the Great's letters against Eutyches.¹¹ Some have even credited Prosper with responsibility for the whole of Leo's published works—though this view is attributable more to active imaginations than to serious comparisons of their works. Msgr Francesco di Capua has advanced numerous stylistic observations that tell against the claim that Prosper was Leo's 'ghost-writer', though he was prepared to admit that Prosper may well have been a secretary in the papal chancery and that Leo's letters were certainly revised.¹² We lack definitive proof for even this more circumspect claim. But there is no reason to reject the tradition utterly.

It seems likely that Prosper lived until at least 455, for his *Chronicon* includes the death of Valentinian.¹³ After that note, we lose track of him. The Maurist Fathers suggest that Prosper probably died before 457, because in that year a certain Victorius refers to him as *uirum sanctum et uenerabilem*.¹⁴ Once more, the claim rests on inconclusive evidence, but it can be accepted in default of a better argument.

⁸ For his life, see esp. the Maurists' *Vita s. Prosperi* (PL 51: 17–54) and Bosio (1961–70); Gennadius, *uir inl* 84 (PL 58: 1107): 'Prosper, homo Aquitanicae regionis'.

⁹ e.g. Weigel (1938): 44.

¹⁰ Prosper, *ep ad Rufin* (PL 51: 79); id., *ep ad Aug* (PL 51: 68): 'apud nos serui Christi qui in Massiliensi urbe constituent'. What is most important for Prosper himself is that the problems are spreading amongst the unlearned: see his *c Coll* 1.1 (PL 51: 215).

¹¹ Gennadius, *uir inl* 84 (PL 58: 1108).

¹² Di Capua (1959a). In another note, di Capua (1959b) has described the revision of one of Leo's letters, which is the role he is willing to concede Prosper may have played in the chancery.

¹³ Prosper, *Chronicon* (PL 51: 864).

¹⁴ See PL 51: 17, 39.

Prosper was a passionate, even intemperate, admirer of Augustine's writings. He devoted a lifetime to the defence and exposition of Augustine's views, tirelessly championing them and appealing for support to Augustine himself and, after Augustine's death, to the Pope in Rome. His sincerity and his enthusiasm are beyond question; his accuracy is another matter altogether. Be that as it may, it is generally accepted that Prosper laid the foundation upon which medieval Augustinian theology was built: in the title of a famous paper, he is the 'first representative of medieval Augustinianism'.¹⁵

Prosper's impact on medieval Augustinianism notwithstanding, some crucial points remain unanswered. Were there other interpretations of Augustine that merit our attention—nascent variations of Augustinianism, so to speak, that died on the vine even as Prosper's version flourished? Does Prosper miss out anything important in Augustine's writings and, if so, what difference does it make? Is Prosper's interpretation ultimately so influential because it is the most accurate, or for other reasons? These questions will not be addressed directly in the present research. However, it will become clear that there are very good reasons for not resting content with the idea that Prosper was for all intents and purposes Augustine's literary executor and thus that there are reasons for pursuing those lines of enquiry further.

There were some stable characteristics to Prosper's spirited defence of Augustine. He depicts himself as an embattled controversialist, in the business of 'strongly condemning' wrong opinions and the authors thereof.¹⁶ In one of his letters, he claims that he has been becoming increasingly unpopular—the object of calumny and malicious rumour—because of his admiration for Augustine's works.¹⁷ He described himself to Augustine as being one of the 'intrepid lovers of the full doctrine of grace, . . . audacious enough to contradict the arguments of men who are by far [his] superior'.¹⁸ Such behaviour was no doubt galling for those superiors, and this may go a long way towards accounting for the acrimonious, if not always personally

¹⁵ Cappuyns (1929); Cappuyns's assessment has been corroborated by three subsequent studies: Pelland (1936); de Plinval (1958); Lorenz (1962).

¹⁶ Prosper, *ep ad Rufin* 18 (PL 51: 88).

¹⁷ Prosper, *ep ad Rufin*, pref. (PL 51: 77).

¹⁸ Prosper, *ep ad Aug* 7 (PL 51: 72).

vindictive, tone characteristic of all Prosper's writings on Augustine's behalf.

In an allegation that subsequent historiography has enshrined, Prosper claimed that his enemies publicly praise Augustine while secretly whispering against him.¹⁹ His account of what motivated this duplicity is marvellously simple: they carry on this way because they fear the crushing weight of Augustine's authoritative tomes.²⁰ There is a certain plausibility to that claim but, even so, Prosper's argument distinctly lacks any proof. In fact, it has that enviable feature of all good conspiracy theories: it is predicated on the assumption that the conspirators are clever enough not to leave any evidence; it flourishes on suspicion, rather than proof.

On the other hand, just because Prosper's argument seems paranoid does not mean that it is wrong. As we will see below, ample evidence demonstrates that a controversy raged in Gaul during Prosper's time and it is beyond question that Augustine's writings were oil on the fire. Even so, what Prosper constantly asserts without substantiation is that Cassian and Vincent of Lérins and their colleagues were covertly attacking Augustine. Prosper thus puts us in the uncomfortable position of having to take him at his word. It is the responsibility of the historically orientated scholar to seek out further evidence with respect to claims of this sort.

Prosper indicates that his enemies spoke highly of Augustine,²¹ and we shall see that he is correct in this claim, but he also flatly accuses them of propagating the malicious belief that Augustine was a Manichean fatalist,²² or else a dangerous innovator.²³ The writings of the Provençal Masters provide no unambiguous evidence for these assertions. Prosper's claim rests instead on an inference of Augustine's name that is not warranted by Prosper's bitter assertions that it ought to be inferred, and not justified by the fact that generations of

¹⁹ e.g. Prosper, *ep ad Rufin* 3 (PL 51: 79): 'Against him who is resplendent with the glory of so many palms and so many crowns which he won for the exaltation of the Church and the glory of Christ, some of ours (to their own great misfortune!) speak and murmur in secret; but it has not gone unheard.'

²⁰ Prosper, *ep ad Rufin* 4 (PL 51: 80).

²¹ Implication: Prosper, *ep ad Rufin* 4 (PL 51: 79–80); assertion: *ep ad Aug* 3 (PL 51: 69): 'this work the holy men greet with loud approval'.

²² Prosper, *ep ad Rufin* 2, 18 (PL 51: 78, 88).

²³ Prosper, *ep ad Rufin* 3; *ep ad Aug* 2–3 (PL 51: 79, 67–70).

scholars have obligingly inferred it. A dispassionate reading of the writings by the Provençal Masters does not tend to corroborate Prosper's claim at all; rather, it reveals them drawing upon Augustine (amongst others) in a critical but always respectful way that is consistent with any serious-minded adherence to a tradition. The irreconcilable differences between Prosper's reading and this reading justify further attention to his case against Cassian.

Turning a critical eye to Prosper, we find flaws in his methodology that lead to a corrupt reading of Cassian's works. The more ambitious task of showing him to have been inaccurate with respect to an explication of *Conference* 13 (not to mention a serious re-evaluation of his place in the history of the reception of Augustine's works) lies beyond the scope of the work in hand.²⁴ But, in view of the inertia which generations of habit have given to Prosper's claims, it is significant nevertheless to show that he did not understand the intricacies of the positions against which he was arguing. On that basis, one can argue for the need for a better approach to Cassian's works.

Prosper's interpretation of *Conference* 13

Prosper's response to Cassian is the longest of his several contributions to the debate over Semipelagianism. Although it has been argued that *Against the Conferencer* followed Prosper's other works in the controversy,²⁵ it seems more plausible to suppose that it was in fact earlier than his other polemics. *On Augustine's behalf, against the Genoese* and *On Augustine's behalf, against the Vincentian Articles* are characteristically repetitious: for example, they regularly accuse the Provençal Masters of fatalism. Furthermore, *Against the Conferencer* is far longer and more detailed than his other breathless writings, and this suggests that Prosper may have written it in a more leisurely way—that is, before the controversy developed in ferocity.

This is not to suggest that Prosper is anything less than fierce in *Against the Conferencer*. Even scholars who endorse the correctness of Prosper's theology are prepared to acknowledge that his arguments

²⁴ For a preliminary analysis of Prosper's evaluations, see Casiday (2005a).

²⁵ Sirmond hypothesizes that Prosper wrote *c Coll* after receiving Pope Celestine's *ep* 21 (see PL 51: 15).

are unjust and that the work is more polemic than analytic in character.²⁶ Elsewhere, I have offered a sustained reading of the text with particular attention paid to Prosper's polemic strategies and interpretive techniques, so it will not be necessary to repeat the exercise here.²⁷ Instead, it will suffice to focus on Prosper's synthetic overview ('per recapitulationem sententiae') of Cassian's purported teaching at *Against the Conferencer* 19 (PL 51: 266 ff). Here, he offers in summary form twelve propositions excerpted from *Conference* 13 and glosses them, thus providing a convenient specimen of his interpretation of Cassian.

His introduction is scathing: Cassian's statements 'flow through the rocky passages and into the putrid gorge of the muddy brooks, from the depths of which a fog wafts up' (19.1 [266]). His subsequent lines do not disappoint the expectations instilled by such a remark, even though the first proposition is adjudged Catholic. That passage (*conl* 13.3.5) states: 'The beginning not only of good works but also of good thoughts comes from God, who starts in us what is good and carries it out and brings it to its completion.' By endorsing a statement that seems to be consistent with Prosper's theological view, he is able to accuse Cassian of inconsistency in subsequent passages. Thus, the second *sententia* (taken from *conl* 13.8.3–4, with its noteworthy clause about God seeing something 'arising from our own effort') is declared a departure from the first inasmuch as with it Cassian 'now partly ascribes to free will' what he had formerly attributed entirely to grace. It is, however, doubtful whether Cassian subscribed to the sharp distinction between nature as God's creation and grace that Prosper's critique presupposes.

The third proposition (*conl* 13.9.4–5) gives Prosper occasion to note that even the desire for spiritual health is inspired in us by God. Prosper's note is jejune and merely insinuates that something is amiss without establishing what Cassian meant. The fourth *sententia* is quoted from *conl* 13.9.5, which reads in full:

²⁶ De Letter's notes witness to the fact that a commentator could recognize the logical inconsistency of Prosper's arguments and all the while affirm their dogmatic and doctrinal correctness. For acknowledgement of Prosper's inaccuracy in various matters pertaining to Cassian's treatise, see de Letter (1963): 215 nn. 171–3; 217 n. 225; and often. But contrast to this de Letter's categorical affirmation of Prosper's orthodoxy, e.g at 14.

²⁷ See Casiday (2005a).

But that it may be even clearer that at times the beginnings of good will arise from the goodness of nature bestowed by the liberality of the Creator—beginnings that nevertheless cannot reach the perfection of virtue unless they are directed by God—the Apostle testifies, saying, ‘For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not’ (Rom. 7:18).

In response, Prosper asserts that the ‘good will’ mentioned by St Paul at Rom. 7:18 is itself a gift of grace.

Throughout his polemic, Prosper regularly distorts that excerpt from Cassian (*conl* 13.9.5) by omitting a phrase that complicates his interpretation and may even invalidate his argument.²⁸ The phrase in question—‘at times the beginning of good will arises from the gifts of nature bestowed by the liberality of the Creator’—could readily be taken by a sympathetic reader of Cassian’s to specify that the functioning of the will is itself a gift liberally bestowed by God. But even an unsympathetic reader should have the integrity to admit that, when Prosper suggests Cassian has separated the exercise of free will from the beneficence of God, he is being wilfully misleading. Even so, Prosper starkly contrasts ‘the gifts of nature bestowed by the liberality of the Creator’ with grace.

The fifth proposition (*conl* 13.11.1–2) features Cassian’s claim, with respect to the two positions on the beginning of the good will, that ‘many people [believe] only one position, and [assert] it more than is right’, which Prosper disingenuously criticizes for suggesting that each position is wrong by itself, but both positions taken together are correct. Prosper turns a blind eye to the suggestive phrase about ‘asserting it more than is right’, which seems to mean that some people are exaggerating one position and thus falsifying it. Nowhere does Cassian indicate that each position is false *eo ipso*, which leaves open the possibility that he was prepared to consider the positions in unexaggerated form. The sixth proposition (*conl* 13.11.4) states that grace and free will ‘go together; that we must admit both, we conclude from the very nature of a devout life’. Prosper responds tritely by specifying a sense in which we ought not to admit both. He insinuates that Cassian taught that there are two different categories of Christians: those in whom grace precedes will, and those in whom will precedes grace. Prosper never showed

²⁸ See, e.g. *c Coll* 4.2 (224), 5.3 (226–7), 7.2 (230).

that this was Cassian's meaning—which is not surprising, since it is altogether unlikely that Cassian meant it.

The seventh proposition (*conl* 13.12.2) is, according to Prosper, doubly false: whereas Cassian says that Adam learnt from his sin what he had not known before, but did not lose what he had known, Prosper maintains that Adam already knew from God what would result from his sin and 'forgot the magnitude of the goodness in which he had been established, when he trusted in the Devil' (19.7 [265]). Prosper's retort is a bald affirmation; he tells us neither why his view is preferable, nor why the question is relevant. The reader is simply given the impression that Prosper is a better theologian than Cassian. The eighth proposition (*conl* 13.12.5) states that we should not refer 'all merits of the saints to God in such a manner as to ascribe to human nature nothing but what is evil'. As before, Prosper responds not to Cassian's warning, but to a modified version, and states that all human merit is attributable to God. (It should be recognized that Cassian need only mean that some merit must be ascribed to the saints and that he certainly does not preclude ascribing it to God simultaneously.)

The ninth proposition (*conl* 13.12.7: 'These seeds [*sc.*, of the virtues] will not be able to attain the stature of perfection, unless they are aroused by God's assistance') elicits from Prosper the doctrinaire statement that Adam's sin cost him (and us) his 'spiritual gifts' and a totally unjustified insinuation that Cassian was a Pelagian who believed that grace enables us to do 'more easily' what we can naturally do in any case. The tenth proposition (*conl* 13.14.1–2) features Cassian's remarks about the trials of Job. In his rebuttal, Prosper accuses Cassian of distancing God from Job's trials. This is a provocative overstatement of Cassian's position, since Cassian specified that God disbarred Satan from depriving Job of his reason and sense (see *conl* 13.14.1–2). The implication is that Satan, if he wanted, could have done so. Prosper's inference from Cassian is therefore extremely dubious.

The eleventh proposition (*conl* 13.14.3–4) concerns the centurion whose profession of faith, according to Cassian, cannot be meritorious only because of what the Lord had given him: '[The centurion] would have deserved no praise or merit if Christ had rewarded that in him which He had given him' (*conl* 13.14.3; cf. Matt. 8:8–10). Prosper

merely castigates this sentiment as ungodly, having only recently examined it in slightly more detail and having found that it ‘confirm[s] in a short summary almost the whole Pelagian dogma’ (16.1 [259]). To Prosper’s ever-vigilant eye, such a claim contradicts several passages of Scripture that teach us to ascribe all gifts to God Who gave them. He forces the issue by asking, ‘Must it be said, then, that all the virtues should indeed be reckoned among the gifts of God, but that man can be praised only for those which he has on his own [*quas de proprio habuerit*]; and that there is only merit where there are no gifts of God?’ (16.1 [259]). The sting of Prosper’s remark is in the tail, but (as we have already had occasion to note in connection with his striking omission from Cassian’s fourth statement) Prosper simply presumes on Cassian’s behalf a sharp distinction between nature as God’s gift and other expressions of God’s grace that is not easily justified with reference to Cassian’s writings.

The twelfth and final proposition states why ‘when we pray, we call the Lord not only our protector but also our helper’ (cf. *conl* 13.17.2). Elsewhere, Prosper fumbles somewhat carelessly though this passage, by taking the liberty of changing Cassian’s claim and substituting a disjunction for Cassian’s conjunction (cf. 18.2 [263]), and this sets the stage for his concluding remarks. Here, he tartly says no more than this: ‘Anyone can approve this statement—so long as he does not wish to have been saved by Christ’ (19.12 [269]).

Our attention has been restricted to a single passage in Prosper’s polemic against Cassian, in which Prosper summarizes his argument. But two key features of Prosper’s attack on Cassian can be seen even from this summary. First, Prosper presupposes unanimity with regard to a distinctly technical use of the term *gratia*, as is evident, for instance, in the ease with which he pits nature against grace. This is an odd way to criticize Cassian, since he seems not to have subscribed to Prosper’s view and since it is far from obvious that there was any such unanimity with regard to this view of grace in the fifth century, Prosper’s assertions to the contrary notwithstanding.²⁹ A second key feature of Prosper’s polemic that is immediately apparent is his willingness to suppress or distort clauses that would tend to

²⁹ For a detailed study of the history and evolution of Augustinian *gratia*, see Rydstrom-Poulsen (2002).

complicate (if not simply invalidate) his portrayal of Cassian's thought. For example, Prosper simply eliminates a rich phrase used by Cassian from his accounts of Cassian's thinking about how God relates to nature ('the goodness of nature bestowed by the liberality of the Creator': *conl* 13.9.5). Cassian ascribes the beginning of the good will to this 'goodness of nature'—and a conscientious expositor of Cassian's works would want to give due attention to the connection he thus makes between the good will, the good creation, and God's generosity. Not so Prosper, whose chief aim is to make Pelagianism seem so awful that it will not beguile the hearts and minds of the faithful.

Prosper's willingness to distort, misrepresent, or suppress the writings he opposed goes right to the heart of the problem Prosper's treatise poses for historical theology. Simply put, Prosper is content to assert that Cassian wrote *Conference* 13 as a cheap attack on Augustine, but his confidence does not compel our assent and his arguments do not persuade. His explication of *Conference* 13 is a tour de force of deploying the hermeneutics of suspicion. Prosper has arguably adduced a few meagre parallels between Cassian and Pelagius and he has built his interpretation of Cassian upon them. This very doubtful way of proceeding brings to mind the warning about 'paranoiac interpretation' from Umberto Eco, who has written that 'the difference between the sane interpretation and paranoiac interpretation lies in recognizing that this relationship is minimal, and not, on the contrary, deducing from this minimal relationship the maximum possible'.³⁰

In keeping with his fundamentally 'paranoiac' approach to *Conference* 13, Prosper avers that Cassian's constant rebuttals of Pelagius (to which we shall devote our attention in chapter 2) are made in bad faith and this distorts his account of Cassian. A more balanced interpretation would take Cassian seriously when he condemns Pelagianism, and look for a way to come to grips with the rest of Cassian without positing a privileged insight (as Prosper does) into Cassian's intentions. To shore up his claims at having a superior knowledge of what is secretly whispered by Cassian and his peers,³¹

³⁰ Eco (1992): 48.

³¹ See Prosper, *ep ad Rufin* 3 (PL 51: 79), cited in n. 19, above.

Prosper attempts to catalogue Cassian's alleged errors. When the error is not sufficiently patent (and it never is), Prosper compensates by adjusting the text. For all these reasons, *Against the Conferencer* is a totally unreliable guide to Cassian's thought and a conspicuous failure as a critique.

Prosper's *Against the Conferencer* is one act in his struggle to establish his version of Augustinianism as the pillar of orthodoxy. In the process, he drew into his account so many other figures that there has developed a habit of thinking that almost everybody in fifth-century Gaul was actively involved in the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius. Prosper's account obscures the careers of several particular people whose writings form the historical context for Cassian's writings. So it is convenient now to turn to three other figures who have been traditionally labelled Semipelagians: Vincent of Lérins, Faustus of Riez, and Valerian of Cimiez.

In what follows, we will regularly see that the major authors of Christian Gaul were full of admiration for Augustine, albeit not the sort of uncritical admiration that we have found in Prosper. This challenges easy confidence in thinking with Prosper that the Provençal Masters were primarily concerned to broker some sort of compromise between Augustine's and Pelagius' teachings. These vignettes will also prepare us to evaluate Augustine's own contributions to the theological discussions of the early fifth century as the works of a monastic theologian, or more specifically a monastic bishop and theologian.

A comparison with some other 'Semipelagians', I: Vincent of Lérins³²

Vincent of Lérins has in many respects suffered a similar fate to Cassian's: long-standing suspicions that he was deliberately, but covertly, attacking Augustine's writings as a novelty have taken their toll on his reputation. The passage on which these claims rest is found in Vincent's *Commonitorium* 26.69:

³² For further analysis of Vincent and his use of Augustinian texts, see Casiday (2005c).

The heretics have long since been used to deceiving careless men in an amazing way with the following promises. They dare to promise and to teach that in their own church, that is, in the conventicle of their communion, there is a certain great and special and indeed personal grace of God. It is such that, without any labour, without any strife [*studio*], without any industry—even though they neither ask nor seek nor knock—all of those who belong to their number are so cared for by the Almighty [*diuinitus*] that, borne up by angels' hands (that is, preserved by angelic protection), they can never dash their foot against a stone (that is, never be caused to stumble).³³

Prosper does not accuse Vincent of anti-Augustinianism on the basis of this passage, and this is a relief: any such accusation would be fatuous. There is no good reason for thinking that by denouncing moral laxists who hoped to be saved by grace, he was actually attacking Augustine. The lack of any reason notwithstanding, there is a tradition of seeing in that passage a sly denunciation of Augustine.³⁴

Even if Prosper does not malign Vincent on grounds of the *Commonitorium*, he smears Vincent's reputation in his *Response to the Vincentian Articles*. The *Articles* survive only in Prosper's response and, if they are taken as observations regarding Augustine's thought (which is plainly how Prosper takes them), then they are nothing if not scurrilous and incendiary. As such they would reflect very poorly upon Vincent's credibility as a theologian. This has led to complex scholarly debates, but in summary the case for ascribing the *Articles* to Vincent of Lérins is considerable, whereas the case against the ascription seems motivated chiefly by piety.³⁵ It is therefore understandable that Owen Chadwick should have portrayed Vincent

³³ Vincent, *Commonitorium* 26.9–9 (CCL 64: 185).

³⁴ Madoz (1933): 59–89; O. Chadwick (1950): 111–12 n. 1 asserts with totally unjustified confidence that 'the *Commonitory* show[s] that St Vincent attacked Augustine vigorously'; Franses (1927): 150–1 even argues that Vincent and Prosper were engaged in an open debate about Augustine and attempts to identify Vincent as the target of other polemics by Prosper.

³⁵ Koch (1907) has argued that Vincent wrote the *Articles* on the basis of a stylistic comparison to the *Commonitorium*; cf. Madoz (1933): 68–9. Those who have distanced Vincent from the *Articles* include Weigel (1938), Demeulenaere (CSEL 64: 133), and O'Connor (1964) (whose work I have not been able to consult). According to Hamman (1986): 546, O'Conner (1963) 'has proposed serious arguments against' ascribing the *Objections* to Vincent—but I have not been able to consult this paper.

as a compatriot of Cassian and, rather more colourfully, described him as an ‘enemy of Augustine’.³⁶

However, I have been unable to find any case made for interpreting the *Articles* as explicitly anti-Augustinian (rather than anti-Predestinationist).³⁷ This interpretation was merely asserted by Prosper, and there are good reasons for questioning it that arise from a little-known work by Vincent: his *Excerpta*. In 1940, Fr. José Madoz (himself an established scholar of Vincent’s *Commonitorium*)³⁸ signalled the discovery of a manuscript containing a series of Vincent’s extracts from Augustine’s writings—a series that incidentally predates the comparable excerpts made by Prosper himself.³⁹ This discovery put Madoz in an awkward position, for his research into the *Commonitorium* aimed at establishing Vincent as an implacable critic of nascent Augustinianism. But in an enormously brief and enormously important note,⁴⁰ Jules Lebreton drew out some fundamentally correct (if formally inadequate) conclusions from Madoz’s initial publication on the *Excerpta*. He argued that, if Vincent made a catena from Augustine’s writings—and here we should note something overlooked by Lebreton: a catena that includes the writings which Augustine sent specially to southern Gaul to clarify his stand on a number of problems flagged by Prosper—then clearly Vincent ascribed some measure of authority to Augustine and to the writings in question. One fact that Lebreton could not have noted, through no fault of his own (since Madoz did not include it in his initial note on the *Excerpta*), is a striking interpolation by Vincent on the matter of grace and Christology: Vincent takes Augustine’s description of Jesus as both ‘assumed’ and ‘predestined’ as a platform for discussing grace and he even develops those ideas in limited but significant ways.⁴¹

The discovery that Vincent thought it worthwhile to prepare several pages of extracts from Augustine tends to bolster the

³⁶ O. Chadwick (1968): 118; discussed more fully in O. Chadwick (1950): 111.

³⁷ By predestinationism, I mean any belief in divine grace that entails fatalism—i.e. a specific position on the matter of predestination. For practical purposes, Lucidus’ recantation (cited at n. 62, below) provides a convenient morphology for predestinationism.

³⁸ Madoz (1933).

³⁹ Madoz (1940).

⁴⁰ Lebreton (1940).

⁴¹ Vincent of Lérins, *Excerpta* 8 (ed. Madoz [1940]: 124–5); see the discussion of this passage in Casiday (2005c): 303–7.

perception of certain affinities to Augustine in the *Commonitorium*.⁴² It appears that Vincent has a far more complicated approach towards Augustine than would be suggested by those who find in the *Commonitorium* an eccentric statement of Augustinian theology and a rejection of Augustine. As with Cassian's appeal to Augustine's authority in his *On the Incarnation*,⁴³ Vincent appeals to Augustine's authority in contending against the Nestorian heresy. We may well wonder how it could be thought that someone who was determined to undermine Augustine's authority would adduce Augustine's testimony in the obvious hope of gaining from doing so. Naturally, this does not mean that Vincent would have been an uncritical admirer, but it does mean that any claims that he was Augustine's enemy can be rejected until further reasons for them are advanced.

Some might argue that the *Articles* present further reasons of just that sort. Now it would be strange indeed if Vincent prepared two antithetical sets of extracts, one highly complimentary, the other shamelessly accusatory. But since the reasons that Madoz enumerated for ascribing the *Excerpta* to Augustine are as compelling as Koch's reasons for ascribing to him the *Articles*, we should consider the possibility that the *Articles* may be other than they appear to be.

As was mentioned, the *Articles* appear to us to be a ruthless caricature of Augustine's thought. They appear this way precisely because that is how they are presented in the only form in which they survive, namely, in Prosper's rebuttal of them. But we have just had occasion to see with respect to Prosper's longest sustained contribution to the debates about Augustinian theology (*Against the Conference*) that his claims are not self-evidently worthy of our confidence. This being so, it would be well to note that nowhere in the *Articles* is Augustine's name mentioned. Prosper supplied that inference, in much the same way that he glossed Cassian's refutation of an intemperate position as a reference to Augustine's position.⁴⁴ Neither Vincent nor Cassian ever wrote a harsh word directly against Augustine (it is only Prosper who tells us they did), and in fact both of them appear to be happy to invest Augustine in authority by appealing to him against their opponents. That may be put down

⁴² See Hamman (1986).

⁴³ Cassian, *inc* 7.27; cf. Casiday (2001a).

⁴⁴ Cf. Cassian, *conl* 13.11.1 to Prosper, *c Coll* 5.2 (PL 51: 226).

to duplicity, but there is a simpler explanation available: Prosper was wrong.

It was probably outrage that blinded Prosper's judgement. Certainly, nearly palpable waves of righteous indignation roll off page after page of Prosper's defences of Augustine. Why was Prosper so bothered by the writings of Vincent, and the Genoese, and Cassian? Perhaps Prosper responded so vehemently to Cassian and the others because he felt his own position being attacked by their claims: he had, after all, been advancing his own arguments modelled after Augustine's.⁴⁵ If they were rejecting Prosper's teaching, it makes sense that their descriptions of what they were rejecting would bear some resemblance to Augustine (without as much as being even near quotations) and would in some cases seem like caricatures. But for all this, they were not attacking Augustine.

In the case of Vincent, his *Excerpta* clearly indicates that he knew Augustine's *On the Trinity*; *On Christian teaching*; *Against Maximinus, bishop of the Arians*; *On the consensus of the Evangelists*; *Letters* 137, 187 and 205; *On the deserts of sinners and their forgiveness*; *On the saints' predestination*; *On the gift of perseverance*; and his *Enchiridion*. Someone with the ability to move freely through that number of works and produce a meaningful document by stitching together extracts from them would not likely aim at criticizing Augustine by way of the gross misrepresentations characteristic of the *Articles*.

Conversely, someone with Vincent's famous hostility towards novelty, if he were a dedicated foe of Augustine's writings, would be a highly unlikely person to cull authoritative extracts from *On the saints' predestination* and from *On the gift of perseverance*. In view of the considerable finesse Vincent displays in the *Excerpta*, we can be reasonably sure that he could have offered criticisms that would have cut much closer to Augustine's bones. And we can therefore be reasonably sure that, despite Prosper's assertion to the contrary, Vincent did not write his *Articles* in an attempt to criticize Augustine.

The most sensible conclusion about Vincent's *Articles* and Prosper's riposte against them is therefore that Vincent wrote against

⁴⁵ Cf. Prosper, *Ad Aug.* 3 (PL 51: 70): 'Et cum contra eos scripta beatitudinis tuae validissimis et innumeris testimoniis divinarum Scripturarum instructa proferimus, ac, secundum formam disputationum tuarum, aliquid etiam ipsi quo concludantur astruimus' (author's emphasis).

some immoderate Predestinationists who were enamoured of Augustine's writings; that Prosper, in his zeal to rebut anything and everything that smacked of opposition to Augustine's teaching, wrongly identified Vincent's *Articles* as an attack against Augustine himself; and that Prosper thus drew Vincent into the Pelagian controversy as a Semipelagian.

A comparison with some other 'Semipelagians', II: Faustus of Riez

Around 474–5,⁴⁶ Faustus of Riez wrote his most significant theological work, a two-volume treatise, *On grace*, which is regularly taken as evidence for his opposition to Augustine.⁴⁷ Prosper himself could not have implicated Faustus in the debates about Augustine, as he had in all likelihood died twenty years earlier. (If any one person is accountable for the myopic interpretation of Faustus that has become standard over the centuries, that person would be Fulgentius of Ruspe.)⁴⁸ Yet because we have little in the way of contemporary evidence and reliable chronology with respect to Faustus, scholars have repeatedly turned to Prosper's accusations of rampant anti-Augustinianism and interpreted Faustus as the last and greatest synthesizer of Semipelagianism. This has had a deleterious effect on how Faustus is interpreted: negative passages against Predestinationism in his *On grace* are sometimes asserted to be directed against Augustine with no further ado⁴⁹—and this without regard

⁴⁶ Weigel (1938): 109; and esp. Smith (1990).

⁴⁷ See Tibiletti (1981), who at 587 notes that 'Prosper's polemic with Cassian' had an impact upon subsequent generations' interpretation of Faustus; Smith (1990): 227–31.

⁴⁸ Fulgentius' refutation of Faustus is lost. It was the sequel to his *De ueritate praedestinationis et gratiae Dei* (PL 65: 603–72), and it is described by Fulgentius himself (*ep* 15 [PL 65: 442]), by Fulgentius' hagiographer (*Vita Fulgentii* 28.54 [PL 65: 145]), and by Isidore of Seville (*uir inl* 27 [PL 83: 1097]).

⁴⁹ e.g. Mathisen (1999): 38: 'Regarding predestination, he [Faustus] called Augustine "a destroyer of free will" Mathisen refers in his note to Faustus, *grat* 1.10 (CSEL 21: 33), which reads (author's emphasis): 'Igitur dum liberi interemptor arbitrii in alterutram partem omnia ex praedestinatione statuta et definita esse pronuntiat, etiam suprema remedia paenitentiae sensu abruptae impietatis euacuat.' Augustine is nowhere named, and it is not self-evident that it was he whom Faustus had in mind.

to the fact that Faustus twice appeals favourably to Augustine in the treatise.⁵⁰

Faustus' own attitude towards Augustine can be assessed with reference to three events: his response to a letter from Graecus the deacon; his attempts to correct the priest Lucidus; and, to a lesser extent, the sermon he preached on the feast of the repose of St Augustine.⁵¹ Taking the letter to Graecus first, we find at some time around the year 450,⁵² the deacon wrote a letter (now lost) to Faustus in which he evidently submitted his idiosyncratic Christology for Faustus' approval. Especially important for our purposes is the fact that, in his response, Faustus named Augustine and his Christological teachings as orthodox sources. This is significant since Faustus introduces Augustine by way of defending him from Graecus, who had seemingly attacked Augustine in his letter to Faustus because Augustine's teaching did not corroborate his own ideas: 'Even if something in the writings of Saint Augustine the bishop is considered suspect by extremely learned men, you should know that none of the things that you have pronounced damnable are reprehensible.' (Faustus proceeds to elaborate the two natures of the Lord and to explain the anti-Nestorian implications of this belief.⁵³)

Scholars have noted that Faustus is somewhat diffident in that he allows that some of Augustine's writings may be controversial—and have taken this as a sign that Faustus is covertly alluding to his own disagreements with Augustine.⁵⁴ But nothing in the letter supports

⁵⁰ Faustus, *grat* 1.5, 2.9 ('beatissimus pontifex Augustinus doctissimo sermone prosequitur') (CSEL 21: 20, 81).

⁵¹ Smith (1990) offers a far more detailed study of the question of Faustus' reception of Augustine than can be attempted here. His monograph is highly detailed and very sensible, though it would not be inopportune for purposes of the research at hand to note that Smith takes for granted that Cassian and Vincent were active opponents of Augustine's teaching (e.g. at 51–3).

⁵² For the approximate dating, see Weigel (1938): 63–4 (whose estimation is 440) and Engelbrecht (CSEL 21: xxi–xxii).

⁵³ Faustus, *ep* 7 (CSEL 21: 201).

⁵⁴ It may be noted that matters are not as simple as Weigel suggests when he writes ([1938]: 50–1): 'He says explicitly that Augustine was suspected of heterodoxy in certain matters. Now there was no suspicion cast on Augustine by the Gauls except for his views on grace and predestination. Consequently we can see that Faustus imbibed freely of the current anti-Augustinian trend.' While there is no reason to doubt Weigel has accurately identified the 'in scriptis sancti pontificis Augustini...

this interpretation. And in any case flagging up controversial aspects in Augustine's thinking is not inconsistent with promoting his works as a whole (late ancient Christians were certainly capable of thinking critically, after all). For example, Augustine's views on predestination (or views thought to be his) received a mixed reception by subsequent authorities. Although it generally endorses Augustine's reputation, the (ps.-?)Celestinian *Indiculus* is studiously silent on the 'deeper and profounder' points associated with Augustine's name that have become controversial—that is, with the question of predestination.⁵⁵ Pope Celestine was personally content to commend Augustine generally and by his silence declined Prosper and Hilary's invitation to address any particular problems that had arisen in consequence of the Pelagian debates.⁵⁶ Similarly, the Second Council of Orange (529) explicitly disavows any teaching of predestination to damnation,⁵⁷ even though its vastly influential *capitula* were heavily influenced by Prosperian Augustinianism.⁵⁸ Despite the fact that Celestine and the fathers at Orange were critical in their reception of Augustine's thinking, no one to my knowledge characterizes them as 'anti-Augustinian'. That designation appears to be reserved for people who are critical of Augustine but do not stand in the intellectual lineage of Prosper.

quid [quod] apud doctissimos uiros putatur esse suspectum', it is a curious expression indeed of anti-Augustinianism to acknowledge Augustine as a saint and defend him against a crank theologian! Or are we to suppose that Faustus was compelled to defend Augustine in order to maintain an elaborate pretence of respect and piety, the more subtly to subvert Augustine?

⁵⁵ *Indiculus* 10 (= [ps.-?]Celestine, *ad ep Gall* 13.15 [PL 50: 537]).

⁵⁶ Celestine, *ad ep Gall* 1.1–2.3 (PL 50: 528–30).

⁵⁷ Second Council of Orange, postface (Bright [1880]: 391): 'Aliquos uero ad malum diuina potestate praedestinos esse, non solum non credimus, sed etiam si sunt qui tantum malum credere uelint, cum omni detestatione illis anathema dicimus.' It is worth noting that the circumlocution ('sed etiam si sunt qui') is only slightly vaguer in formulation than the expression used to describe the opponents of this council (384: 'peruenit ad nos esse aliquos qui de gratia et libero arbitrio per simplicitatem minus caute et non secundum fidei Catholicae regulam sentire uelint.'). In both instances, Caesarius and his fellow bishops were remarkably discreet, and the difference lies, I think, in that they had no one in particular in mind who is a Predestinationist whereas they probably had someone in mind who was in their view 'minus caute'.

⁵⁸ Second Council of Orange, articles 9, 12–15, and 25, are expressed in terms taken from Prosper's *Sententiae* rather than directly from Augustine; and 16–24 are found in Prosper's *Sententiae* as well, which suggests that it may well have served the bishops at Orange as a dossier of Augustinian theology.

As for Faustus' dealings with Lucidus, he was convinced that he was dealing with a Predestinationist.⁵⁹ (We know very little about Lucidus' beliefs—which is a great loss, since it deprives us of a way of assessing Faustus' claims—so it is important throughout this discussion to be very reserved in attributing beliefs to Lucidus, since the records only tell us about Faustus and his beliefs and perceptions.) Two documents concerning their correspondence survive: Faustus' final letter, and a recantation by Lucidus that was probably written, or jointly written, by Faustus himself.⁶⁰

We learn from Faustus' first letter that several letters preceded it and that the discussion had grown stale. Faustus was not satisfied with Lucidus' teaching, thinking it heterodox; Lucidus was, for whatever reason, not persuaded by Faustus' arguments. Faustus was therefore preparing to take disciplinary action against Lucidus. When Lucidus did not comply with Faustus' final request, Faustus brought the matter to the attention of the bishops assembled in council at Arles. The bishops agreed with Faustus and required Lucidus to anathematize nine principles. To preclude any further obfuscation, they also drafted, or commissioned Faustus to draft, an authoritative statement of their position. (The thesis of the fathers of Arles was a first draft for Faustus' later and lengthier treatise, *On grace*.) Lucidus eventually signed the statement prepared for him.

The erroneous principles rejected by Faustus are as follows: 1) 'that the work of divine grace is not bound to human obedience'; 2) 'that after the fall of the first man the inclination of the will was totally extinguished'; 3) 'that Christ our Lord and Saviour did not suffer death for everyone'; 4) 'that the foreknowledge of God violently compels some to death or that those who perish, perish by the will of God'; 5) 'that anyone who fell away after receiving a legitimate

⁵⁹ This emerges from the implicit contrast drawn by Faustus as against his own belief (*ep* 1 [CSEL 21: 163]): 'nos autem per inlumptionem Christi ueraciter et confidenter adserimus et eum, qui periit per culpam, saluum esse potuisse per gratiam, si gratiae ipsi famuli laboris oboedientiam non negasset; et eum, qui per gratiam ad bonae consummationis metas seruitio obsequente peruenit, cadere per desidiam et perire potuisse per culpam.'

⁶⁰ Faustus, *ep* 1 (CSEL 21: 162–5); Lucidus, *retract*, *ap.* Faustus, *ep* 2 (CSEL 21: 165–8).

baptism died in Adam’—that is, in the state of original sin;⁶¹ 6) ‘that some are set aside for death, others predestined to life’; 7) ‘that from Adam to Christ, no pagan was saved by the first grace of God, that is, by the law of nature until the coming of Christ, because they had completely lost free will in the first parent’; 8) ‘that the Patriarchs and Prophets or any of the pre-eminent saints went to their heavenly home before the time of the redemption’; 9) and ‘there is no fire and no pit.’⁶² What Lucidus was required to anathematize, then, is the system of belief in predestination to salvation and to damnation that we have been calling ‘Predestinationism’.

There is little reason to see in the list prepared for Lucidus a subversive attempt by the bishops at Arles to supplant Augustinian orthodoxy with Semipelagianism. It makes more sense as precisely what it purports to be, a refutation of local Predestinationist beliefs. More will be said about Predestinationism in contemporary Gaul in due course, but at present let us note that the practice of treating these records with suspicion because they originate from parties hostile to Augustine has no basis in the evidence. In fact, Carlo Tibiletti has shown in a series of persuasive studies that Faustus was deeply influenced by Augustine.⁶³ Indeed, it is far more likely that Faustus was rebutting the same outbreak of Predestinationists described by ps.-Augustine’s *Praedestinatus* than that he was rebutting Augustine.⁶⁴ Tibiletti has also shown that many of the supposedly Augustinian tenets rejected were in fact never embraced by Augustine himself.⁶⁵ We have seen from Faustus’ gentle but firm

⁶¹ Cf. Faustus, *ep* 1 (CSEL 21: 162): ‘Item anathema illi, qui hominem cum fideli confessione solemniter baptizatum et adserentem catholicam fidem et postmodum per diuersa mundi huius oblectamenta et temptamenta prolapsus in Adam et originale peccatum perisse adseruerit’ (author’s emphasis).

⁶² Lucidus, *retract ap.* Faustus, *ep* 2 (CSEL 21: 165–6).

⁶³ Tibiletti (1979): 260–3; this is not to say that Tibiletti passed silently over their differences: see, e.g. Tibiletti (1980) and (1981): 567–72.

⁶⁴ Tibiletti (1985): 518–21.

⁶⁵ Tibiletti (1985): 520: ‘Dal confronto dei tesi di Fausto e del libro II del *Praedestinatus* sembra potersi inferire che Fausto combatte anzitutto la predestinazione quale è descritta nel *Praedestinatus*. La condanna non può estendersi alla predestinazione di Agostino, dalla quale la prima deriva per esasperazione di posizioni. Agostino non parla di predestinazione alla morte, alla dannazione; si limita a dire che i non eletti sono lasciati (*relinquuntur*) nella loro condizione, privi degli aiuti necessari per salvarsi (*de dono perseu.* 14,35).’

correction of Graecus that he considered Augustine an author worthy of respect (though not uncritical devotion). Since there is not a scrap of evidence that Faustus bore any animosity towards Augustine or Augustine's writings, it is extremely precipitous to infer tacit rejections of Augustine, and even more precipitous to accuse Faustus of duplicity.⁶⁶

This is made quite clear from our final source of evidence for Faustus' attitude toward Augustine, his sermon 'On the repose of Augustine'.⁶⁷ Faustus does not enter into any discussion of Augustine's teaching on this occasion. Instead, he focuses chiefly on the merits of Augustine's life. Faustus commends his life as an example of Christian virtue and refers to him five times as 'St Augustine',⁶⁸ and once each as 'Bishop Augustine of saintly memory, our lord and father',⁶⁹ 'the great St Augustine, our special patron',⁷⁰ and 'Lord Augustine of saintly memory'.⁷¹ The sermon ends with a grandiose tribute to Augustine.⁷² Again, this reverent and enthusiastic devotion is in no way tantamount to Faustus' unqualified endorsement of the saint's every writing or utterance; instead, taken with Faustus' acknowledgement in the letter to Graecus that learned men may dispute some aspects of Augustine's works, what this indicates is a devout but critical acceptance of Augustine as a teacher. That Faustus would decide to speak so highly of Augustine tells strongly against the modern presumption that he was hostile towards Augustine—a presumption evident in the claims sometimes made that the sermon is not genuine.⁷³ But any assessment of Faustus' attitude

⁶⁶ Cf. Weigel (1938): 104–5: 'Of course, this tactic has been interpreted as malicious subterfuge or subtle irony. However, such interpretations are tendentious, for... nothing in the text warrants them. Faustus had no desire to quarrel with Augustine personally. He was only anxious to crush what he quite probably believed was the final upshot of Augustine's doctrine.' For an example of this tendentious interpretation, Weigel references Arnold (1894): 554, where Arnold discusses the polemic of the Second Council of Orange.

⁶⁷ Faustus, s 27 (CSEL 21: 330–4).

⁶⁸ Faustus, s 27 (CSEL 21: 331.15; 332.1, 6, 16; 333.21–2).

⁶⁹ Faustus, s 27 (CSEL 21: 330.9–10).

⁷⁰ Faustus, s 27 (CSEL 21: 331.5–6).

⁷¹ Faustus, s 27 (CSEL 21: 331.24).

⁷² Faustus, s 27 (CSEL 21: 333.21–334.6).

⁷³ e.g. Weigel (1938): 105; Morin (1892): 52. By contrast, see Engelbrecht (CSEL 21: lx); Morin (1935): 114; and Courcelle (1968): 399. For a general treatment of the problems associated with Faustus' homilies, see Morin (1935) and Griffe (1960).

towards Augustine must begin with a thorough assessment of Faustus' writings, rather than with a presumption of hostility. As we have seen, preliminary indications strongly suggest that such an assessment will produce a strikingly different evaluation of Faustus' attitude towards Augustine.

A comparison with some other 'Semipelagians', III: Valerian of Cimiez

The final Provençal Master to be considered in this connection is Valerian of Cimiez. Very little survives from his pen: we have but twenty homilies that are mostly of an unexceptional character in respect of both their theology and the style.⁷⁴ After a careful analysis of the homilies, Jean-Pierre Weiss has made a reasonable case for thinking that Valerian was the father of Eucherius of Lyons, for whom Eucherius wrote his *De contemptu mundi*.⁷⁵ Valerian was the son and son-in-law of illustrious men,⁷⁶ which accounts for the classical learning he adroitly displays in his homilies.⁷⁷ Weiss also notes that Valerian borrows from Eucherius for the stirring admonitions often met in his homilies.⁷⁸ Tibiletti has corroborated Weiss's analysis by showing that the general tenor of Valerian's homilies, especially his eleventh homily, is consonant with the theological anthropology of the Provençal Masters.⁷⁹

Valerian's collected homilies were first published in Paris in 1612. Shortly thereafter, a certain Nicolas Chichon claimed to find Pelagian tendencies in the homilies and denounced them. Théophile Reynaud was moved to take up Valerian's defence.⁸⁰ Reynaud could not abide the claim that Valerian was Pelagian, but he was nevertheless prepared to identify Valerian as a Semipelagian.⁸¹ Approximately

⁷⁴ His homilies are found at PL 52: 691–756.

⁷⁵ Weiss (1970).

⁷⁶ Cf. Eucherius, *De contemptu mundi* (PL 50: 724): 'Quamuis autem in maximos saeculi apices patre soceroque elatus, illustribus ex utroque titulis ambiaris'.

⁷⁷ Weiss (1970): 148–54. On the intellectual calibre of Eucherius and others, see esp. Courcelle (1968).

⁷⁸ Weiss (1970): 161.

⁷⁹ Tibiletti (1982) and (1990): 38–43.

⁸⁰ The information about Chichon is given by Reynaud (PL 52: 757–8).

⁸¹ Reynaud (PL 52: 765–6).

three centuries later, Weiss echoed Reynaud's claim, relying heavily on J. Chéné's account of the history of Semipelagianism.⁸² Weiss's reliance upon Chéné means in effect that he simply recycles Prosper's concerns to provide criteria for assessing Valerian's doctrines. Once more, the staying power of Prosper's scheme is in evidence.

Finally, in the course of his research into the Provençal Masters, Tibiletti turned his attention to the homilies of Valerian. Despite his remarkable good sense with respect to their writings, Tibiletti was also quick to make a series of comparisons to Augustine as well as to Cassian and Faustus.⁸³ One might think that an author is not a genuine Christian voice of late ancient Gaul if he cannot be easily slotted into some point of Prosper's continuum running from Pelagius to Augustine (with most of them falling, awkward and compromised, in the middle).

This episode is instructive because it shows us how entrenched is the habit, born of Prosper's pamphleteering, to categorize anything from his day to the Second Council of Orange as some shade of Semipelagianism. Frankly, nothing is lost either: Valerian's sermons simply do not command much interest and no latter-day Reynaud is expected to come to Valerian's rescue. But surely there is no justification for instinctively trying to reduce just over a century's worth of theology to a series of answers to a question posed by a second-rate theologian who was a first-rate controversialist.

A new interpretive scheme for the Provençal Masters

What we need is a way to appreciate the Provençal Masters that does not give unwarranted emphasis to aspects of their writings that are peripheral at best, and in any case debatable. The traditional nomenclature, whether it is taken to be pejorative or not, inescapably has the effect of grouping all these writers together according to the supposed position they took on just such a peripheral question. For the record, whenever the Provençal Masters address the problems associated with Pelagius' name, they express unreserved hostility

⁸² Weiss (1970): 155: every footnote on this critical page refers either to Chéné (1953), or to Prosper's *ep ad Aug.*

⁸³ See esp. Tibiletti (1982): 523–6.

towards them. Vincent is particularly vehement, and Faustus had no patience at all for Pelagius. With respect to the Pelagian controversy, then, the evidence we have seen calls for an account of Latin resistance to Pelagianism that would take stock of the diversity and broad basis of that resistance and would therefore be more satisfactory than the simple dichotomy proposed by Prosper ('Augustine v. Pelagius').

Furthermore, inasmuch as we have found unmistakable evidence in the writings of the Provençal Masters of their respect for Augustine and no evidence at all for their purported animosity towards him, there is no advantage to substituting 'anti-Augustinian' for the traditional 'Semipelagian'.⁸⁴ Neither term is warranted by the records; both terms tend to distort our interpretations of their writings. It does not improve matters much to claim that the Provençal Masters represent a 'pre-Augustinian orthodoxy'. Even as it attempts to legitimate their position, such a claim unhelpfully reinforces Prosper's claim to the correct interpretation of Augustine (which is a claim that must be considered *sub judicio* until further research has been conducted). It also reinforces his dubious assertion that Augustine's writings were the standard of orthodoxy.

Moreover, in the forthcoming examination of Cassian's argument against the Pelagians, we will find evidence that Cassian himself was positively receptive of Augustine's ideas, as indeed were Vincent and Faustus. In other words, the Provençal Masters cannot strictly be considered 'pre-Augustinian' because they show signs of Augustine's influence.

Another reason to draw back from Prosper's schematisation is that it oversimplifies the possibilities for appealing to Augustine against Pelagius. We have noted that Cassian, Vincent, and Faustus made such appeals to Augustine, but the evidence available to us indicates that the Provençal Masters were opposed, stridently and vociferously, to a certain party that itself objected to Pelagius. This tells against the assumption that there was a monolithic resistance to Pelagianism that drew on Augustine. To be sure, the people opposed by the Provençal Masters may very well have thought of themselves as loyal sons to Augustine. But there is no justification for assuming that they had a special claim to rightly interpreting Augustine.

⁸⁴ Cf. N. Chadwick (1955): 180.

Abundant evidence directs us to the conclusion that some Gallic Christians were persistently attracted to a statement of divine predestination that was thought by their contemporaries to jeopardize moral responsibility. So far as circumstantial evidence allows us to judge, the former group relied very heavily on their interpretation of Augustine. Gustave Weigel has observed that the Predestinationists (whom he thought to be few in number and deeply idiosyncratic) were necessarily indebted to Augustine for the expression—and perhaps inspiration—of their thoughts. Weigel further notes that this put the opponents of Predestinationism in the position of frequently having to reject catenae of propositions from Augustine that had been ‘slightly or greatly distorted’.⁸⁵ We have argued that the passages from Cassian and Vincent that so offended Prosper make little sense as objections against Augustine, but they make very good sense indeed as objections against Predestinationists who were ‘slightly or greatly distorting’ Augustine’s works.

Examples abound. Vincent struck out against moral laxity and indifference amongst people who thought that they could not fail to be saved on account of the special grace they enjoyed. Likewise, Faustus explained his disagreement with Lucidus in terms of Lucidus’ Predestinationist tendencies.⁸⁶ Faustus’ *On grace* is tenaciously opposed to Predestinationism, and he tells Pope Leontius that councils were held in both Lyons and Arles ‘to condemn the error of predestination’.⁸⁷ An item in the *Gallic Chronicle* for the twenty-third year of Arcadius and Honoratus’ reign (that is, 417–18) informs us that the Predestinationist heresy—designated as an offshoot of Augustinianism—arose in that year.⁸⁸ Arnobius the Younger, in his *Commentary on the Psalms*, makes a reference to such a heresy.⁸⁹ Gennadius of Marseilles seems to have addressed the Predestinationists in a fragment from his now lost *On heresies*.⁹⁰ The *Praedestinatus*

⁸⁵ Weigel (1938): 105.

⁸⁶ Faustus, *ep.* 1 (CSEL 21: 162–5); and Lucidus’ retraction, *ap.* Faustus *ep.* 2 (CSEL 21: 165–8).

⁸⁷ Faustus, *grat.*, prol. (*ep. ad Leontium*) (CSEL 21: 3–4).

⁸⁸ *Chr gall* 81 (MGH aa 9: 656).

⁸⁹ Arnobius, *in Ps* 108 (PL 53: 495).

⁹⁰ Gennadius, *haer* (PL 53: 586); for the authenticity of this excerpt, see Morin (1907).

lists Predestinationism as the ninetieth and most recent heresy and preserves, it would appear, a Predestinationist treatise that draws heavily from Augustine.⁹¹ Furthermore, the rejection by the Second Council of Orange of predestination unto condemnation indicates that this belief was in need of redressing.⁹²

In a word, we have far more contemporary witnesses for the existence of Predestinationist agitators than we do for anti-Augustinian agitators. It is a bit of extraordinary special pleading to bracket all the contemporary evidence that there were Predestinationists in late ancient Gaul, by claiming, for example, that the anti-Predestinationists were simply misunderstanding Augustine and responding to perceived threats. We have already found in the case of Vincent, for instance, a theologian sympathetic to Augustine and well versed in his writings who nonetheless lashed out against Predestinationism. Vincent was knowledgeable and sympathetic, which makes it unlikely that he mistakenly identified some enthusiastic admirers of Augustine as full-blown heretics.

The claim that anti-Augustinians were maliciously labelling Augustinians as Predestinationists relies ultimately upon Prosper's campaigning. It is clear from Prosper's writings that he wanted to establish Augustine's writings as the touchstone of orthodoxy. In furtherance of this goal he consistently distorted the works of the Provençal Masters in order to maintain a sharp dichotomy between Augustinian orthodoxy and Pelagian heresy, and thus to establish Augustine as the anti-Pelagian (and the Doctor of the Church!) nonpareil. A more complicated account—one in which, for example, Augustine was ranged with several other opponents of Pelagianism in defence of Catholic Christianity—would not only detract from Augustine's pre-eminence, it would also validate a group of formidable authors whose appropriation of Augustine's writings differed markedly from Prosper's own.

⁹¹ *Praedestinatus* 1.90 and 2 *passim* (PL 53: 620, 621–8).

⁹² Second Council of Orange, postface; see n. 57, above. I cannot agree with Weigel (1938): 98–9, that this clause was inserted as a palliative for Semipelagians. In the light of the other evidence we have for Gallic Predestinationism, I take this clause as a bona fide response to a serious problem, but one they regarded as being less urgent than the matter at hand.

The traditional success of his campaign, as evident especially from the fact that Prosper became the exemplar of Augustinianism for the early Middle Ages, in no way constitutes an adequate basis on which to reject the plausible, repeated affirmations of respect that the Provençal Masters pay Augustine and the positive and creative (if not uncritical) use that they seem to have made of his writings. Their affirmations serve as a better foundation for interpreting the Provençal Masters than does Prosper's claim. After one has seen that Prosper bungled his way through a critique of Cassian, the bold figure of *Prosperus contra mundum* does not inspire confidence.⁹³

Some hypothetical objections can be met in advance: the thesis here advanced does not affirm that there were no differences between Augustine and the Provençal Masters; but it does insist that we do not have sufficient grounds at all for the confidence with which it has been traditionally claimed that they were self-conscious enemies of Augustine who hypocritically praised him whilst trying to subvert his authority. This analysis does not prefer either Augustine's or Cassian's (or, for that matter, anyone else's) account of salvation. Such a preference would be out of place in this study, which primarily addresses the need for a robust theological evaluation of Cassian (rather than being, for instance, a comparative study of his teaching on grace). Furthermore, this analysis does not preclude the possibility that there were outspoken critics of Augustine's position in Gaul during this period. It does, however, insist that the reasons traditionally held for identifying Cassian, Vincent, and Faustus amongst those outspoken critics do not stand up to scrutiny.

The foregoing remarks may well delineate a plan for a consistent and coherent reading of the reception of Augustine's writings by monastic authors of subsequent generations in southern Gaul. But an important question remains: is there any reason to think that the Provençal Masters deserve to be taken seriously as readers of Augustine? The question is pointed, since history (especially early modern history) favours a reading of Augustine that is adumbrated in detail

⁹³ I am disinclined to accept Weigel's decision to weigh Prosper's evidence more heavily than the combined evidence from the other sources concerning Predestinationism—and yet Weigel's comprehensiveness is certainly a credit to his analysis: see Weigel (1938): 93–9.

by Prosper's Augustinianism. That Prosper anticipated the terms and categories according to which Jansen, Luther, and others sought to lay claim to Augustine's heritage might incline us to suppose that Prosper's perspective is historically normative and that therefore the reception of Augustine's works by monks in Gaul is likely to be idiosyncratic at best. However, as we have noted, there is reason to suppose that, in terms of his own day, Prosper's views were more the exception than the rule. There were numerous parties who took a serious interest in laying claim to Augustine's works and we need not be enchanted into thinking more of Prosper's views than we ought by the simple coincidence of those views with views more contemporaneous to us. To fill out these suggestions, we will consider in the rest of this chapter the similarities between Augustine and Cassian (and, by extension, Augustine's other monastic readers). These similarities, and dissimilarities, provide an important insight into the context in which Cassian engaged with salient questions in Gaul.

2 AUGUSTINE THE MONK

It is sometimes claimed that their commitment to the monastic life set the Provençal Masters at odds with Augustine.⁹⁴ This claim is perhaps related to the popular view of Pelagius according to which he, as an ascetic-minded reformer, could not abide with the 'pessimism' or even 'fatalism' of Augustine's mature thought. If we approach the Pelagian controversy with this mindset, it is extremely easy to assimilate ascetics to one side of the debate and bishops to the other. Presumably, the thinking that underlies this schematisation is that ascetics would want to stress action and responsibility, both of which depend upon a robust affirmation of human potential; whereas bishops and theologians with an interest in leading the Church would want to stress sin and obedience, both of which necessitate a consistent teaching about human weakness. People like Cassian are hard to classify satisfactorily according to such a scheme: they appear to insist on ascetic struggle, whilst acknowledging the need for

⁹⁴ e.g. Stewart (1998): 25.

obedience precisely because they have a robust sense of the problems that arise because of human frailty. On the conventional interpretation, they try to do the impossible by providing a third way, to which scholars sometimes attach an unsatisfactory label (Semipelagianism, or semi-Augustinianism, or whatever).

So much for the received account of how his near contemporaries responded to Augustine's theology. We should notice, however, that it overlooks Augustine's own life as a bishop and a monk, and indeed a monastic founder. Recent scholarship has, however, begun to draw our attention to the impact that Augustine's monastic vocation had on his thinking. For example, there have been a number of important studies of Augustine's *Rules*, his monasticism, and his beliefs about the monastic life. But this is a special topic within the vast field of Augustinian study and to date the results of this research have not made as much of a difference in how Augustine is read and thought about as they probably will do, given more time. Augustine the bishop is a well-known figure; Augustine the monk is not. One area in which these recent findings should be applied is in the discussion of how his contemporaries (not least Cassian and Pelagius) reacted to his teaching on grace. This section is an effort to fill that gap in scholarship.

Augustine and his contemporaries in Gaul shared a monastic culture—a Mediterranean ascetic *koiné*—in terms of which they analysed, discussed, and in the end rejected the Pelagians' programme of reform.⁹⁵ This shared culture made it easy for their successors, such as Julianus Pomerius, Caesarius, Fulgentius of Ruspe, the great Benedict, and others, to direct both Cassian's and Augustine's works into a common channel that ultimately fed Western monasticism. Furthermore, the signal elements of Augustine's theology—though perhaps some might think they exist in an uneasy

⁹⁵ Cf. O. Chadwick (1968): 127–8; de Plinval (1943): esp. 216–25; Markus (1990): 177–9; Mathisen (1989): 130; Ramsey (1997): 460–3; Rébillard (1994); Weaver (1996): 126. Georges de Plinval (1943): 218, summarized the character of Pelagius' reform as follows: 'Ils sont ceux qui connaissent le véritable esprit de «christianité» et leur idéal est de purger la religion de tout accommodement et de toute faiblesse pour y faire régner effectivement la justice complète, afin qu'autant qu'il dépendra d'eux l'Eglise soit dès ce monde immaculée et sans ride.' More will be said on this subject in the chapter on Cassian's response to Pelagianism.

relationship with some aspects of his thinking about monasticism—are nevertheless part and parcel of Augustine's teachings on monasticism.⁹⁶ In consequence of these claims, I argue that the very promising way to read Augustine's anti-Pelagian treatises is with his monastic convictions firmly in mind.

Some forty years ago, Fr. Adolar Zumkeller noted that 'Modern man sees in St Augustine a seeker after God, a bishop, and a great theologian. The monasticism of the saint has largely been forgotten. And yet, his personality can be fully understood and appreciated only in the light of his life and work as a monk.'⁹⁷ We shall therefore consider Augustine as precisely the sort of 'monastic theorist' that Peter Brown has more recently suggested that Cassian was, when he wrote: 'Cassian... was a theorist, writing to persuade Latin readers who did not necessarily share his views.'⁹⁸ If we appreciate the affinities that bound together these 'monastic theorists,' we will be better able to offer an accurate estimation of where their views diverged and how significant those divergences were. Instead of finding in the cordiality so typical of this debate a mark of refined distaste at bad form or simple Christian tolerance,⁹⁹ we can begin to see how mutual awareness of a shared heritage and, *vis-à-vis* the reforms of Pelagius, a common cause can account for it.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Lorenz (1966): 41–2: 'Die eigentliche Bedeutung Augustins für die Geschichte des Mönchtums liegt darin, daß er tiefer als je einer vor ihm die paulinische Theologie in das Mönchtum hineingenommen hat und die Gesetzlichkeit des Vollkommenheitsstrebens durch die paulinischen Gedanken vor der Freiheit der Liebe und der Gnade durchbrochen hat.' Cf. also Sr. Agatha Mary (1992); Fry (1981): 59–64; Lawless (1987): esp. 155–61; van Bavel (1996): 117, 119–20; Verheijen (1979): 92–3; Zumkeller (1986).

⁹⁷ Zumkeller (1986): ix. One indication of how uncommon this realization has been can be found in Owen Chadwick's claim that Cassian was 'the first theologian of the religious orders': Chadwick (1968): 158. Even setting Augustine to one side, it is hard to imagine how Chadwick could have overlooked Basil the Great and Evagrius. Despite the various merits of Chadwick's study, his treatment of Cassian's relationship to Augustine (and indeed Western theology in general) has begun to show its age. The publications of Luc Verheijen are of inestimable value as a corrective to this short-sightedness. Particularly noteworthy are Verheijen (1975) and (1979).

⁹⁸ Brown (1989): 232; cf. Stewart (1998): 28.

⁹⁹ O. Chadwick (1968): 127–32; Markus (1989): 178; Mathisen (1989): 124.

¹⁰⁰ Rébillard (1994); cf. Brown (1972*b*) and (1972*c*); Nürnberg (1988); *pace* O'Keefe (1994, 1995): 62.

The evidence from Possidius¹⁰¹

Possidius of Calama, Augustine's first biographer, long-time friend, and episcopal colleague-in-arms, offers us a valuable perspective on the way that Augustine's ascetic life impacted upon his writing and thinking. Possidius' major preoccupation throughout his *Life of St Augustine* is to stress that Augustine tirelessly served the Catholic cause from the time of his conversion until his death. Since such is Possidius' aim, it is therefore highly significant that he describes Augustine's conversion as not merely a conversion to the Catholic life, but more specifically as a conversion to the Catholic *ascetic* life: 'And at once being confirmed in the Catholic faith,' he writes, 'an ardour of love for *perfecting himself in religion* was born in him and, with the holy days of Pascha drawing near, he received the water of salvation'.¹⁰² With the biographer's benefit of hindsight (and of earlier sources from which to draw his information), Possidius knows that the outcome of Augustine's conversion will in due course be his adoption of the monastic life, here glossed as 'perfection in religion'. Scant lines later, he writes: 'And soon from the innermost depths of his heart, he abandoned all the hope which he had had in this world. He no longer sought a wife, nor children of the flesh, nor wealth, nor yet worldly honours; but he determined to serve God with God's own'.¹⁰³ He also claims that Augustine was motivated by

¹⁰¹ This subsection is adapted from an argument that I have made more fully elsewhere: see Casiday (2003*b*). After I had written that paper, and indeed the present chapter, a relevant monograph came to my attention—Dagemark (1995). Dr Dagemark's work is highly detailed and I therefore regret that it has not been possible to incorporate his findings into this chapter. However, I am currently engaged in preparing a new edition of Possidius' *Vita Augustini* on the basis of several unstudied manuscripts and that project will I hope provide me with an opportunity in the future to engage with Dagemark's research.

¹⁰² Possidius, *u Aug* 1.5 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 134): 'protinus que in fide catholica confirmatus, proficiendi in religione eidem amoris ardor innatus est, quo propinquantibus diebus sanctis paschae salutis aquam perciperet.'

¹⁰³ Possidius, *u Aug* 2.1 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 136): 'Mox que ex intimis cordis medullis spem omnem quam habebat in saeculo dereliquit, iam non uxorem, non filios carnis, non diuitias, non honores saeculi quaerens, sed Deo cum suis seruire statuit'. Oddly, Possidius' *Life of Augustine* never refers to Adeodatus. We know from Augustine's sermons that 'service of God' is his preferred euphemism for the monastic life; see Brown (2000): 125–38.

Matt. 19:21 (*Si uis esse perfectus . . .*), which we know from Augustine's recollections that he encountered, not from contemplating Scripture, but instead from reading the *Life of Anthony*.¹⁰⁴ The reader of Possidius' work who knows the tale of Augustine's conversion as related by Augustine himself is thus reminded yet again of Augustine's eventual monastic profession.

In these passages, Possidius is describing Augustine's retreat at Cassiciacum.¹⁰⁵ Scholars have debated precisely how monastic this retirement would have been, and some have argued against describing it as being in any meaningful sense a monastery.¹⁰⁶ But, as Carol Harrison has recently reminded us, there is good evidence for continuity between the life at Cassiciacum and the monastery proper that Augustine was to found at a later date.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, we must remember that philosophical retirement in Augustine's time was ascetical in character.¹⁰⁸ Non-Christian sources on the inherent asceticism of philosophical retirement remind us that asceticism was not the exclusive domain of Christians; they also keep us from presuming that the practices of Christian monasticism in Egypt or Syria, for example, were somehow normative for late ancient asceticism.

In the *Life of Augustine*, Possidius offers a synthetic description of what this life entailed: 'With his friends and countrymen who likewise served God . . . who stayed with him, he lived, with fasts and prayers and all good works, meditating upon the law of the Lord day and night.'¹⁰⁹ This way of living was characteristic of Augustine's time in Thagaste; but Possidius indicates that the patterns worked out for the community in Thagaste were the same ones that Augustine implemented in the monastery that he established in Hippo after his priestly ordination.¹¹⁰ Several occasional remarks that Possidius makes give us some sense for the sort of practices that Augustine (and his monks) observed. 'His clothing and footwear and even

¹⁰⁴ See Augustine, *conf* 8.12.29 (ed. O'Donnell [1992]: 1: 101, 3: 66).

¹⁰⁵ On which, see Augustine, *conf* 9.4.7–12 (ed. O'Donnell [1992]: 1: 105–8).

¹⁰⁶ Thus, Halliburton (1962).

¹⁰⁷ Harrison (2000): 177–9.

¹⁰⁸ This is quite clear from Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Life* and Eunapius' *Lives of the Philosophers*, for example. For Pythagoras, see G. Clark (1989): 43–4; for Eunapius, see Wright's edition (1922).

¹⁰⁹ Possidius, *u Aug* 3.1–2 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 136–8).

¹¹⁰ Possidius, *u Aug* 5.1 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 140).

bedclothes were modest but appropriate—neither excessively impressive, nor too impoverished.¹¹¹ This moderation is typical of Augustine’s monastic life. In fact, ‘moderation’ is the byword for Possidius’ account of Augustine’s monastic practice: ‘But, as I said, he kept to the middle, straying neither to the right nor to the left.’¹¹² His table was usually spread with roughage and beans, but Augustine allowed meat for guests and for the brethren who were *infirmiores* (it is unclear whether disposition or illness is meant) and he allowed wine, albeit in rationed amounts.¹¹³ In this context, Possidius quotes Augustine’s *Confessions* 10.31.46:

I do not fear the uncleanness of flesh, but the uncleanness of gluttony. I know that Noah was permitted to eat every kind of meat that was good for food; that Elias was refreshed by eating meat; and that John, endowed with astounding abstinence, was not polluted by those animals—the locusts—granted to him for food. And I know that Esau was betrayed by desire for lentils, and David chastised himself for his desire for water, and Our King was tempted by bread, not meat. Furthermore, the people in the wilderness deserved to be reproached, not because they desired meat, but because they murmured against the Lord from a desire for food.¹¹⁴

The table was set with earthenware, wooden or marble vessels; his spoons were silver. At table, he preferred reading and conversation to food—though he strictly insisted that any conversation must be edifying.¹¹⁵ He discouraged his monks and clergymen from attending banquets, ‘lest the acquired practice of temperance be lost’.¹¹⁶

Some might feel that this does not sound particularly ascetic.¹¹⁷ In response, we should note first off that eating is only one component

¹¹¹ Possidius, *u Aug* 22.1 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 184).

¹¹² Possidius, *u Aug* 22.1 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 184). This ideal is endorsed by Augustine himself: cf. *pec mer* 2.35.57 (CSEL 60: 125–6); *ep* 215.5–8 (CSEL 57: 391–6); *en Ps* 90 s.1.4.1–17 (CCL 39: 1256–7); *qu* 4.2, 4.38, 4.50, 4.48 (CSEL 28²: 314–15, 350, 357–9, 407–9).

¹¹³ Possidius, *u Aug* 22.2 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 184–6); on the daily ration of wine, see *u Aug* 25.2 (194).

¹¹⁴ Possidius, *u Aug* 22.3 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 186).

¹¹⁵ Possidius, *u Aug* 22.5–6 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 186–8).

¹¹⁶ Possidius, *u Aug* 27.5 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 200).

¹¹⁷ This objection, far from being hypothetical, was vigorously urged against me when I presented this material to the Senior Patristic Seminar at the Cambridge Faculty of Divinity in May 2003.

of life and therefore it stands to reason that what one eats (or does not eat) is only one component of ascetic life. Asceticism is a complex of behaviours involving not only observations concerning food and drink, but also particular decisions about such issues as personal possessions, interpersonal (including sexual) relations, manner of dress, and how one spends one's time. So it is churlish in the extreme to insist that if someone eats meat, he or she cannot possibly be an ascetic. Second, it has been well noted recently that asceticism is an enormously variegated human activity.¹¹⁸ So it is totally inappropriate to privilege certain forms of ascetic behaviour (such as eating only raw vegetables, or grazing) so that we lose sight of less spectacular expressions of asceticism. This danger is particularly acute in cases such as the one at hand, where we are not in the habit of thinking of Augustine as a monk and an ascetic. So we would do well to recall that Augustine's standards as reported by Possidius are not especially lax in comparison with others of that period.

For example, as regards the eating of meat—probably an anti-Manichean gesture in Augustine's case¹¹⁹—and drinking wine, Palladius of Hellenopolis endorsed a position extremely close to the one described by Possidius. In the prefatory letter to his *Lausiac History* (c.419–20), Palladius reassures Lausus that 'by partaking reasonably and abstaining reasonably, you will never sin'. He even explicitly disavows Manichean fasting habits!¹²⁰ Michele, Cardinal Pellegrino, has noted that the First and Second Councils of Braga (561 and 572) stipulated that abstaining clergy should have their vegetables cooked with meat so as to eliminate suspicions of Priscillianist tendencies.¹²¹ These examples indicate that Catholic fasting habits were responsive to the possibility of misinterpretation—and in some cases were, in fact, deliberately (one might say, *polemically*) intended to distinguish Catholics from others. The contemporary witnesses of Palladius and (as we shall see) Cassian, along with the later evidence from the fathers of Braga, show that these rules were not inflexible, that there was no particular fascination with meat for its own sake, and

¹¹⁸ See Wimbush and Valantasis (1995): xix–xxxiii.

¹¹⁹ See Augustine, *mor* 2.35.

¹²⁰ Palladius, *HL* pref. 9–14 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 10–14); on the Manicheans, see esp. pref. 11 (ed. Bartelink: 12).

¹²¹ Possidius, ed. Pellegrino (1955): 218–19.

that one could still lead an ascetic life without starving oneself to death.

Alongside these descriptions of eating and drinking, Possidius also stresses Augustine's monastic poverty. He describes the poor as Augustine's 'co-paupers' and notes that Augustine provided for them out of the same resources from which he provided for his own community.¹²² Possidius makes rather less of this aspect of Augustine's life than he might have done since, as Luc Verheijen has shown, the renunciation of property is emblematic of the entire Christian life for Augustine and he intended that his monks should exemplify this practice.¹²³ The centrality of this principle is not evident from Possidius' references, which are much more incidental (as when he notes that 'Augustine made no will, for God's pauper had nothing to pass on').¹²⁴

We see, then, from Possidius' account, that Augustine's daily life was structured by his monastic practices. How he spoke, what he ate, and even how he dressed constantly exerted pressure in Augustine's life along the lines of his monastic vocation. Possidius indicates that this was not at all inconsistent with Augustine's other activities as a pastor, theologian, and author, so the *Life of Augustine* gives us a good foundation for considering other aspects of Augustine's life in the light of his monasticism. In the overall context of the *Life*, this emphasis on the priority of asceticism has the effect of stressing that Augustine's service to the Church was realized first and foremost in his pursuit of Christian asceticism. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, according to Possidius, Augustine's monastic life was the wellspring of his devotion to the Church.

Parallels in Augustine's and Cassian's theology and asceticism

Those general observations about Augustine's life as a monk provide a foundation for comparing him and Cassian as monastic

¹²² Possidius, *u Aug* 23.1 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 188).

¹²³ Verheijen (1979).

¹²⁴ Possidius, *u Aug* 36.1 (ed. Bastiaensen [1975]: 236): 'Testamentum nullum fecit, quia unde feceret pauper Dei non habuit.'

theologians who were actively engaged in promoting Christian orthodoxy. Before turning to the salient differences, we will first note the similarities in their writings that are attributable at least in part to the fact that they were both monks as well as theologians.

For example, monasticism as the *uita angelica*,¹²⁵ a theme we have come to expect in Cassian, is also present in Augustine. A typical example from Cassian is found in his beautiful description of prayer:

And when the mind has been established in such a tranquil condition and freed from the nets of all carnal desires, and the heart's most urgent purpose has been fixed on that one and highest good, he will then fulfil the Apostolic precept, 'Pray without ceasing;' and, 'in every place lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing.' For when by this purity (if I can say so) the thoughts of the soul are engrossed and are re-fashioned out of their earthly condition into a *spiritual and angelic likeness*, then whatever it receives into itself, whatever it takes, whatever it does, will be perfectly pure and sincere prayer.¹²⁶

To this we can compare Augustine's letter to Proba and Juliana Anicia, congratulating them on Demetrias' consecration as a holy virgin. Augustine writes, 'This offspring of the house of Anicius has chosen the nobler part by blessing her illustrious family through abstaining from marriage—rather than increasing it by bearing children—and by following the *life of the angels* already in the flesh—rather than by the same flesh adding to the number of mortals.'¹²⁷

These excerpts show how they both asserted that contemporary ascetics had succeeded (if only fleetingly) in realizing the blessedness of the Age to Come.¹²⁸ Augustine would insist quite forcefully upon this claim as against his Manichean rivals. This realization of angelic

¹²⁵ Frank (1964); Lamy (1963); Nagel (1966).

¹²⁶ Cassian, *conl* 9.6.5; cf. Stewart (1998): 56.

¹²⁷ Augustine, *ep* 150 (PL 33: 645); cf. Zumkeller (1986): 122. According to Augustine, this is not a vocation exclusive to monks. It is clear from *ciu* 22.1 (CSEL 40²: 581–3) that all Augustine's saints live in a community that emulates the 'angelic life' precisely in that their union is founded upon contemplating God.

¹²⁸ Constable (1995): 86 has noted that, 'by the fathers', contemplation was seen 'as brief glimpses of divinity and the life to come'. The classic account where Augustine relates the transience of this experience is the famous vision at Ostia, esp. at *conf* 9.10.25 (O'Donnell [1992]: 113–14). See too Louth (1981): 134–7, for some thought-provoking remarks about the relevance for Augustinian monasticism and mysticism of this event, the importance of which was not least that it was an experience Augustine and Monica shared.

blessedness, here and now, constituted an incontrovertible proof for his claims for the Catholic Church.¹²⁹ Since Augustine's claim often has a polemical edge, it is no surprise to find that he often depicts the angelic life precisely as communal life within the Church, which he elsewhere calls the *socialis uita sanctorum*.¹³⁰ This is a life that all Christians are called to live, yet it is a life exemplified by monastic Christians.¹³¹

Cassian employed the powerful metaphor more subtly, but with an intention no less urgent. His talk of the Desert Fathers as 'angels in the flesh' has the goal of asserting the possibility of a robust attainment to this lofty state in the present life.¹³² But Cassian was sensitive to the demands of the flesh (his arguments in *Conference* 23 against the possibility of sinlessness showcase that sensitivity), so we can be sure he knew that these fathers were still in the flesh and still subject to its exigencies.¹³³ But even though there are practical limitations, Cassian is prepared to offer a wealth of anecdotal evidence showing that the limitations are much further removed than one might have thought. Cassian thus uses the angelic way of life to promote the goal of a life transfigured by Christ.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Cf. Augustine, *diu qu* 59.4 (CCL 44A: 117–18); *en Pss* 9, 12 and 132, 5 (CCL 38: 64, 40: 1929–30); *ep* 147.5.13 (CSEL 44: 285–6); *Gn lit* 11.23 (CSEL 28¹: 355–6); *eu lo tr* 18.7 (PL 35: 1539–40); *uirg* 4.4, 13.13, 24.24, 53.54 (CSEL 41: 237–8, 245–6, 258–60, 299–300).

¹³⁰ Augustine, *ciu* 19.5; cf. 15.16 (CSEL 40²: 380–1, 98.16–22). Elsewhere, Augustine uses exactly this phrase to describe the monastic life; e.g. s 356.14 (PL 39: 1580): 'Dixeram enim, et scio me dixisse, ut si nolint suscipere socialem uitam me cum non illis tollerem clericatum; seorsum manerent, seorsum uiuerent, quomodo possint deo uiuerent.' Cf. Ladner (1959): 361–2.

¹³¹ The matter of precisely how Augustine conceived of Christian monastics relating to other Christians will be considered below. At present, suffice it to say that I consider Augustine's references to the *socialis uita sanctorum* in his specifically monastic writings and in *De ciuitate dei* to be mutually illuminating.

¹³² Cassian, *conl* 9.6.5, 10.7.3, 19.5.1; cf. *inst* 5.14.4, *conl* 9.2.1.

¹³³ It would seem from an amusing passage by Sulpicius Severus that, amongst Cassian's peers, there were some who took a much more stringent line on how closely humans could approximate the angelic life: *dial* 1.4.6 (CSEL 1: 156): 'Sed facis inhumane, qui nos Gallos homines cogis exemplo angelorum uiuere [!]: quamquam ego studio manducandi etiam angelos manducare credam: nam istud dimidium hordecium timeo uel solus adtingere.'

¹³⁴ Cf. Didier (1954): 41: 'De tout cela il se dégage incontestablement une certitude et une exigence: la nature humaine est marquée, jusque dans son élément le plus charnel, par la grâce du Christ et le corps trouve place dans l'ordre nouveau

The actual enjoyment of the *eschaton*, here and now, is ambivalent. For at least one major Pelagian author, the complete perfection of the human person, here and now, is simply a gloss on what it means to take Christianity seriously.¹³⁵ This style of Christian maximalism was very likely one of the major factors contributing to Augustine's and Cassian's common cause against Pelagianism as a misconceived, though doubtless attractive (and therefore dangerous), form of Christian piety.¹³⁶ Both Cassian and Augustine explicitly characterized 'the angelic life' as altogether extraordinary, the full fruition of which can only be realized in 'the life of the age to come'.¹³⁷ This means they deferred the ultimate attainment of perfection to the post-mortem state. Both Cassian and Augustine clearly agreed on the practical impossibility of sinlessness,¹³⁸ whatever they may have thought about *apatheia* ('imperturbability'), a term that Jerome glossed as *impeccantia* ('sinlessness') and thereby imposed on subsequent scholars the necessity of thinking out the relationship of those terms.¹³⁹ Daily requests for forgiveness presuppose daily sins and so,

qu'instaire sa résurrection;—mais alors, comment le chrétien qui voit resplendir dans son corps de chair une anticipation de sa résurrection dans le Christ, pourrait-il se comporter avec ce corps de la même façon qu'un païen?

¹³⁵ See the Sicilian Anonymous, *poss non pecc* (ed. Caspari [1964]: 114–22).

¹³⁶ Brown (1972*b*); Brown (1972*c*); Markus (1989); Rébillard (1994); cf. Ladner (1954): 870–1.

¹³⁷ Augustine, *cons eu* 1.5 (CSEL 43: 8): 'ac per hoc in hac uita mortali illa est in opere bonae conuersationis, ista uero magis in fide et aput perpaucos per speculum in enigmatē et ex parte in aliqua uisione incommutabilis ueritatis'. Cf. Markus (1990): 187, 'Mary in the Gospel story lived this fragmentary anticipation of the contemplative life; by living it, her life was a sign which pointed to its eschatological fulfilment.' Markus was writing of Cassian, but his words apply no less to Augustine.

¹³⁸ Cassian, *conl* 23; Augustine, *ep* 4*.4 (CSEL 88: 27–8); *uirg* 48.48–9.50 (CSEL 41: 293–6); *perf ius* (PL 44: 291–318); see also Sheridan (1997*a*): 288 n. 7 and 310 n. 120.

¹³⁹ At *ciu* 14.9 (CSEL 402: 21), Augustine endorses a limited definition of *apatheia* (*viz.*, 'rectam rationem sequantur istae affectiones') that is congenial to Cassian's teachings on *puritas cordis* and that is almost certainly more in line with the moral philosophical tradition of the term. But immediately thereafter (402: 22.10–15), Augustine writes, 'Quocirca illa, quae *apatheia* Graece dicitur (quae si Latine posset impassibilitas diceretur), si ita intellegenda est (in animo quippe, non in corpore accipitur), ut sine his affectionibus uiuatur, quae contra rationem accidunt mentemque perturbant, bona plane et maxime optanda est, sed nec ipsa huius est uitae.' Cf. Casiday (2001*b*); Sheridan (2000): 299–303; Zumkeller (1986): 221. For further discussions of *apatheia* in these authors, see Colish (1985): 118–20; Draguet (1949): xlix–liv; Stewart (1998): 56–7.

in the words of Ecclesiasticus 11:30 (as quoted by both Augustine and Cassian), nobody should be praised before his death.¹⁴⁰

Since both Augustine and Cassian regarded the attainment of this status as fleeting and altogether uncommon, neither of them insisted on radical measures in pursuit of it. A certain moderation, even ‘humaneness’, characterizes their approach to ascetic practice.¹⁴¹ They both judged the forms of self-mortification associated with the fathers of Syria and Egypt to be out of place and inappropriate in the Occident. Cassian, an eyewitness to radical austerities, advises appreciably more circumspect practices.¹⁴² Augustine, for all his admiration of the stunning feats of the Desert Fathers, counsels no such perfection for his flock.¹⁴³ Possidius lovingly describes the moderate austerities observed by Augustine and his fellows, silver spoons and all,¹⁴⁴ and Augustine’s *Rule* bears out his description. It was the acquisition and cultivation of communal charity, and not grim demonstrations of prodigious holiness, that Augustine sought to further.¹⁴⁵ Across the Mediterranean, Cassian was true to form (given his admiration for discernment) by judiciously advising his correspondents as to the application of Egyptian principles in southern Gaul.¹⁴⁶ Some have spoken appreciatively of Cassian’s apparently modern sensibility in eschewing the miraculous.¹⁴⁷ But this appreciation seriously misses the point. Cassian frequently showcases the greatest of all miracles—the gradual reconfiguration of the human into the proper image and likeness of God.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁰ On daily sins, see Cassian, *conl* 9.22, 22.13, 23.18 and Augustine, *ep* 4*.4 (CSEL 88: 27–8); for the quotation from Eccles., see Cassian, *conl* 6.16.2 and Augustine, *en Ps* 99, 12.31–3 (CCL 39: 1400). All the more interesting on this account is Cassian’s *inc* 7.27, where he cites Augustine, who was still living at the time, as an authority; see Casiday (2001a).

¹⁴¹ H. Chadwick (1991): 21; cf. Weaver (1996): 76; Zumkeller (1986): 232.

¹⁴² Cassian, *inst* pref.; *conl* 1 pref. 6–7; cf. *inst* 5.4. See Stewart (1998): 28.

¹⁴³ Augustine, *mor* 1.31.65–33.73, esp. 1.33.71–2 (PL 32: 1337–41).

¹⁴⁴ Possidius, *u Aug* 22.1–7 (ed. Pellegrino [1955]: 118–22).

¹⁴⁵ Sr. Agatha Mary, SPB (1992): 117–20 has shown this with remarkable clarity in her lucid exposition of the *Rule*.

¹⁴⁶ Cassian, *inst* pref.

¹⁴⁷ See Appendix 2, ‘Cassian on miracles’, below.

¹⁴⁸ Cassian, *conl* 12.13.3, 15.8. Parallels in Augustine’s writings can be found, e.g. in *conf* 10.4.5–6, 10.27.38–29.40 (ed. O’Donnell [1992]: 1: 120–1, 134–5), with its shocking refrain, ‘da quod iubēs et iube quod uis’; s 131.6–7 (PL 28: 732–3), with

An even more salient goal for Christians than being like the angels is participation in the divine glory of Jesus Christ. It was their mutual belief that Christians could be thus related to God that enabled Augustine,¹⁴⁹ no less than Cassian,¹⁵⁰ to affirm the doctrine of Christian deification.¹⁵¹ We have come to think of Augustine as generally separated from this teaching, and indeed some even think of it as a distinctively *non-Augustinian* belief. A representative example is provided by Myrrha Lot-Borodine in her study of deification. She writes:

Always drawn on by the weight of its desire—*amor meus, pondus meum*—the Augustinian spirit tends with all the force of its wings to the grace of the *beatific vision*, which alone can afford it the ‘light of glory.’ It functions and orders itself toward *beatitudo*,—but not toward *deification*; this remains forbidden to it, since there cannot be for Augustine consubstantiality (and therefore mutual penetration) of divine nature and human nature.¹⁵²

In view of the numerous passages from which it is clear that deification was an important concept in Augustine’s soteriology, one might

its the analogical explanation of the Good Samaritan in terms of salvation; and *c ep Pel* 3.3.5 (CSEL 60: 490–1), an account of the effects of baptism: complete purification, but gradual sanctification.

¹⁴⁹ Augustine, *ciu* 14.4 (CSEL 40²: 9): ‘Quod dicebat: Animales estis, et: Carnales estis, expressius dixit: Homines estis, quod est “Secundum hominem uiuitis, non secundum Deum, secundum quem si uiueretis, dii essetis.”’ Elsewhere (Casiday [2001*b*]: 335–7), I have argued that, in *ciu* 14, the phrase ‘uiuere secundum Deum’ is implicitly Christological. Christ exemplified ‘living according to God’s standards’; therefore, if we would live as Christ lived, we would be gods. The process is not only Christological according to Augustine; it is Trinitarian as well. Thus, *f et symb* 9.16 (PL 40: 189): ‘Non enim sunt naturaliter dii, quicumque sunt facti atque conditi ex Patre per Filium dono Spiritus sancti.’ They may not be *naturaliter dii*, but they are *dii* nonetheless. For further discussion, see my annotated translation of *s. Dolbeau* 5: Casiday (2001*c*).

¹⁵⁰ See Cassian, *conl* 9.18.2–3, 11.7.3, 11.9.3–4, 11.12.5–6, 16.13 (the model of deification by adoption is not used here), 21.34.2, 22.6.7–8, 24.26.4.

¹⁵¹ On Augustinian deification, see Bonner (1996*a*): 369–86 and (1996*b*); Capánaga (1954); Ladner (1954) and (1959); Oroz Reta (1993); Philips (1971); Riga (1968); Teske (1992); Zumkeller (1986): 27–8, 103; *contra* Folliet (1962) and van der Meer (1961): 215. For Cassian’s teaching on divine adoption as evidence for his belief in deification, cf. Marsili (1936): 24, 54, 66; cf. 70–1. This provides a solid basis for rejecting Chadwick’s premature judgement (absent from the second edition) that Cassian did not teach a doctrine of deification: O. Chadwick (1950): 148.

¹⁵² Lot-Borodine (1970): 39–40.

say of Lot-Borodine's evaluation what she herself found occasion to say of some critical passage in the Greek and Byzantine Fathers as regards their modern Roman Catholic interpreters—they were 'inconnus, ou méconnus, par elle'. Even if Augustine's teaching of deification does not conform to expectations shaped by reading in the Eastern Fathers, we cannot rightly refuse to recognize it as an endorsement of that teaching. Nevertheless, some modern Orthodox theologians have done precisely that, in furtherance of the belief that the doctrine of *θέωσις* is exclusively the cultural patrimony of Greek Christianity.¹⁵³

In fact, this claim is risible. The doctrine has been embraced and propagated in Western Christianity by such tremendously important persons as diverse as Thomas Aquinas, Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St Thierry, and John of the Cross (*inter alios*).¹⁵⁴ This is to say nothing of the teaching as found within the Reformed tradition, where, for instance, a regular cottage industry of research into Lutheran *Gottförmigkeit* has emerged.¹⁵⁵

Interestingly, Augustine rarely discusses deification in the context of monasticism (though his teaching of deification ought to be recalled when we encounter in the *Rule* that odd description of the community *in deum*: that is, a community whose existence *tends*

¹⁵³ Azkoul (1986): 61, 166–9 and (1990): 69 n. 69, 176–7 n. 81 (a systematic, even indignant, response to Bonner [1996a]); Lot-Borodine (1970); Meyendorff (1974); Sherrard (1959): 139–64; but see Parry (1999). An odd bedfellow is Adolf von Harnack, who seems relieved to report the following, (1990): 5: 47–8 n. 1: 'Der Vergottungsgedanke findet sich auch bei den Abendländern, vor allem bei Augustin. Aber wenn ich mich nicht täusche, so hat ihn even derselbe Augustin zu einer erfreulichen Verkümmernng gebracht.'

¹⁵⁴ In general, see Bonner (1996a), and (1996b). For references to deification as found in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, William of Saint-Thierry, Bernard of Clairvaux, and John of the Cross, see Casiday (2001c): 23–4. For medieval Western teachings on deification, see Constable (1995) and Kantorowicz (1952)—the latter concerning 'political' deification, with special reference to twelfth-century Western Europe, eleventh-century Byzantium, and twelfth- and sixteenth-century Tsarist Russia.

¹⁵⁵ See Bielfeldt (1997); Flogaus (1997); Nygren (1932–9) 2.2: 437–8, 516; and Posset (1993). The Finnish Lutheran theologian Tuomo Mannermaa (1983): 172 makes the following bold claim: 'Man kann, wenn man will, paraphrasierend die ganze reformatorische Rechtfertigungslehre Luthers (und die ihr eigentümliche Lösung des Verhältnisse zwischen Gerechterklärung und Gerechtmachung) von dem Theosis-Gedanken her verstehen.'

unto God).¹⁵⁶ It is far more prevalent in his general treatments of Christian life. So even though both of them willingly talk of the ‘adoption of sons of God’ through Jesus Christ, and both recognize the participation in God that this entails, it is Augustine who explores this theme much more fully. In an unexpected way, Augustine affirms this ‘Eastern’ belief more vigorously than Cassian, despite Cassian’s evident sympathy for the teachings of Evagrius that so elegantly support the doctrine.¹⁵⁷ Like Cassian, Evagrius affirmed Christian deification, but he did not devote any real time to articulating his teaching.¹⁵⁸ To that extent, both of them fell short of the standard set by Origen, whose endorsement of deification was unambiguous.¹⁵⁹

We have noted that Augustine presented his understanding of *deificatio* much more frequently in homilies and exegesis than in his strictly monastic works. This poses the question of how Augustine conceived of the relationship between the monastery and the Church at large. Was the monastery for Augustine a defiant gesture aimed at the intrusions of secularity into the Holy Church? Did he think of non-monastic Christians as being, in principle, inferior to monastic Christians and, if so, in what way? These are important questions. I have found no indication that Augustine thought of

¹⁵⁶ Van Bavel (1958): 164: ‘En effet, *in Deum* reflète une idée qui est spécialement chère à Augustin et dont le sens appert le plus clairement du *De bono conjugali* 18, 21 (CSEL 41, 214): «*Sed quoniam ex multis animis una civitas futura est habentium animam unam et cor unum in deum—quae unitatis nostrae perfectio post hanc peregrinationem futura est...*»’; see also Verheijen (1979): 15, 92–3.

¹⁵⁷ See Casiday (2003a) and Louth (1981): 108–11.

¹⁵⁸ e.g. in his *Epistola fidei* 3 (= Ps-Basil, *Ep* 8.3) (Forlin Patrucco [1983]: 90), Evagrius acknowledges that a human can legitimately be called ‘god’ *κατὰ χάριν*. Another (admittedly ambiguous) statement of the view is found in *sp sent* 24 (PG 40: 1269): *ψυχή καθαρὰ μετὰ θεὸν, θεός*. A single occurrence of *θεοποιεῖν* is quite negative—obviously meaning ‘to make an idol’ rather than ‘to make godlike’ (*cog* 37.24, SC 438: 282); cf. *prak* 42, 46 (SC 171: 596, 602–4); but see also *KG* 4.51, 4.89, 5.81 (PO 28: 159, 175, 211); cf. Bunge (1989a).

¹⁵⁹ e.g., Origen, *orat* 27.13 (GCS 3: 372): ‘...περὶ οὗ εὐχεσθαι δεῖ, ἵνα ἐκείνου ἀξιοθῶμεν καὶ τρεφόμενοι τῷ «ἐν ἀρχῇ» «πρὸς θεὸν» θεῷ λόγῳ θεοποιηθῶμεν.’ Similarly, in his *HEX* 6.5.4–7 (GCS 29: 182), Origen asserts (apropos of *Ex* 15.11): ‘Quod dicit: “quis similis tibi in diis?” non simulacris gentium comparat Deum nec daemonibus, qui sibi falso deorum nomen adsciscunt, sed deos illos dicit, qui per gratiam et participationem Dei dii appellantur.’ Cf. *Clo* 2.2.17–3.23 (SC 120: 218–22).

For further discussion of this theme in Cassian, Evagrius, and Origen, see Casiday (2003a).

monasticism as a kind of ‘counter Church’. What is quite clear is that, though Augustine certainly mourned the secularization of the Church, he mourned even more deeply the sectarian spirit that attempted all too prematurely to separate the wheat from the tares.¹⁶⁰ This intuition, honed in the Donatist controversy and deployed in the Pelagian controversy, should make us think twice before portraying Augustinian monasticism as a rejection of the non-monastic Church.¹⁶¹

Now there is no doubt that Augustine considered the monastic vocation superior to that of the non-monastic (a preference he could plausibly claim to have learnt from no less an authority than St Paul)—though he did allow that a humble wife is preferable to a haughty virgin.¹⁶² After all, as he could reassuringly remind his congregation in the words of Our Lord, ‘In my Father’s house there are many mansions’ (John: 14.2).¹⁶³ Augustine therefore stressed naturally enough the continuity that existed between the two estates: *omnium enim christianorum una respublica est*.¹⁶⁴ The consecrated virgins assuredly exemplified the Christian life, but theirs was not an exclusive calling, nor was theirs a separate holiness.¹⁶⁵ Rather, monasticism was for Augustine simply a form of ‘concentrated Christianity’.¹⁶⁶ It is important in this connection to recall that Augustine’s monastery served quite literally as a seminary from which the Church throughout North Africa drew her clergy.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ Augustine, *ciu* 1.35, 18.49 (CSEL 40¹: 57, 40²: 349–50); *perf ius* 15.35 (PL 44: 310); cf. *en Ps* 95.5 (CCL 39: 1346–7).

¹⁶¹ Cf. Zumkeller (1986): 104.

¹⁶² Augustine, *en Ps* 75.16 (CCL 39: 1049): ‘Melior uirgo humilis, quam maritata humilis; sed melior maritata humilis, quam uirgo superba.’

¹⁶³ Augustine, *uirg* 26.26 (CSEL 41: 262–3); cf. Cassian, *conl* 11.12.7.

¹⁶⁴ Augustine, *op mon* 25.33 (CSEL 41: 579–80).

¹⁶⁵ Zumkeller (1986): 120.

¹⁶⁶ I owe this expression to my friend and colleague Adam Cooper.

¹⁶⁷ Possidius, *u Aug* 11.1–4 (Pellegrino [1955]: 72–4), testifies that Augustine’s monastery produced about ten such monks-turned-bishops. He writes (*ibid.* 11.3: 74): ‘Nam ferme decem, quos ipse noui, sanctos ac uenerabiles uiros continens et doctos beatissimus Augustinus diuersis ecclesiis, nonnullis quoque eminentioribus, rogatus dedit.’ It seems unlikely that he is including himself, though he certainly qualifies. Chiefly from Augustine’s correspondence, Pellegrino (1955): 208 has drawn up a roster of likely candidates: Alypius of Thagaste, Severus of Mileu, Urbanus of Sicca, Evodius of Uzala, Profuturus of Cirta, Privatus, Servilius, Paul of Cataquas, and Antony of Fussala. See also Brown (2000): 143.

Indeed, Augustine specifically warned Eudoxius that monks were obligated to serve as clergy if they were called.¹⁶⁸

The practical bond that linked monastery to world was just as evident, if not more so, in Gaul. The doors of Cassian's monastery were open to allow monks out—though not so frequently, one presumes, as they allowed novices in—so that they could take up orders in service of the Church.¹⁶⁹ From the way Cassian's monastery functioned as an 'episcopal seminary',¹⁷⁰ it seems highly likely that his notions of how the monastic Christians should relate to lay Christians would approximate to the vision we can ascribe more securely to Augustine. Alas, but for a few fleeting descriptions of exceedingly monastic lay people,¹⁷¹ Cassian rarely gives us a glimpse of how these two populations within the Church could, should, or even did cooperate. However, we should recall that Cassian had witnessed the eruption of fierce controversy from perilously close quarters on two occasions, which was presumably very painful for him.¹⁷² It seems *prima facie* highly unlikely that he would deliberately provoke further troubles by antagonizing non-monastic Christians. To draw a tentative conclusion about his beliefs from these observations, we can expect that no more than Augustine would Cassian have favoured 'rending the body of Christ' by reserving the dignity of 'true Christians' for those within the very narrow compass of the monastic vocation.¹⁷³

What we have seen thus far are indications of a common monastic outlook that Augustine and Cassian shared. This is important precisely because it is very easy to overlook the relevance of monasticism for Augustine's theological writings, whilst stressing Cassian's

¹⁶⁸ Augustine, *ep* 48 (CSEL 342: 137–40).

¹⁶⁹ This seems initially surprising, particularly when we recall that the famous injunction to avoid bishops—and women—came readily enough from Cassian (*inst* 11.18.1); but see Rousseau (1996): 79. Cassian would have merely been conforming to established Gallic practice in this matter; see Mathisen (1989): 85–92.

¹⁷⁰ Rousseau (1996); cf. Mathisen (1989): 119–20.

¹⁷¹ Cassian, *conl* 14.7; at 18.14.1, Piamun mentions a *religiosae cuiusdam feminae*, who might qualify as another example, if we read this as 'a certain devout woman' (though the context could certainly justify reading that as 'a certain nun').

¹⁷² Rousseau (1996): 82; Stewart (1998): 12, 15.

¹⁷³ De Vogüé (1961): 234: 'La signification ecclésiastique du monachisme est donc simplement de vivre en plénitude la vie sainte, aimante et priante de l'Église. Il va sans dire qu'une telle formule ne se rencontre nulle part chez Cassien, étranger qu'il est à la problématique qui nous l'inspire.'

asceticism at the expense of his theological competence. But we have now noted that, in a number of basic cases, the two of them had closely allied concerns that are primarily attributable to the fact that they were monks. In short, their lives as monks had an impact upon their writings. However, it would be misleading to stress these similarities without evaluating the disparities between Cassianic and Augustinian monasticism. These differences are few, but significant nonetheless.

Organizational and theoretical differences between Augustine and Cassian

As important as it is for us to come to grips with the difference in Augustine's and Cassian's respective views on monasticism and how it relates to theology, a full evaluation of the significance of these differences may still be premature at this point. Since Prosper's time, many commentators have offered their evaluations about how Cassian and Augustine differ and have done in a strongly polemical way—for instance, by assuming that Cassian's views are to be evaluated against the standard of Augustine's views. Since our survey is as yet incomplete, and since polemic tends to be very distracting, we will need to defer some legitimate questions until we have built up a satisfactory account of how they differ with respect to more basic issues. So even though their most famous divergence was on the matter of grace and freedom, and even though discussing this difference is unavoidable, before turning to such a rarefied theme we will look first at a few cases of more prosaic difference. This will help us situate the controversy on grace more precisely within the context of Cassian and Augustine's respective theological outlooks and thus give us a secure basis for evaluating that difference in particular.

We notice at once that the structures of monastic life as envisaged by each founder were quite different. For example, Cassian is unlike Augustine in endorsing both the coenobitic and anchoritic forms of monastic life.¹⁷⁴ Cassian's monasteries also seem to differ from

¹⁷⁴ Markus (1990): 182–4; Stewart (1998): 30–2, 54; but Verheijen (1975): 816–17, the great authority on Augustinian monasticism, found no inherent contradiction in the notion of an Augustinian solitary.

Augustine's in that Cassian clearly describes an initiatory rite for seekers.¹⁷⁵ In a similar vein, we might observe that Augustine organizes his monastery in a way that seems much less authoritarian than Cassian's.¹⁷⁶ After all, Cassian stresses the virtue of obedience so mightily, even in the face of absurdity, that modern commentators may find some passages objectionable or even alarming.¹⁷⁷ This stress on obedience gives Cassian's account of coenobitic life a much more stringent character than is found in the parallel descriptions in Augustine's monastic legislation. Even so, it is inadvisable to commend Augustinian monasticism for its foreshadowing of egalitarian democracy simply because its account of leadership strikes us as more palatable.¹⁷⁸ After all, Cassian was explicitly telling would-be monastic founders how best to go about their business; Augustine, on the other hand, was providing spiritual and practical counsel for an existent monastery.

More important than this difference is the fact that their governing paradigms for monasticism were different. Salvatore Marsili has masterfully established that the framework, and no less the *scopos*, of Cassian's explanation of the monastic life can be positively correlated to the scheme of contemplation fashioned by Evagrius Ponticus. But Marsili equally established that Cassian's understanding of contemplation was inextricably bound up with his understanding of *caritas*, Christian love. Contemplation for Cassian was no dusty concern for the endless pondering of those 'men without chests' described so excellently by C. S. Lewis;¹⁷⁹ nor still was it a flight from the body (though it might easily be misconstrued as such).¹⁸⁰ Rather, *contemplatio* was for Cassian the summation of Christian virtue in its organic, embodied totality: it is the love of God, uniting

¹⁷⁵ Cassian, *inst* 4.4–7, cf. 4.4.32; see Penna (1959): 353–5. This does not mean, however, that Augustine's monastery lacked a procedure for gaining admittance; it simply means that his *Rule* does not tell us that such a procedure existed. But the *Rule* is hardly an exhaustive blueprint for operating a monastery.

¹⁷⁶ Markus (1990): 164–5.

¹⁷⁷ One thinks especially of Paternutus dashing off at the command of his elder to throw his son into the Nile; see Cassian, *inst* 4.27, and cf. 4.24–9, 5.40; *conl* 19.1.1–3. Ramsey (2000): 109–10 is surely right to suggest that the name—which means, 'the silent father'—is programmatic.

¹⁷⁸ Pace van Bavel (1996): 45–7, 101–5; see Zumkeller (1986): 161.

¹⁷⁹ Lewis (1943): 3–14.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Colish (1985): 118–20.

the Christian to God and fellow Christian.¹⁸¹ For this very reason, as Gabriel Bunge has authoritatively demonstrated, it represented Evagrius' contemplation at its best.¹⁸²

For Augustine, the monastic life was quite simply one of the excruciating attempts of *peregrini* to realize the City of God here below.¹⁸³ This city is united by God's love and it is thereby characterized by Christian mutual love.¹⁸⁴ Fostering the development of these two forms of love is itself the goal of Augustinian monasticism. The first precept of the *Ordo monasterii* teaches nothing if not this lesson.¹⁸⁵ So if Augustine's *Rule* appears at first blush somehow too easy (as compared—and when such comparisons are made, they are made, without exception, invidiously—with the austerities of the 'Rule of the Four Masters' or the structure of Benedict's *Rule*), we must re-read it. Augustine's rule calls for nothing less than a monumental re-casting of human society by a deceptively simple means.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Marsili (1936): 69: 'Ed allora l'unione stabilita dalla carità tra Padre e figlio [sic], non sarà più unione, semplicemente perchè l'immagine dell'uno si ritrova nell'altro, ma piuttosto perchè, per la contemplazione, Dio sarà diventato tutto nel monaco come per la contemplazione stessa è tutto nei santi del cielo. Anzi il Collatore vola più in alto: l'unione che passa tra il Padre e il Figlio nel seno della Trinità santissima, unione che non si basa solo su una somiglianza, ma su una comunione di natura, è data da Cassiano come modello al monaco [Conl. X.7.2].'

¹⁸² Bunge (1989a): 87–8.

¹⁸³ e.g. Augustine, *ciu* 1.35, 10.7, 19.26 (CSEL 40¹: 57, 457, 40²: 420–1).

¹⁸⁴ Augustine, *ciu* 14.28, 15.1, 15.6 (CSEL 40²: 56–60, 66–7); cf. *trin* 7.3.6 (PL 42: 938): 'Spiritus quoque sanctus siue sit summa charitas utrumque coniugens nosque subiugens, quod ideo non indigne dicitur quia scriptum est: "Deus charitas est" [1 Jn 4.8]'. Zumkeller (1986): 261: 'Because love is the soul of Augustinian monasticism, his thinking about community occupies a central place. It is precisely in the community that a true, selfless love is preserved and goes on growing.' The hard sayings in *doctr chr* on 'using' other people and 'loving' God only, should be understood in this way as well: *doctr chr* 3.37 (CSEL 80: 89): 'Caritatem uoco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum *et se atque proximo propter deum*; cupiditatem autem motum animi ad fruendum se et proximo et quolibet corpore non propter deum' (author's emphasis).

¹⁸⁵ Augustine, *reg* 'Ordo monasterii' (Verheijen [1967]: 1: 148): 'Ante omnia, fratres carissimi, diligatur deus, deinde et proximus, quia ista sunt praecepta principaliter nobis data.'

¹⁸⁶ As Ladner (1954): 877 rightly puts it, 'For St. Augustine, as for all orthodox Christians, the Church was and always will be the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God, in heaven and on earth. But, St. Augustine also fervently desired that at least some of the Christians comprised by the terrestrial Church live in Christian societies on earth which, though "on pilgrimage", would correspond as closely as possible to the eternal *Civitas Dei*. . . [L]ater he found it in a type of monasticism modelled after the common life of the Apostles in Jerusalem as described in Acts.'

Augustine chose to emphasize not the ordinances governing the monastic community (though, to be sure, he does not neglect this), but rather the forging of the all-important bonds of *caritas* that are fundamental to the existence of any community. Since Augustine's monastic programme aimed at redressing one of the basic manifestations of sinfulness, it was necessarily relevant to the Church at large: 'After all, nothing is by vice so quarrelsome, but by nature so social, as the human race.'¹⁸⁷ In the monastery especially, then, Christians could work out a properly Christian social arrangement that focuses first on God and then on one's neighbour.

The difference between Augustine's emphasis on society and Cassian's on contemplation is striking. These respective themes make themselves felt throughout their writings. Clearly, Augustine's emphasis on love as the cornerstone of monasticism no more made him soft-headed than Cassian was cold-hearted for his emphasis on contemplation. The two differed here, but even in their differences both acknowledged the ultimate importance of the love of God. This common acknowledgement suggests that, if Cassian and Augustine had hypothetically ever sat and discussed the importance of monasticism, they would have had a shared frame of reference and therefore could in theory have carried on a profitable conversation about the ways in which monasticism helps actuate the love of God within a human society.

Speaking of the love of God brings us, at last, to the convoluted intricacies of grace, freedom, and merit. In recent years, a staggering amount of work has been done on the precise relationship of these terms for Cassian.¹⁸⁸ The secondary literature on Augustine's doctrine is legion. Many modern scholars have quite rightly reconsidered the received opinion that Cassian was a sloppy theologian who clumsily attempted to repudiate Augustine's teachings by drawing from Eastern traditions.¹⁸⁹ Though this revisionist work has gone a

¹⁸⁷ Augustine, *ciu* 12.28 (CSEL 40¹: 613–14): 'Nihil enim est quam hoc genus tam discordiosum uitio, tam sociale natura.' Cf. *mor* 1.33.71–3 (PL 32: 1340–1); *s* 268.3, 269.2, 271, 356.1 (PL 38: 1233, 1235–6, 1245–6, 39: 1574–5).

¹⁸⁸ N. Chadwick (1955); O. Chadwick (1968); Markus (1990); Marsili (1936); Mathisen (1989); Munz (1960); O'Keeffe (1994, 1995); Ramsey (1997); Rébillard (1994); Stewart (1998); Tibiletti (1977); Weaver (1996).

¹⁸⁹ For a summary, see Casiday (2001a). Victor Codina took a balanced perspective on the matter of Cassian's theological sophistication. Writing on a harsh

long way towards clearing the field, it remains to erect a proper account of Cassian's doctrine in its labyrinthine complexity.

Not only do *Conferences* 3 and 23 as well as 13 consider this theme in an extended way, Cassian liberally scattered throughout his works numerous references to grace and God's assistance. From reading his works, it is possible to draw up a provisional catalogue of five recurrent themes. First, while God may in fact will the salvation of all, there are very strong reasons—some of them scriptural—for affirming that not all will be saved.¹⁹⁰ Second, God's grace initiates, sustains, and perfects human salvation.¹⁹¹ Third, God's grace is quite capable of proactively converting the unwilling.¹⁹² (When we come to Cassian's reaction to Pelagianism, this affirmation will be particularly important.) Fourth, in a life lived *sub gratia*, people may initiate good actions on their own, which God gratuitously deems meritorious.¹⁹³ Fifth and finally, here as elsewhere, the judgement of the precise flourishing of salvation in individual cases demands an exercise of discernment.¹⁹⁴

This last point means that Cassian generally resisted stating an abstract doctrine of God's grace and human freedom. But we see that, when he hinted what such a thing might be like, he did so in terms

comparison of Cassian to Evagrius, Codina (1966): 80 stated: 'no es puramente falta de precisión y sutileza filosófica, sino que responde a una diversa postura teológica.'

¹⁹⁰ Cassian, *conl* 13.7.2 (though God wills no one to perish, they still perish), 17.16.5–6, 18.16.1, 23.15.2.

¹⁹¹ Cassian, *inst* 4.39; *conl* 4.15.2, 5.14.1–2, 5.14.5–15.4, 7.1–2.2, 7.8.2, 8.21.5, 8.23, 8.24.3, 9.7.2, 9.25–6.2, 9.27.1, 9.24.5–6, 10.9.3, 10.10.2, 10.10.4, 10.10.5, 11.9.1–3, 12.4.1–4, 12.5.4, 12.6.3–4, 12.6.8–9, 12.7.6, 12.8.6, 12.9, 12.10.1, 12.12.1–7, 12.15.2–3, 12.16.1, 13.5.1, 13.14.8, 15.2.3, 15.7.1 (a hard passage: *nec quemquam in donis ac mirabilibus dei, sed potius ex propriis virtutum fructibus praedicandum esse censebant, qui industria mentis et operum virtute generantur*. This distinction, though, should be understood according to the dichotomy previously advanced of those who work miracles through virtue [15.1.2] and those who work miracles otherwise [15.1.3]. The works are attributed to the first group, notwithstanding the fact that they are *electos quosque ac iustos viros*, accomplishing these things *secundum auctoritatem domini*; cf. 18.1.3), 15.12.2, 17.3–4 (a nice indication of Cassian's ability to sniff out God's grace), 18.13, 19.9.1, 22.6.2–3, 22.7.1–3, 22.8.7, 22.14, 23.10.1; cf. 7.34.1, 9.20.2.

¹⁹² Cassian, *conl* 13.9.1—God *resistentes ac longe positos uocet, inuitos adtrahat ad salutem, peccare cupientibus explendae copiam subtrahat uoluntis, ad nequitiam properantibus benignus obsistat*.

¹⁹³ Cassian, *conl* 11.7.1 (hirelings, not slaves, can hope for a reward), 11.8.3, 11.12.5–6, 21.5.4, 21.7.1–2 (note that John is referring in both cases to converted Christians—21.5.5), 21.30.1–3; cf. Macqueen (1977).

¹⁹⁴ Cassian, *conl* 11.12.1.

deeply and happily amicable to Augustine's teachings. The discrepancies adduced by Prosper were exaggerated, as noted earlier in this chapter, not least because of the exegetical violence with which Prosper attempted to extract Casian's teachings from their context and force them, bare, into an Augustinian framework of his own devising. To point this out is not to claim that there would be no difference at all between Cassian's teachings and Augustine's if both were handled with more care than Prosper mustered; rather, it is simply to assert that the differences are appreciably less than Prosper tried to make his readers believe.

A striking difference, perhaps the most important between the two, was the way they attempted to resolve the difficulty of affirming simultaneously God's ultimate sovereignty and the Pauline admonition to 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling'. Augustine discussed the matter with reference to divine epistemology: God's knowledge (which from our time-bound perspective sometimes appears to be foreknowledge) of free human actions makes them no less free, no less human, and no less actions. To the contrary, as Augustine insisted, God's knowledge *guarantees* that what He knows as a free human action is precisely that. Otherwise, when God knows a deed to be the free action of a person, God would be mistaken, which is plainly impossible.¹⁹⁵ So far from undermining human freedom, Augustine's teaching of divine knowledge aims to ensure that human freedom is meaningful.

Cassian, on the other hand, wrangled with this seeming contradiction on a moral level. Even though he grounded his exhortations on the bedrock of divine grace, he always spoke freely of the moral imperative of Christian struggle. This might give the appearance that Cassian elided the hard problems of God's knowledge as it relates to humans, problems that so vexed Augustine. But we should not jump from this appearance to the unwarranted conclusion that Cassian was somehow less 'theoretical' and more 'experiential' than Augustine. Certainly, the experiential—even the mystical—element in Cassian's writings is undeniable.¹⁹⁶ But even if by contrast, Augustine's

¹⁹⁵ Augustine, *ciu* 5.9–10 (CSEL 40¹: 222–30).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Miquel (1968) and Spirelli (1984): 29: 'Non la teologia, pertanto, intesa come applicazione delle categorie del pensiero umano alle realtà celesti, potrà mai condurci, secondo Cassiano, alla scoperta della verità; sarà in grado di farlo, invece,

approach seems more philosophical, this by no means indicates that it was somehow impoverished with regard to experience or else too bookish in some other way.¹⁹⁷

Furthermore, we should not assume that Cassian was not interested in how God's grace relates to the human life simply because he did not write on that question. For all we know, Cassian could have dedicated hours and hours of lecturing to that topic—or any other topic—and had a definite perspective on the matter that simply is not available to us. It may very well be the case that Augustine formulated a theory that was more comprehensive in scope than was Cassian's. But all the evidence we have for Cassian's theological beliefs unmistakably demonstrates his competence in theory. As for the interface between theory and experience, we have seen time and again that for both Augustine and Cassian, theory and experience come together in the monastic life.

Both of these fathers theorized their experiences and experienced their theories. On this account, the *Conferences* bear a good comparison to the *Confessions*: both are gripping stories that are profoundly informed by their authors' theology. It is only regrettable that Cassian did not write as prolifically as Augustine and thus provide us with a key for decoding the *Conferences*.¹⁹⁸ To reiterate a theme, both Cassian and Augustine were 'monastic theorists' whose theological writings we can understand properly only by taking into account the impact such a life must have had on their thinking. It would be interesting to see precisely what impact the monastic character of the Pelagian controversy in its early phases had on Augustine's thinking; but such questions lie beyond the scope of a study dedicated to Cassian.

In any case, we have now come full circle in considering some of the ways their shared monastic culture informed their theological

unicamente la "teoria", intesa come attività contemplativa scaturita dalla purezza interiore.'

¹⁹⁷ Moran (1957); Penco (1960).

¹⁹⁸ Cf. the impressive and convincing attempt by McMahon (1989) to interpret the theology of the *Confessions*. Though it is generally true that Cassian did not provide a key for his work, V. Codina's research into the pervasiveness of Cassian's Christology, based on *inc*, should not be neglected: Codina (1966).

perspectives, and in describing some of the content of that shared culture. An overview of what we have seen is therefore in order.

3 CONCLUSIONS

In surveying Cassian's and Augustine's writings for their beliefs about monasticism, we have found that both of them heavily emphasized the eschatological dimension of monastic life. They rejected the consummate attainment of perfection in this life, while insisting that efforts to that end must be made. They boldly described this perfection as divine adoption that results in humans becoming gods. But from other passages in their writings they are both seen to have embraced the further implication of that remarkable image: here, as with mundane cases of adoption, it is God as parent who adopts us as children, and not vice versa. In other words, on the matter of divine grace Cassian and Augustine agreed far more than Prosper (and anybody whose perspective derives from his) could imagine. This agreement is, and was, obscured by the different styles each writer used, and (even more than the simple difference of genre) the different paradigms that governed their understandings of monasticism. However, this should not blind us to the fact that Augustine no less than Cassian was a profound theologian because he was a devoted monk.

We have no evidence to indicate that Augustine corresponded with the monks of Gaul. We only know him to have corresponded with Prosper. But this is another point in our study where it is important to be aware of a bias in favour of Prosper. It is consistent with Prosper's advocacy of Augustinian theology to construe himself as the only person in Gaul who was capable of understanding Augustine—or, for that matter, of entering into dialogue with him. But we have already called into question the notion that Prosper had a privileged claim on receiving, interpreting, and advancing the ideas that Augustine expressed in his writings. We found that Vincent of Lérins has impressive credentials as a discerning student of Augustine's work—credentials that are, in fact, far better than Prosper's own. We have also seen that Faustus was similarly

knowledgeable of Augustine's writings and there is of course in Cassian's *On the Incarnation* a well-known (if often misunderstood) commendation of Augustine as a teacher of the Church.¹⁹⁹ The textual evidence that the Provençal Masters busied themselves with reading and incorporating elements from Augustine's works is incontrovertible. If we keep in mind that the monks of Gaul were also in a kind of conversation with him (if I may be permitted to describe the appropriation of his writings in that way), we may reasonably conclude that the ascetically minded Gallic Catholics shared with Augustine a monastic culture in terms of which they evaluated his writings.

In addition to listing many parallels and similarities in Cassian's and Augustine's monastic theologies, I have also pointed to some of the significant divergences between them. But these divergences look different in the context of their broad agreement about key themes of monastic Christianity than they look in the conventional framework whereby the reception of Augustine's works in Gaul is plotted along the axes of Augustinianism and Pelagianism. In other words, I have suggested that Cassian and Augustine would have had a foundation for constructive interaction. To be clear, we have no evidence whatever that Cassian and Augustine were ever directly in contact with one another; the line of thinking I am suggesting is therefore imaginative. But it is no less valuable for being imaginative, because it goes to show that there are alternatives to Prosper's way of characterizing the Gallic monks as subverting Augustine's works. The next chapter will carry forward this study's revisionist approach to Cassian by showing that, contrary to that characterization, Cassian was heavily involved in efforts to stave off the advance of Pelagian preaching—and that he did so in terms that are comparable (albeit not identical) to those used by Augustine the monk.

¹⁹⁹ On *inc* 7.27, the standard misinterpretations of it, and a suggestion at a more sensible reading, see Casiday (2001*a*).

*Cassianus contra Pelagianos**

Cassian's opposition to Pelagius and Pelagianism is explicit, even vociferous,¹ and yet many modern readers of Cassian have treated this opposition with sustained incredulity and, in some instances, even contempt. This suspicion is founded on the belief that Cassian's harsh words concerning Pelagius and company were an attempt to divert attention from his own theological inadequacy.² Scholars suspicious of Cassian tend to rely upon Prosper of Aquitaine's presentation of contemporary events (if only in that they assume Cassian was involved in 'monastically influenced anti-Augustinianism', in the words of one recent scholar),³ and we have already found Prosper's version to be inconclusive and indeed objectionable. But it is not sufficient to cast doubt on Prosper's credentials. What is needed is an interpretation of Cassian's works that, in addition to undermining facile confidence in Prosper's judgement, demonstrates a consistent teaching opposed to Pelagian principles from Cassian's early career

* I advanced some elements of the central argument of this chapter at Casiday (2004*b*).

¹ Cassian, *inc* 1.3.3–4.2; 5.2.1–2; 6.14.1–2; 7.21.4; cf. 2.1.1–2.

² Stewart (1998): 22–3 speculates that Cassian may have included the case of Leporius 'to certify his anti-Pelagian credentials in Rome' and flatly notes, 'A great work of Christology this is not'. Cf. O. Chadwick (1950): 156–60 (but O. Chadwick [1968]: 137–47 is more reserved and judicious); Grillmeier (1975): 470–1. For further consideration of Cassian's Christology, see Chapter 5 below.

³ Stewart (1998): 25. It is worth drawing out the point: to this day, Cassian's theological competence is maligned because Prosper believed him to be an anti-Augustinian. In this chapter, we will not have occasion to dwell on Cassian's differences with Augustine. They certainly exist. But, in keeping with my conviction that these differences have received far too much attention, in this chapter we will instead focus on Cassian's differences with Pelagius. This regrettably means the work of assessing Cassian's relationship to Augustine will be left undone. But the work here undertaken is a necessary preliminary to any accurate assessment of that problem.

and the continuity of this teaching with uncontested aspects of Cassian's theology. Such is the aim of this chapter.

Cassian's position on human autonomy, which emerges from his earliest works and so lies within the early phases of the Pelagian controversy, is fundamentally at odds with Pelagius'. As we shall see from a survey of the writings of Pelagius and other Pelagians, their moral theology was grounded on the conviction that human will is inviolable; Cassian, to the contrary, affirmed that God can convert the unwilling and consistently reveals an attitude towards the will that is probative and highly critical. The first section of this chapter explores the Pelagians' presuppositions about will and then Cassian's views. We will note in passing how closely Cassian's teaching on grace is linked to his Christology—so much so, that one can reasonably talk of Cassian's 'Christology of grace'. It is therefore appropriate in examining Cassian's denunciation of Pelagius to attend to the implications of the Christological term *homo assumptus*, as regularly used by Cassian. That topic will be explored in this context, but a full treatment will be reserved for chapter 6, when Cassian's Christology will be discussed.

After considering these aspects of Cassian's teaching about grace, we will turn briefly to a vexed question about the chronology of Cassian's writing. It has been suggested that the conventional dating for the publication of *Conference 13* (or rather, of the second instalment of the *Conferences*, in which it appears) is inconsistent with the standard chronology of the controversies in Gaul that Prosper described. It will be argued here that, in view of Cassian's consistently anti-Pelagian purpose, the supposed problem of dating *Conference 13*—and in fact the common interpretation of *Conference 13* as a whole—only arises if certain dubious assumptions are made.

We begin, then, with an examination of the will according to Pelagian moral teaching.

1 THE COHERENCE OF 'PELAGIANISM'

A preliminary word should be said on Pelagianism. Numerous monographs, essays, and studies have recently been written about Pelagius

and his fellows.⁴ These studies have decisively undercut the presumption that Pelagianism was a uniform movement characterized chiefly by its theological and social optimism, liberty, and humanism.⁵ Gerald Bonner has wisely cautioned that ‘one should avoid any facile use of the style “Pelagians” as a blanket-term to cover a number of highly individual personalities’.⁶ The operative term in that caveat is ‘facile’. As Bonner himself has argued in another paper, the term ‘Pelagian’ is not therefore devoid of meaning, even though it should be used with care; Pelagius himself can still be considered a Pelagian.⁷ But since the movement associated with his name admits of a considerable variety of theological nuance, we need to come to terms with the central tenets of Pelagianism before any assessment of Cassian’s response to Pelagian ideas is possible. Let us consider a few of the relevant propositions that recur in the writings of the Pelagians.

Infant baptism

Pelagius’ understanding of baptism shows a remarkably well-developed teaching about the regeneration that it implies.⁸ And yet he takes little interest in the baptism of infants. For example, his analysis of the grace of baptism is predicated on the assumption of choice and consent—which puts infants beyond the scope of consideration.⁹ In fact, in his early writings he is content to state

⁴ For what follows, I am chiefly indebted to Bonner (1966), (1970), (1972); Brown (1972*a*), (1972*b*), (1972*c*); De Bruyn (1993); de Plinval (1943), (1947); Evans (1968*a*), (1968*b*); Greshake (1972); Rees (1988), (1998); Thier (1999); and Valero (1980). I have not had access to Dempsey (1937); Pirenne (1961); or Prete (1961).

⁵ Pelagius himself endorsed the dim estimation of the unaided capabilities of human wisdom found in Isaiah: *leg diu* 3 (PL 30: 108).

⁶ Bonner (1972): 3.

⁷ Bonner (1966). In this context, one can only stand in awe of the superior semantic precision deployed in the distinction made by Greshake (1972): 27 fn. 3: ‘Wir verwenden das Wort “pelagisch” im Unterschied zu “pelagianisch” dann, wenn es im strikten Sinn Person und Werk des Pelagius selbst und nicht der Pelagianer meint.’

⁸ Pelagius, *leg diu* 1–2 (PL 30: 106); cf. Bohlin (1957) and Rivière (1946).

⁹ Pelagius, *leg diu* 1 (PL 30: 106): ‘Qua ratione colligimus uocationem nostram iuxta uocantis dignationem, etiam nostrae uoluntatis stare consensus’; similarly, at *exp* 2 Cor. 8:17 (ed. Souter [1926]: 277–8), Pelagius notes, ‘Gratiam quidem exhortationis accepit, sed uoluntate propria festinauit, ut mercedem haberet, non inuictus, quasi ei sit credita dispensatio.’

insouciantly that those infants who die unbaptized will not on that account be deprived of the Kingdom of Heaven.¹⁰ In what may be taken as evidence that he has already begun to be embroiled in the controversy that was provoked by the more radical views of his associates, Pelagius later stipulates that he maintains ‘one baptism, which sacrament we aver must be celebrated with the same formula for infants as for adults’;¹¹ and he deplores those who would deny ‘the common redemption of the human race’—baptism—to babies on the basis of their age.¹²

Along similar lines, Aurelius of Carthage and Paulinus of Milan pressed Caelestius to justify his affirmation that babies are baptized *in remissionem peccatorum* (the same formula used for adults’ baptisms, as endorsed by Pelagius), a difficult question for Caelestius precisely because of his insistence that babies are in fact sinless.¹³ Bonner has convincingly argued that the influence of Rufinus of Syria is decisive in Caelestius’ consolidation of disparate beliefs on infant baptism that are similar (but not identical) to Pelagius’.¹⁴ Caelestius and Rufinus share a common rationale for baptizing sinless babies that is altogether lacking in Pelagius’ works.¹⁵ Since we have no evidence that Pelagius shared in these views, he may therefore have been genuinely baffled when the fourteen bishops at

¹⁰ See Pelagius, *exp Rom* 5:14 (ed. Souter [1926]: 46–7); Augustine, *nat et gr* 9.10 (CSEL 60: 238–39). See De Bruyn (1993): 18–24.

¹¹ Pelagius, *lib fid* 7 (PL 15: 1718): ‘Baptisma unum tenemus, quod iisdem sacramenti uerbis in infantibus, quibus etiam in maioribus, asserimus esse celebrandum.’

¹² Pelagius, ap. Augustine, *gr et pecc or* 2.19.21 (CSEL 42: 181): ‘Quis ille tam inpius est qui cuiuslibet aetatis paruulo interdicat communem humani generis redemptionem?’ Cf. Ambrose of Chalcedon, *exp fid Cath* (PLS 1: 1684), Sicilian Anonymous, *diu* 8.3 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 35–6). Evans (1968b): 118–19 rightly criticizes Pelagius for being inconsistent on this front.

¹³ Caelestius, ap. Augustine, *gr et pecc or* 2.5.5 (CSEL 42: 169–70); Augustine supplies a transcript of Caelestius’ interrogation, along with his own interpretation of these events, at *gr et pecc or* 2.4.3–7.8. This preoccupation with infant baptism seems to have caught on in Sicily; Hilary notes that it is being discussed in Syracuse, ap. Augustine, *ep* 156 (CSEL 44: 448): ‘quod quidam Christiani apud Syracusas exponunt dicentes . . . infantem non baptizatum morte praeuentum non posse perire merito, quoniam sine peccato nascitur.’

¹⁴ Bonner (1970).

¹⁵ Rufinus, *fid* 40–1, 48 (ed. Miller [1964]: 114–18, 126); for Caelestius, see n. 13, above, and for Pelagius, n. 10.

Diospolis interrogated him on this point.¹⁶ In this context (though, as we will see, not in others), it would be hasty to echo Peter Brown's observation that 'the Pelagian is contemptuous of babies'.¹⁷

From the divergent evidence of Caelestius' and Rufinus' position on one hand, and Pelagius' rather inarticulate position on the other, it would rather appear that babies are instead something of a puzzlement to the average Pelagian. The problem is not that Pelagius, Caelestius, and Rufinus despised babies; it was instead that they overlooked babies in framing their teaching, until such time as their adversaries sharply challenged them to reconcile their claims about baptism to their claims about babies' sinlessness. That accounts for the ad hoc feel of most Pelagian statements on the matter.

Virtues of the Jewish saints

This is not to suggest that all Pelagians were freewheeling improvisers. The 'Sicilian Anonymous',¹⁸ for example, appears to have been a meticulous and methodical (and probably dyspeptic) thinker who selectively extended Pelagius' ideals on several fronts to such an extent that he became far more Pelagian than Pelagius. For instance, the Sicilian pushes the distinction between the Old and New Testaments further than Pelagius ever did.¹⁹ He is in fact little short of scornful in one passage.²⁰ Pelagius typically presents the saints of the

¹⁶ Cf. Augustine, *gest Pel* 19.43 (CSEL 42: 98–9), for Pelagius' disavowal of the charges taken from Caelestius, including the thesis that *infantes etsi non baptizentur, habere uitam aeternam* (ibid. 11.23). However, Evans (1964) has cast doubt on the truthfulness of Pelagius' testimony at Diospolis.

¹⁷ Brown (2000): 352; for the context in which Brown's claim is eminently appropriate, see n. 94, below.

¹⁸ Credit for this refinement of Morris's 'Sicilian Briton' goes to Gerald Bonner, who rightly questions Morris's inference about the author's homeland. See Morris (1965): 40 and Bonner (1972): 5–6. Morris did not accept Caspari's identification of the author as a certain Briton called Agricola, whom Prosper denounced (see Caspari [1964]: 382–8), though he did endorse Caspari's interpretation of the 'periculosa expeditio' as the author's travels from Britain to Sicily.

¹⁹ Pelagius makes a point of affirming the entire canon 'which the authority of the Holy Catholic Church hands down', *lib fid* 8 (PL 45: 1718), and repeatedly castigates the Manichaeans for separating the two testaments, *exp* 2 Cor. 3:7, 12:1, 1 Tim 6:3 (ed. Souter [1926]: 246–7, 302, 499).

²⁰ e.g. Sicilian Anonymous, *cast* 12.4 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 151); and *diu* 9.4–5 (38–9). The Sicilian does not refrain from effectively denouncing the Old Testament

Old Testament as exemplars of virtue.²¹ But the Sicilian's parallel invocation of them is vitiated by a generally condescending attitude towards pre-Christian history. Typical of his attitude is the following claim: 'These things were from the Old Testament, when the dignity of modesty shone with correspondingly less glorious splendour due to the quality of the times, which ordered marriage for the lustful.'²² The Sicilian's lengthiest catena focuses on the sins of the Patriarchs, not their virtues.²³

The possibility of sinlessness

The Sicilian also takes an uncompromising line on sin that would have made Pelagius blanch. For his part, Pelagius acknowledged the value of penitence for the lapsed and thereby tacitly acknowledged the possibility that a Christian could fall into sin;²⁴ likewise, Rufinus the Syrian,²⁵ and at least one other anonymous Pelagian author, who appealed to lapsed Christians to repent or encouraged penitent Christians to persevere.²⁶ As for sinlessness as such, Pelagius' view

when his opponents point to inconvenient things it upholds. In the passages just cited, Old Testament accolades for wealth and procreation come under fire.

²¹ Pelagius, *Dem* 5–6 (PL 33: 1102–4).

²² Sicilian Anonymous, *cast* 6.1 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 132).

²³ Sicilian Anonymous, *mal doct* 13 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 90–1). Pelagius was not blind to the faults of Jewish sinners (see *Dem* 7 [PL 33: 1104]), but he devotes less energy to denouncing them than he does to praising Jewish saints.

²⁴ Pelagius, *lib fid* 7 (PL 45: 1718): 'Hominem, si post baptismum lapsus fuerit, per poenitentiam credimus posse saluari.' And *exp* Eph. 5:27 (ed. Souter [1926]: 378): 'Si omnibus membris immacula est [sc., ecclesia], maculati ab ea alieni esse censentur, nisi rursus per poenitentiam fuerint expurgati.' Cf. *Dem.* 8 (PL 33: 1104–5), where Pelagius intimates the need for correction of life even among sincere Christians, particularly when a wayward youth has resulted in malformed habits. When Pelagius warns that there is Hell to pay for sins, even little sins, and that these sins are unforgivable (*uirg* 7 [CSEL 1: 232–34]), the warning is directed to those who would excuse their sins by flattering themselves for what they have done (pp. 232–3). That sort of attitude, which is antithetical to repentance, is the only thing in this passage which precludes forgiveness.

²⁵ Rufinus, *fid* 50 (ed. Miller [1964]: 128): 'Quamdiu igitur sumus in hac uita, possumus poenitentiam agere et futuram illam beatam uitam ac sempiternam mereri.'

²⁶ Anon., *Pam et Oc* 4 (PL 30: 239–42) clearly indicates that the unknown author is calling to repentance his addressees, though they are already Christian; likewise, *uera paen* (PL 30: 242–5) and *uirg deu* (PL 17: 579–84). Although I agree with Caspari

was complex. At Diospolis, he was presented with a dossier of excerpts pointing to a doctrine of sinlessness, to which he responded as follows:

We have said that a man can be without sin and keep God's commandments, if he wishes; for God gave him this possibility. However, we did not say that anyone can be found who, from his infancy even to his old age, has never sinned; rather, [we said that,] having turned from sins by his own effort and God's grace, he can be without sin—but not therefore incorruptible from that point on. As for the rest of the statements that were put down below, they are neither in our books, nor did we ever say such things.²⁷

In fact at least one of the excerpts did come from Pelagius (the third is a quotation from *uit chr* 11), but Pelagius' summary of his teaching is otherwise consistent with what we find in his writings. Pelagius' own teaching therefore warrants the explicit proclamation by later Pelagians of a doctrine of sinlessness. So the Sicilian set the bar very high indeed. 'A Christian,' he says,

is one who never lies, never curses; who makes an oath under no circumstances; who does not repay evil for evil, but rather good; who blesses those who curse him and even does good for them; who loves his enemies; who prays for those who persecute him and calumniate against him; whose every thought is also pure from every wickedness and shamefulness; who asks of no one what he himself would not wish to come to pass, but freely imparts to all what he would wish to have himself; and, that I might conclude briefly, who after the washing of baptism is a stranger to sin. I say nothing about greater misdeeds, since there is no doubt that lesser offences are not allowed to one for whom committing greater offences is not permitted.²⁸

The Sicilian adds this rider: 'Unless someone were just, he could not be saved; but he will not be just, unless he stops sinning.'²⁹ At no point in the extant writings of the Sicilian does repentance enter into

(1964): 397, and Rees (1998) that *mag cumulatur* (ed. Caspari [1964]: 171–8) is Pelagian in provenance, I find no reason to assume with Rees (1998): 326 that the recipient of it has become a Pelagian ascetic. It is more economic to understand the recipient as simply a penitent. The idea of a Pelagian doing penance is, as we have seen, not at all implausible.

²⁷ Augustine, *gest Pel* 6.16 (CSEL 42: 68–9).

²⁸ Sicilian Anonymus, '*Hon tuae*' 1 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 5).

²⁹ Sicilian Anonymus, '*Hon tuae*' 1 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 7–8); cf. *cast* 10.8 (144).

his message. In its place, we find only improvement. Indeed, the Sicilian's confession of his own sinfulness is not an admission that he constantly lapses; rather, it means that he still has a great deal more progress to make. His flattering references to being outstripped by his addressee *in omni religionis cultu et deuotione* make this quite clear.³⁰

All this could be an accident of history: perhaps letters and homilies in which he encouraged repentance have for whatever reason not survived. And yet the Sicilian's reader is left with the distinct impression that only progress is possible for 'authentic Christians'³¹ and backsliding is strictly impossible. So the Sicilian takes Pelagius' line about the importance of not sinning and impressively extends it.³²

Social justice

Even more striking is the Sicilian's extension of Pelagian reforms from the private life into social life.³³ He takes up the broad mandate for Christian charity we find in Pelagius,³⁴ but further issues a call for the rich to renounce all their possessions in language that could be taken as a justification for despoiling the rich: 'Get rid of the rich and you will find no poor. Let no one have more than is necessary, and everyone will have as much as is necessary. For the few who are rich are the cause of the many who are poor.'³⁵ Not least because of the

³⁰ Sicilian Anonymous, *mal doct* 1.3 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 68).

³¹ Cf. Sicilian Anonymous, *diu* 10.3 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 41).

³² Cf. Pelagius, *uirg* 6 (CSEL 1: 230): 'Iustitia ergo non aliud est quam non peccare, non peccare autem est legis praecepta seruare.' See also *exp Gal.* 3:10 (ed. Souter [1926]: 319).

³³ Cf. Morris (1965): 45–51.

³⁴ Note how the Sicilian glosses his exhortation to holiness: *ep. 'Hon tuae'* 6 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 13): 'Esto sanctus, innocens, misericors, pudicus, hospitalis et pius. Nulli aduenienti tua clausa sit domus, nullus, si possibile est, mensam nesciat tuam; esurientes et egentes tuis panis saturentur. Adiuua uiduas, pupillos defende, indefensos tuere, succurre miseris laborantibus, omnibus necessitatem patientibus opem praesta, ut tu dicere cum sancto uiro possis: "Conseruau i egenum de manu potentis et pupillo, cui non erat adiutor, auxiliatus sum. Os uiduae benedixit me. Cum essem oculus caecorum, pes quoque eram claudorum et inualidorum pater" (Job 29:12–13, 15–16).' This is paralleled by Pelagius' explanation of what it means to 'love one's neighbour as oneself' at, e.g. *uit chr* 6, 10, 14.1–2 (PL 50: 389, 393–5, 400).

³⁵ See Sicilian Anonymous, *diu* 12.2 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 48). I am unaware of any evidence that the Sicilian was actually fomenting revolution and think the passage just cited can easily be read as a thought-experiment.

Sicilian's *On riches*³⁶ have scholars debated the merits of considering Pelagianism a social movement.³⁷ On the other hand, R. F. Evans has judged that such social considerations had relatively little impact on Pelagius himself.³⁸ Certainly, Pelagius reckoned that the waters of baptism made all Christians equals, irrespective of their wealth or social standing; but, as with the Pauline attitude towards masters and their bondservants,³⁹ there is no indication that by this teaching Pelagius sought to rework the order of society.⁴⁰ On this score, the Sicilian embraces the equality of Christians—an element present in Pelagius also—but he pursues this insight in a way that neither Pelagius nor any other of the authors whose works survive did.

The call to Christian perfection

These differences in emphasis notwithstanding, the Pelagian preachers and theologians were united by more than simply the external pressure brought to bear on them by African, Milanese, Spanish, Gallic, and Roman expatriates. What made Pelagianism a coherent movement was first and foremost its message of reform leading to Christian perfection. This message was borne up by several tacit presuppositions with respect to which we find broad-based agreement. For instance, the Pelagians consistently insist upon the

³⁶ Esp. Sicilian Anonymous, *diu* 8.1–3 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 34–5).

³⁷ Supporting the claim: Frere (1967), Greshake (1972): 35–7, Morris (1965) and (1968), Myers (1960), Salway (1981): 443, 727, Ward (1972): 284–5; rejecting it: Cameron (1968), Liebeschütz (1963) and (1966), Thomas (1981): 53–60, Thompson (1977), 314 and n. 42. The claim simply does not withstand the criticisms levelled against it. In any case, any straightforward reading of the Sicilian as an *ur-Sozialist* is confounded by his willingness to countenance wealth ‘which is acquired without any sin, is spent on good deeds and by which no opportunity or need for delinquency is provided to its possessors’ (*diu* 6.1; cf. 19.3–4 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 30, 61–4)). It would be possible, perhaps, to extend Jones’s doubts about the Egyptian character of Monophysitism, the African character of Donatism, and the German character of Arianism to the British character of Pelagianism; see Jones (1959).

³⁸ Evans (1968*b*): 90–121.

³⁹ e.g. Eph. 6:5–9; Col. 3:22–4; 1; 1 Tim. 6:1–2; Titus 2:9–10; Phil. 8–18.

⁴⁰ Pelagius, *uirg* 16 (CSEL 1: 246–7); cf. *exp* 1 Cor. 7:20–1 (ed. Souter [1926]: 165): ‘Ne dicas: “quo modo possum deo placere, qui seruus sum?” deus enim non condiciones aspicit, sed uoluntatem quaerit et mentem.’

need for ascetic struggle in order to measure up to rigorous standards befitting Christians: ‘No Christian is permitted to sin, and living a spotless life befits absolutely all who have been cleansed by the sanctification of the spiritual washing, that they might be admitted into the innermost parts [*uisceribus*] of the Church, which is described as being “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing”’ (Eph. 5:27).⁴¹ This call for reform is itself of greater importance than the precise details of their preaching as such. So, for instance, their divergent perspectives on the finer points about baptism are ultimately of less importance than their agreement that maximal Christian practice is the only acceptable behaviour after baptism.⁴² The Sicilian sums up the matter with characteristic verve:

It is not the name, but the deed that makes a Christian. . . . So they err greatly who think themselves Christians in that they have the name Christian, not knowing that it isn’t the thing that is owed to the name, but the name to the thing; and that a person may rightly be called what he is, but it is vain if he is called what he is not.⁴³

All the Pelagians agreed on the possibility of sinlessness, the critical need for struggle to attain it, and the importance of the Christian community in that struggle. It is in effect a matter of definition that all Pelagian works share this stock of common beliefs, consistently deployed in the same ways to the same ends, which set them apart

⁴¹ Pelagius, *uirg* 11 (CSEL 1: 241); cf. Augustine, *gest Pel* 6.16 (CSEL 42: 68–9).

⁴² e.g. Pelagius, *leg diu* 9 (PL 30: 114–15). That baptism is a decisive turning-point is seen in the Sicilian’s treatment of catechumens as a distinct grade within the Church, for whom lesser standards are acceptable: Sicilian Anonymous, *diu* 12.4–6 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 48–9).

⁴³ Sicilian Anonymous, ‘*Hum reflit*’ 3 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 17): ‘Christianum enim non nomen, sed actus facit. . . . Errant enim nimium, qui in hoc se Christianos putant, quod Christianum tantum possideant nomen, ignorantes, quod non res nomini, sed nomen rei debeat, et recte aliquem uocari, quod sit, quod non sit uero uanum esse si uocetur’; cf. Sicilian Anonymous, ‘*Hon tuae*’ 1 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 5): ‘Uehementer enim errat, quisque putat, se rem aliquam iam obtinuisse, si eius obtineat nomen, cum nomen rei non res nomini debeat.’ Pelagius, *uirg* 17 (CSEL 1: 248): ‘sancta magis esse quam uideri stude, quia nihil prodest aestimari quod non sis, et duplicis peccati reus est non habere quod creditur et quod non habeas simulare.’ Pelagius offers a similar admonition to Demetrias, *Dem* 20 (PL 33: 1113): ‘Auferantur omnia figmenta uerborum, cessent simulati gestus, et ante occasionem sermo placidus.’ This comes in the context of Pelagius’ reproach for feigned piety. See also Pelagius, *uit chr* 1, 6, 10–11, 13 (PL 50: 383–5, 389, 393–6, 397–400).

from contemporary writings. In this connection, Morris's description of 'a common Pelagian idiom' is helpful.⁴⁴

2 HOW THE WILL FUNCTIONS ACCORDING TO THE PELAGIANS

It is not our purpose to offer here a comprehensive account of Pelagian theology, or even Pelagius' own theology.⁴⁵ Instead, we will identify one particular principle of Pelagian theology that can be profitably compared to Cassian's theology—namely, the inviolability of human will. This principle is a fundamental postulate of Pelagian morality.⁴⁶

Necessity and willing

Pelagius begins his teaching with a clear and important ontological claim: 'Whatever is constrained by natural necessity is deprived of choice and deliberation of the will.'⁴⁷ This has immediate and obvious ethical consequences: 'So then, how can one be held responsible by God for a sin which he does not recognize as his own? For it is not his, if it is necessary; but if it is his, it is voluntary. And if it is voluntary, it can be avoided.'⁴⁸ Thus far Pelagius; but the Sicilian Anonymous is not to be outdone: 'If a man is not able to be sinless, what transpires on account of that inability will no longer be sin,

⁴⁴ Morris (1965): 32.

⁴⁵ Evans's excellent work has rendered such an undertaking largely redundant; see esp. Evans (1968*b*): 90–121.

⁴⁶ Cf. Pelagius, *Dem* 2–4 (PL 33: 1100–2).

⁴⁷ Pelagius, *nat ap. Augustine, nat et gr* 46.54 (CSEL 60: 272); cf. *Dem.* 7 (PL 33: 1104): 'Scripturarum utar testimoniiis, quae peccantes ubique crimine uoluntatis grauant, non excusant *necessitate naturae*.' Pelagius only ever talks of a 'necessity of sinning' by way of stressing the power of habit, and even then he hedges the term 'necessitas': *lib arb.* ap. Augustine, *gr et pecc or* 1.39.43 (CSEL 42: 156–7); cf. *exp Rom.* 7:20, (ed. Souter [1926]: 59); *lib arb* fr. 1 (PLS 1: 1540).

⁴⁸ Pelagius, *nat ap. Augustine, nat et gr* 30.34 (CSEL 60: 258); Pelagius also taught that the Christian era is the 'time of grace, in which the fullness of perfection has arrived' (*leg diu* 10.2 [PL 30: 116]).

since the inability is ascribed to nature; however, sin is not ascribed to nature, but to will, lest the one who commits the deed be judged guilty by nature.⁴⁹ In terms of the spiritual life, these principles safeguard the attribution of praise or blame based on performance of and obedience to God's law.⁵⁰ Accordingly, Pelagius states: "That eternal life cannot be rewarded except for the keeping of all the divine precepts, Scripture attests when it says, "If you would come into life, keep the commandments"" (Matt. 19:17).⁵¹ Because he thus supposes that the enacted will is sufficient to this task, Pelagius can even say, 'And neither has anything impossible been commanded you: he who has done what he could, has fulfilled everything.'⁵²

Now if, *per impossibile*, God or the demons or whoever could override a person's will, then that person's responsibility would be fundamentally compromised.⁵³ This poses the problem that, if God can override a sinful will,⁵⁴ the justice of divine judgement can be called into question.⁵⁵ Caelestius likely has this conundrum in mind when he argues that it would be unjust for God to give grace to sinners,⁵⁶ for God could only give grace to sinners if He caused them

⁴⁹ Sicilian Anonymous, '*Hon tuae*' 1 (ed. Caspari [1964], 6); cf. *poss non pecc.* 2.2–3.2 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 115–17. Cf. Caelestius ap. Augustine, *per iust* 2.1 (CSEL 42: 4): 'Ante omnia interrogandum est qui negat hominem sine peccato esse posse, qui sit quodcumque peccatum: quod uitari potest an quod uitari non potest. Si quod uitari non potest, peccatum non est; si quod uitari potest, potest homo sine peccato esse, quod uitari potest. Nulla enim ratio uel iustitia patitur saltem dici peccatum, quod uitari nullo modo potest.'

⁵⁰ See Pelagius, *leg diu* 4 (PL 30: 108–10); Rufinus, *fid* 19, 37 (ed. Miller [1964]: 76, 110); Sicilian Anonymous, *diu* 6.3 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 32–3).

⁵¹ Pelagius, *uirg* 4 (CSEL 1: 228).

⁵² Pelagius, *uirg* 6 (CSEL 1: 232); cf. *exp Rom.* 14:5 (ed. Souter [1926]: 107). In light of this affirmation by Pelagius, it is strange that Caspari (1964): 397 n. 2 thought the phrase 'uiriliter agentes et ipsius adiutorium implorantes, mandata eius, quantum possumus, custodire studeamus' (*Pam et Oc* [176.12–13]) was *ganz unpelagianische*. While it is admittedly unusual for a Pelagian to implore divine aid, it is certainly not unusual for a Pelagian to 'do what he can'—for that is enough.

⁵³ Cf. Pelagius, *exp Rom.* 8:32 (ed. Souter [1926]: 69); Julian, ap. Augustine, *c Iul imp* 1.78 (CSEL 85: 93).

⁵⁴ Cf. Pelagius, *Dem* 3 (PL 33: 1100–1).

⁵⁵ Cf. Ambrose of Chalcedon, *exp fid Cath* (PLS 1: 1685).

⁵⁶ Caelestius, *lib cap* ap. Augustine, *gest Pel* 14.30 (CSEL 42: 84): 'dei gratiam secundum merita nostra dari, quia si peccatoribus illam det, uidetur esse iniquus'. Rather similarly, Pelagius argues that grace—in particular, baptismal grace—follows upon and does not precede consent and choice at *leg diu* 2 (PL 30: 107).

to cease to be sinners. The same principle is at stake in Pelagius' commentaries when he tirelessly hammers away at the theme that 'God is no respecter of persons' (Rom. 2:11).⁵⁷ If God did indeed show partiality by giving grace to some (but not all!) who do not deserve it, then, according to Pelagian thought, another intolerable consequence would ensue—fatalism.⁵⁸

Fatalism

Fatalism, particularly under the guise of Manicheism, was the great bugbear of Pelagius (and countless of his contemporaries).⁵⁹ The popular association between Manicheism and fatalism added punch to Julian of Eclanum's round denunciation when he characterized Augustine's attitudes towards sex and sin as Manichean.⁶⁰ And yet the accusation of Manichean heresy was made promiscuously in ancient times,⁶¹ so we would do well to ask what it was particularly about Manicheism that offended Pelagius' sensibilities. First, Pelagians

⁵⁷ Pelagius, *exp Rom.* 1:7, 2:10, 1 Cor. 7:22 (ed. Souter [1926]: 9, 22, 165); Anon., *indur* 19–21 (ed. Morin [1947]: 157–9); cf. Pelagius, *exp Rom.* 2:2, 9:26, Col. 1:4 (ed. Souter [1926]: 19, 78, 451); Anon., *indur* 47 (ed. Morin [1947]: 193–5); Sicilian Anonymous, '*Hon tuae*' 1 and *cast* 13.2 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 7, 152).

⁵⁸ Cf. Anon., *indur* 2, 53 (ed. Morin [1947]: 137–9, 201); Pelagius, *leg diu* 7 (PL 30: 112–13); cf. Sicilian Anonymous, *cast* 8.2 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 135).

⁵⁹ e.g. Pelagius, *Dem* 3 (PL 33: 1100–1); *lib arb* fr. 1, 3 (PLS 1: 1539–43); *lib fid* 10, 13 (PL 45: 1718); *exp Rom.* 1:2, 6:19, 7:7, 8:7, 9:5, 1 Cor. 11:12, 15:45, 2 Cor. 3:7, 12:1, Gal. 5:21, Col. 1:16, 1 Tim. 6:3, 6:16, (ed. Souter [1926]: 8, 53, 56, 62, 73, 189, 223–4, 246–7, 302, 336, 454, 499, 503). Valero (1980): 206–10 provides an elegantly concise explication of Pelagius' interpretation of Paul as anti-Manichean.

⁶⁰ These accusations occur thickly throughout *c Iul imp.*

⁶¹ For instance, Jerome in writing to Eustochium bemoans the ease with which sober, right-minded Christians of ascetic inclination could be maligned as Manichean (*ep* 22.13 (Labourt [1949–54]: 1: 123); he himself was smeared as a Manichean by Pelagius, who consistently and pointedly denounces Manicheism while rebutting Jerome's views (*lib arb* 1–4 [PLS 1: 1539–43]). The accusation is purely opportunistic. For comparable accusations in the Christian East, see Lieu (1992): 207–10, with copious references. It is no testament to Julian's perspicuity that he lobbed that accusation against the Bishop of Hippo. One may be pardoned for wondering at the zest with which modern scholars have taken up Julian's lead, and sought to further it with evidence of duality in Augustinian thought. But duality does not make for Manicheism, and we can justifiably demand better evidence for the claim that nine years on the periphery of Manichean communities formed Augustine's thought more than forty years of leadership in the Catholic Church.

believed that Manichean dualism introduced an unacceptable distinction between the goodness of creation and the material order.⁶² Second, Pelagius objected to the rift in Manichean theology between those who were created for salvation and those who were created for damnation.⁶³

This sort of fatalism also encourages spiritual laxity and is therefore diametrically opposed to the rigours that Pelagius urged on Demetrias and others. Initially it seems strange, then, to find that the Pelagians did not expect many people to be saved; certainly, they did not expect *most* people to be saved.⁶⁴ And yet, because of the clear principle of accountability to which they could appeal, the apparent similarity is misleading. Unlike the Manichean scheme, Pelagianism does not teach that there are certain people who cannot possibly be saved. Rather, Pelagianism teaches that there are in fact few people who willingly obey God's commands and that in all fairness only few people will enjoy the rewards of obedience, while the majority will suffer the consequences of disobedience. About 1 Cor. 1:1, Pelagius writes, 'Anyone who is called to faith is called "by the will of God", but the call is believed by his initiative and decision, as it says in Acts, "I did not doubt the heavenly vision"' (Acts 26:19).⁶⁵ In this brief remark, we catch a glimpse of that process at work: God calls, thus discharging divine responsibility and satisfying the divine will that all be saved—but it lies with each person called to make of that calling what he will.

⁶² For Pelagius, cf. *exp Rom.* 14:20 (ed. Souter [1926]: 111); for Mani, cf. *orig corp suae* 22, 81–5 (ed. Cameron [1979]: 22, 64–8).

⁶³ This objection can be compared to Irenaeus denouncing Valentinus' threefold scheme for classifying humans (*pneumatikoi*, *psychikoi*, and *hylokoi/somatikoi*) on grounds that it undercuts moral behaviour and smacks of fatalism, inasmuch as it implies that some people are saved regardless of their actions: *adu haer* 1.6.1–7.5 (SC 100¹: 90–112). Mani also discerns these three components in the make-up of human beings, though in context (such as we have it!) the implications are not notably fatalistic: *Keph* 114 (ed. Schmidt [1940–66]: 1: 239–40). Nevertheless, election is an important theme in Mani's teaching: e.g. *orig corp suae* 79 (ed. Cameron [1979]: 62). On Mani's indebtedness to Valentinus, see Lieu (1992): 64–5. This is an admittedly slender reed on which to hang accusations of fatalism, but 'Manichean' and 'fatalism' go together in the tradition just like 'bread' and 'butter'.

⁶⁴ e.g. Pelagius, *leg diu* 7.2 (PL 30: 112–13); *Cel* 10 (CSEL 29: 443); Sicilian Anonymous, *Hum ref lit'* 3.1 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 17).

⁶⁵ Pelagius, *exp* 1 Cor. 1:1 (ed. Souter [1926]: 128): 'Voluntate dei uocatur quisque uocatur ad fidem, [sed] sua sponte, et suo arbitrio credit[ur], sicut ait in Actibus [Apostolorum]: "non fui incredulus caelesti uisioni"'

The rewards of virtuous willing

Alongside numerous exhortations to virtue, there are in the Pelagian corpus persistent hints and intimations at the richness with which those who run the race well will be rewarded. This rhetoric of merit and reward,⁶⁶ which in the celebrated letter to Demetrias periodically lapses into distastefully construing the Christian life as an opportunistic scramble to augment the Anicii's traditional splendour with heavenly glory,⁶⁷ constantly reinforces the Pelagian emphasis on judgement.⁶⁸ As we have noted, Pelagius' emphasis on judgement in turn depends upon the inviolability of the human will. In his letter to Demetrias, Pelagius goes further and explains that the will is indefectible as well—and even if habit periodically undermines good intention, habit is itself built up by the deliberate operation of the will.⁶⁹ On this basis, Pelagius splendidly writes about 'a certain natural sanctity presiding in the citadel of the soul',⁷⁰ which sanctity is bound up in recognizing and worshipping God.⁷¹

Pelagians of course acknowledge that the will is a gift of God. Like every gift of God, it is a good thing:

how, then, is the verse to be understood, that 'Each one has his own gift from God' [1 Cor. 7.5]? The gift of his own free will, of course, in conjunction

⁶⁶ Cf. Pelagius, *leg diu* 4 (PL 30: 109): 'Non nobis blandiri debemus in factis iussorum, si in prohibitorum transgressionem peccemus, cum transgressionis crimen benefacti meritum tollat.'

⁶⁷ Pelagius, *Dem* 14 (PL 33: 1108–9). The Sicilian would doubtless not be amused: see *mal doct* 18.3 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 103–4). But Pelagius is no less capable of contrasting the woes of this life—and even the glories of this life—with the heavenly joys that await the faithful; see *leg diu* 6 (PL 30: 111–12).

⁶⁸ Cf. Pelagius, *Dem* 1, 10, 14, 17 (PL 33: 1099, 1106–07, 1109, 1110–11). So, too, *uirg. passim*, but see esp. 4, 12, and 19 (CSEL 1: 229, 241, 250)—this virgin's glory is to be as dazzling as the hereditary dignity of Demetrias.

⁶⁹ Pelagius, *Dem* 8 (PL 33: 1104–5); cf. *leg diu* 8 (PL 30: 113–14), *exp Rom.* 7:15–24 (ed. Souter [1926]: 58–60); Sicilian Anonymous, *mal doct* 4.2 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 71–2) and *diu* 1.1 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 25). See Greshake (1972): 88–93.

⁷⁰ Pelagius, *Dem* 4 (PL 33: 1101–2): 'Est enim, inquam, in animis nostris naturalis quaedam, ut ita dixerim, sanctitas, quae uelut in arce animi praesidens, exercet mali bonique iudicium; et ut honestis rectisque actibus fauet, ita sinistra opera condemnat, atque ad conscientiae testimonium diuersas partes domestica quadam lege diiudicat: nec ullo prorsus ingenio, aut fucato aliquo argumentorum colore decipit; ipsis nos cogitationibus, fidelissimis et integerrimis sane testibus, aut arguit, aut defendit.' Cf. Pelagius, *leg diu* 2 (PL 30: 107): 'the whole citadel of the heart.'

⁷¹ Cf. Pelagius, *Dem* 2 (PL 33: 1100) and *leg diu* 3 (PL 30: 107–8).

with which not only the state of being either married or unmarried is given to them, but even the choice of good and evil, life and death, as Scripture says: 'Before a man is good and evil, life and death; what pleases him, will be given to him' [Eccles. 15:18].⁷²

As Gisbert Greshake has perceptively observed, Pelagius is able to integrate his accounts of creation and salvation at just this point. Pelagius' claims about the goodness of the will as a product of divine creation, which he associates with the Logos, dovetail his message about the salvific work accomplished by Christ, the Incarnate Logos.⁷³ And yet, Pelagius does not allow that God could impinge upon the free operation of the will. He even explains Rom. 8:32 ('He who did not even spare His Son') by saying, 'He allowed Him to be handed over, so that He might preserve liberty of will for those who handed Him over and show us an example of patience.'⁷⁴ Even at the heart of the central Christian mystery, then, Pelagius finds evidence of God respecting, even deferring to, human freedom. Rees expressed the matter concisely: 'His whole teaching of grace was constructed around the central premise of the absolute freedom of man's will when faced with a choice between good and evil, a freedom given to man by God but, once given, not subject to God's interference.'⁷⁵

The will and decision-making

By the same token, Pelagius' reference to the 'deliberation of the will' is highly unusual.⁷⁶ Generally, Pelagians show no interest in what the Greek Fathers would discuss as the 'deliberative' or '*gnomic* will'.⁷⁷ In

⁷² Sicilian Anonymus, *cast* 10.5 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 142).

⁷³ See Greshake (1972): 121–4.

⁷⁴ Pelagius, *exp* Rom. 8:32 (ed. Souter [1926]: 69). ⁷⁵ Rees (1998): 1: 34.

⁷⁶ Pelagius, *nat* ap. Augustine, *nat et gr* 46.54 (CSEL 60: 272): 'Voluntatis enim arbitrio ac deliberatione priuatur, quidquid naturali necessitate constringitur.'

⁷⁷ For Athanasius, *def* 2 (PG 28: 540), and Anastasius of Sinai, *hod* 2 (PG 89: 61–5), *thelēmata gnōmika* account for why some people become farmers and others become sailors, why some sleep and others do not, etc.: in general, they account for questions of how one chooses to live. Maximus, *Pyrr* (PG 91: 308–9), takes the question from that point and develops the term so that it refers primarily to the deliberation such choices entail. John of Damascus takes this as normative and makes Maximus' stipulation the touchstone for 'speaking properly' about Christ (*κυριολέκτεω*): *fid* 3.14 (PG 94: 1044–5), cf. *uolunt* 20 (PG 95: 152).

this tradition, the will takes an active role in making decisions, not least because sin occludes human moral vision and such decisions are consequently necessary.⁷⁸ For the Pelagians, this perspective is simply not available: first, because they insist that the conscience is intact and indeed is the touchstone of moral behaviour;⁷⁹ second, because the will merely enacts the decisions made by the rational soul and so cannot be thought to ‘deliberate’ or otherwise involve itself in the process.

The Pelagians’ references to the will thus typically dissociate it from deliberation and decision-making and allocate those functions to reason. Pelagius himself does this in propounding the Christian life to Demetrias. He writes: ‘For the adornment of the rational soul is built on this judgement of twin paths, on this freedom of both parts. Herein, I say, consists all the honour of our nature, herein the dignity.’⁸⁰ Glory redounds to the rational soul when the will functions properly, because one’s will is directed by one’s reasoning. Pelagius thus subordinates will to reason.⁸¹ The will simply functions as reason dictates. Ambrose of Chalcedon likewise states very clearly: ‘It is therefore impious to say that God does not wish us to be sinless; that he not appear the author of our wickedness, it remains for us to confess that we are sinners now, not because we cannot avoid sin, but because *we are unwilling to do so* due to our negligence.’⁸²

⁷⁸ See Maximus, *op* 3 (PL 91: 45–56); cf. Basil of Seleucia, s. 4.1, 4.3 (PG 85.64), where he affirms that the will can become sick. For further discussion of Maximus, see Louth (1996): 59–62.

⁷⁹ Pelagius, *Dem* 4 (PL 33: 1101): ‘Age iam ad animae nostrae secreta ueniamus. Seipsum unusquisque attentius respiciat: interrogemus quid de hoc sentient propriae cogitationes; ferat sententiam de naturae bono ipsa conscientia; instruamur domestico magisterio animi, et mentis bona non aliunde magis quaeque, quam ab ipsa mente, discamus.’ Cf. *exp* Rom. 2:12, 2: 15, 5:14 (ed. Souter [1926]: 22, 23, 46): the conscience is Paul’s ‘lex naturae’.

⁸⁰ Pelagius, *Dem* 3 (PL 33: 1100); cf. *exp* 2 Cor. 8:11 (ed. Souter [1926]: 276): ‘Complete what you voluntarily began: for an end is expected for every good work, since, just as no deed is accomplished by the unwilling, the will is also fruitless to those who have it without doing anything.’ Note that Pelagius talks about the person who is (or should be) acting, not the will.

⁸¹ Pelagius, *Dem* 3 (PL 33: 1101).

⁸² Ambrose of Chalcedon, *exp fid Cath* (PLS 1: 1685): ‘Unde quia impium est dicere deum nolle ut simus sine peccato; ne auctor uideatur nostrae malitiae, superest ut fateamur quia peccatores ideo sumus, non quia non possumus sed quia *nolumus* uitare peccatum per negligentiam nostram’ (author’s emphasis).

The only proviso to be added is that the Sicilian Anonymous, that Archpelagian, recognized that natural limitations can thwart a person's will. By way of example, he adduces a number of physical limitations to the pursuit of lust: 'Immune to and free from all these necessities is chastity, which nature furnished with such strong protection that it is preserved even when its possessor is unwilling.'⁸³ Because sin is unnatural, this is largely incidental; but it does remind us that what was at stake during the debates was not the intellectual satisfaction of having a more thorough system than one's opponent—it was a way of making sense of life.

Because the will follows reason without hindrance, praise and reproof are appropriate to reason, not to will. Habits can be bad, and so can decisions, but the will itself is a marvel: even when it is put to bad use, it is good.⁸⁴ This means that, if a Pelagian were to speak strictly, he would never upbraid someone for having a bad will, but rather for putting his (necessarily good) will to bad use. The will is therefore unimpeachable with respect to sin and indefectible with respect to its operation. As we have seen, for a person to commit a sinful act, that act must issue from the will. But the will is not tainted in the process; to indulge in personification, the will is only doing its job.

Although the Stoic overtones are patent, some examples are in order.⁸⁵ Seneca explains the aetiology of right actions by stating that they proceed from right will, which proceeds from the right habit of mind, which in turn proceeds from living one's whole life in accordance with the laws;⁸⁶ and this allows us to appreciate his extraordinarily simple injunction to Lucilius: 'What do you need to be good?

⁸³ Sicilian Anonymous, *cast* 3.6 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 126).

⁸⁴ Sicilian Anonymous, *cast* 3.6 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 126): 'Quod cum ita sit, hoc quoque ipsum quod etiam mala facere possumus, bonum est: bonum, inquam, quia boni partem meliorem facit.'

⁸⁵ For a general discussion of will according to the Stoics, see Dihle (1982): 60–5 and Rist (1969): 219–32. It also bears mentioning that Cicero, *fat* 39 (von Arnim [1903–24]: 2: 974), and Augustine, *ciu Dei* 5.10 (von Arnim [1903–24]: 2: 291), observe that the Stoics build a hedge about the will in their discussion of fate, despite their general affirmation of fate, so as to keep it from impinging upon the free operation of the will; and that the Pelagian call for utter sinlessness echoes the Stoic equalizing of all sins (von Arnim [1903–24]: 3: 528–33); see further Rist (1969): 81–96.

⁸⁶ Seneca, *ep* 95.57 (von Arnim [1903–24]: 3: 517).

Will it.⁸⁷ Diogenes Laërtius delineates a marvellously straightforward Stoic view of doing one's duty that presumes the choices made by reason are enacted with no further ado.⁸⁸ We also read that, according to the Stoics, '*technê* and *aretê*' account for virtue and that 'all skill is a system of contemplations exercised jointly: reason follows contemplations; custom follows joint exercise'.⁸⁹ The characteristic Pelagian insistence on the autonomy and integrity of the will fits comfortably into this tradition.

... a Deo emancipatus homo est

Pelagius' insistence on maintaining the sovereignty of the will eventually brought him into conflict with Augustine and others. What Augustine found so unacceptable is most spectacularly evident when Julian, in a perfectly natural development of the Pelagian view, maintains that by free will Christians are 'emancipated from God'.⁹⁰ It is not at all plausible to think that Julian meant to suggest that Christians are 'emancipated *by* God' from sin. For in the Roman legal tradition, one is not emancipated by another from some third party; emancipation is instead the process whereby the *paterfamilias* grants autonomy to one of his dependants.⁹¹ This is consistent with Pelagius' emphasis on the sovereignty of human will.⁹² Although other

⁸⁷ Seneca, *ep* 80.4 (ed. Gummere [1917–25]: 2: 214): 'Quid tibi opus est, ut bonus sis? uelle.'

⁸⁸ Diogenes Laërtius 7.108 (von Arnim [1903–24]: 3: 495).

⁸⁹ Von Arnim (1903–24): 3: 214.

⁹⁰ Julian, ap. Augustine, *C Iul imp.* 1.78 (CSEL 85: 93): 'Libertas arbitrii, qua a deo emancipatus homo est, in ammittendi peccati et abstinendi a peccato possibilitate consistit.' Cf. *ibid.* 5.28, 6.18 (PL 45: 1466–7, 1541).

⁹¹ The sources for this practice are as follows: 1) *Leges XII tabularum* 4.2 (ed. Warmington [1938]: 442): 'Si pater filium ter venunduit, filius a patre liber esto.' 2) Ulpian, *fr* 10.1 (ed. Warmington [1938]: 440–2): 'Liberi parentum potestate liberantur emancipatione, id est si posteaquam mancipati fuerint manumissi sint. Sed filius quidem ter mancipatus ter manumissus *sui iuris fit*' (author's emphasis); 3) Gaius, *inst* 1.132–4 (ed. Reinach [1950]: 25–6), who uses the similar phrase '*sui iuris efficiatur*' to describe the freedom this ritual confers. Boethius knows this practice (*Com top Cic* [PL 64: 1075]), as does Isidore of Seville (*Etym* 5.17 [PL 82: 355]).

⁹² Pelagius anticipates Julian by maintaining that our ability to choose makes us '*sui iuris*' (*Dem.* 4 [PL 33: 1101]). Therefore, even granting the excellent distinction of the *pelagisch* from the *pelagianisch*, Greshake (1972) 65–6 is wrong in insisting that emancipation from God does not follow human freedom according to *pelagisch* thought.

Christian authors misappropriate the term *emancipatio* to talk of Christ liberating Christians from sin,⁹³ it is entirely in line with the trajectory of Julian's argument to interpret his use of the term as faithfully preserving its traditional meaning. In other words, Julian means that God sets us free from Himself so that God's will does not impinge upon our will. However bold Julian's statement of it may appear, this is as characteristically and unexceptionally Pelagian a belief as one could hope to find.⁹⁴ This kind of independence from God that humans enjoy is yet another reason for the Pelagians to insist on the justice of God's judgement.

The influence of Origen and Sextus

The centrality of just judgement for Pelagius' thought is not unusual for his time. Divine judgement plays a central role in Origen's theology, for instance. This appears in Rufinus' translation of *On first principles*.⁹⁵ It has been amply demonstrated that Pelagius knew and used Rufinus' translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*.⁹⁶ That link is so close that one modern translator of Rufinus–Origen has felt the need to defend the earlier commentary from anachronistically Pelagian interpretations.⁹⁷ That such a defence is timely is a

⁹³ e.g. Pacian of Barcelona (fl. 360–90) effortlessly conflates *liberatio* and *emancipatio*, e.g. at *paen* 3.3 (SC 410: 122): 'His igitur nos omnibus multisque praeterea carnalibus uitiiis, ut citius ad destinata quisque perueniat, sanguis Domini liberauit, redemptos a seruitute legis et libertate fidei emancipatos'; see also Tertullian, *fug* 12 (PL 2: 114) and cf. *pud* 21 (PL 2: 1036); Prudentius, *cath* 7.184 (PL 59: 854), cf. *peri* 5.345 (PL 60: 398). The Vulgate of St Paul provides a helpful contrast at Rom. 8:1–2: 'There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ has set me free [*liberauit me*] from the law of sin and death.' Meanwhile, Ambrose of Milan uses *emancipatio* accurately in its technical sense at *fid* 92 (PL 16: 635).

⁹⁴ It is in this context that Brown noted, not without reason, that 'the Pelagian is contemptuous of babies'—because they have no operative will and, in terms of the passage that we have just been considering, are thus 'unemancipated' from God. Pelagius, Caelestius, Julian, and the Sicilian placed a premium on spiritual maturity. This is another facet of their insistence on responsibility. Brown contrasts the Pelagian ideal of autonomy implicit in being 'emancipated from God' to the Augustinian ideal of dependence implicit in being children of God.

⁹⁵ e.g. Origen, *prin* 2.9.5–8 (SC 252: 360–72).

⁹⁶ Smith (1918–19).

⁹⁷ See Scheck (2001): 1–48.

tribute to Jerome's success in tarring Pelagius with the Origenist brush.⁹⁸ But just because a notorious controversialist made the accusation is no reason to rule it out of court and we should consider the possibility that more than hostility motivated Jerome's claims.

Pelagius' attitude towards Origenism is complex. He used Rufinus' translations, but, even though he was therefore possibly exposed to an expurgated version of Origen's teaching, Pelagius had little patience with the more extravagant claims associated with the great Alexandrian theologian. For example, he dismissed the Origenian interpretation of Eph. 1:4 ('He chose us for Himself before the foundation of the world')—paraphrased as 'the souls in heaven before they were separated'⁹⁹—as 'what certain heretics dreamed up'.¹⁰⁰ R. F. Evans plausibly suggested that Pelagius' *De natura* was aimed at Jerome's latent Origenist inclinations (that is, rather than at Augustine).¹⁰¹ Pelagius' barbed remarks obviously show he was critical of some ostensibly Origenian beliefs, but the accuracy with which he makes his point also shows that he was capable of finding his way round Origenian theology.¹⁰²

It was also by Rufinus' translation that Pelagius came to know the *Sentences* of Sextus,¹⁰³ a handbook of Christian—or Christianized—

⁹⁸ Brown (1972c); Duval (1970); Evans (1968b).

⁹⁹ Cf. Origen, *prin* 3.5.4 (SC 269: 226), *Clo* 19.22.5.149 (SC 290: 138); and the exegetically wayward young Jerome at *CEph* 1.4 (PL 26: 446–8)—on which, see Schatkin (1970). Rufinus and Pelagius were well aware of Jerome's indebtedness to Origen in this commentary and, when Jerome unwisely threw down the gauntlet (*ep* 84.2 (ed. Labourt [1949–54]: 4: 125–6)), each of them in turn took it up (Rufinus, *c Hier* 1.22–44 (CCL 20: 56–80)). For an excellent discussion, see Evans (1968b): 6–25.

¹⁰⁰ Pelagius, *exp* Eph. 1:4 (ed. Souter [1926]: 345).

¹⁰¹ Evans (1968b): 24–5.

¹⁰² Cf. Pelagius, *exp* Rom. 11:24 (Souter [1926]: 90): 'Quia iam olim patres eorum, naturale obliti legem, degenerauerant a natura, et per successiones peccandi, consuetudine permanente, quasi naturaliter amari et infructuosi esse coeperant.' It is difficult to imagine Origen, Rufinus, or Evagrius finding anything objectionable in that explanation—particularly since Pelagius does not fix the identity of the 'fathers' in question, this sounds a lot like a mythical account of sin. Rufinus of Syria also based his denunciations of Origen on at least a topical knowledge of the Alexandrian's writings; see *fid* 17 (against the necessity of creation); 20 (against the *apokatastasis*); 21 (against astral souls); 22 (against Origenian allegory); 27 and 36 (against double creation); and Sr Miller's notes, *ad loc*, in Miller (1964).

¹⁰³ See Evans (1968b): 43–65.

maxims that were happily compatible with Pelagius' teaching and had the not incidental benefit of being attributed to a remote and practically legendary pope. (As a curious aside, we find that in a ninth or tenth century MS in the Bibliotheca Vaticana, the Pelagian treatises *On wealth*, *On bad teachers*, and *On chastity* are similarly attributed to 'St Sextus, Pope and martyr'.)¹⁰⁴ Pelagius could (and sometimes did)¹⁰⁵ appeal to Sextus' *Sentences* for his views on sin¹⁰⁶ and sinlessness,¹⁰⁷ for the importance of reality over appearance in ethics,¹⁰⁸ for the priority of doing works over teaching others,¹⁰⁹ for the relative value of marriage,¹¹⁰ and for a general affirmation of individual responsibility and capability with respect to spiritual and ethical improvement.¹¹¹ (The Sicilian, for his part, would surely have been gratified by the indications in the *Sentences* that wealth is an impediment to salvation.)¹¹² Pelagius would have therefore had recourse to Rufinus' translations, and been shaped by them at least in some measure by the Origenian tradition.¹¹³

God's just judgement

Pelagius could shear off the controversial cosmic dimensions of Origen's teaching about judgement and still remind his audience of the awesome power of God's sovereign judgement with the unerring skill of a consummate preacher.¹¹⁴ God judges accurately, and God's

¹⁰⁴ The MS in question is *Vat. lat.* 3834; see Caspari (1964): 227–30, 329–35.

¹⁰⁵ According to Augustine, *nat et grat* 64.77 (CSEL 60: 291), Pelagius cited *Ench Sex* 36, 46, and 60 (ed. H. Chadwick [1959]: 17, 19). In this passage, Augustine accepted the author as 'beatissimus Xystus Romanae ecclesiae episcopus et domini martyr', though he later expressly reversed his attribution: *retr* 2.42.68 (CSEL 36: 180): 'sed postea legi Sexti philosophi esse, non Xysti christiani'.

¹⁰⁶ *Ench Sex* 12 (ed. H. Chadwick [1959]: 13).

¹⁰⁷ *Ench Sex* 8, 36, 60 (ed. H. Chadwick [1959]: 13, 17, 19).

¹⁰⁸ *Ench Sex* 64, 189 (ed. H. Chadwick [1959]: 21, 35).

¹⁰⁹ *Ench Sex* 356, 359, 368, 383 (ed. H. Chadwick [1959]: 53, 55, 57).

¹¹⁰ *Ench Sex* 230a–b (ed. H. Chadwick [1959]: 39).

¹¹¹ *Ench Sex* 255, 306 (ed. H. Chadwick [1959]: 41, 47).

¹¹² *Ench Sex* 193, 227 (ed. H. Chadwick [1959]: 35, 39).

¹¹³ On Pelagius' use of Origen's writings via Rufinus, see Bohlin (1957): 65–9, 77–103.

¹¹⁴ Pelagius dedicates practically the whole of *uit chr* to preaching about God's judgement.

judgements are unsparing, as Pelagius is capable of making fearfully clear: ‘Let no one, I say, delude or deceive himself—God does not love the wicked, God does not love the sinner, does not love the unjust, the greedy, the cruel or the impious.’¹¹⁵ Fear, according to the Sicilian, is a legitimate and powerful motivating force for Christians.¹¹⁶ Their shared realization of God’s mighty and terrifying power gives additional urgency to Pelagius’ and the Sicilian’s cry for ‘authentic Christianity’. Nothing less will do. Failure, the Pelagians would be sure that we understand, is the sole responsibility of the one who fails; to suggest otherwise is to endorse fatalism. As we have just observed, the Pelagians bolstered this argument with a robust affirmation of the will’s capacity to act without interference. This is elegantly summarized with Julian’s claim that

we confess free will to be an ample witness to divine fairness, such that, at the time when each of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive recompense according to whatever we did in the body, whether good or evil, God is seen never to judge unjustly; He never holds a sin against anyone unless he who is punished for it could have also avoided it.¹¹⁷

Their preaching is therefore underwritten by a direct, simple, and intuitive assessment of how the will functions—one that Cassian repeatedly violates.

3 HOW THE WILL DYSFUNCTIONS ACCORDING TO CASSIAN’S MONASTIC WORKS

We do not know much about Cassian’s circumstances in Gaul, but Gennadius indicates that he founded two monastic establishments in Marseilles.¹¹⁸ Prosper’s anxiety about the dissemination of suspicious

¹¹⁵ Pelagius, *uit chr* 4 (PL 50: 388); cf. *leg diu* 7.2 (PL 30: 112–13); and *exp Rom.* 2:3–4, 8:15, 13:4 (ed. Souter [1926]: 19–20, 64, 102).

¹¹⁶ Sicilian Anonymous, *mal doct* 4.1, 5.5, 13.1–2, 14.5–16.3, 17.1–2, 19.2, 24.2–3 (ed. Caspari [1964]: 71, 74, 90–1, 93–6, 100–2, 104–5, 112–13).

¹¹⁷ Julian *ap. Augustine*, *c Iul imp* 3.107.1 (CSEL 85: 427).

¹¹⁸ Gennadius, *uir inl* 61 (PL 58: 1095): ‘[Cassianus] apud Massiliam presbyter condidit duo monasteria, id est, uirorum et mulierum, quae usque hodie extant.’

ideas by Cassian also provides some information: Cassian was a respected member of the Christian scene and, though we may presume that his monastery was the locus for his activities, his teachings must have reached lay Christians.¹¹⁹ It was only when he received the commission to pen a treatise against Nestorius that Cassian addressed his writings to the Christian world at large. Indeed, there is only slight evidence from the earlier works of what Cassian thought about secular Christians.¹²⁰ His early writings do not show particular thought for secular Christians, nor do they indicate an anticipated secular readership. In short, Cassian's earlier writings were written for the benefit of a select, monastic audience and they say very little either to or about secular Christians in general.

Here, the contrast to Pelagius could hardly be greater. Pelagianism, so far as we know about its social context, was a secular movement. To be sure, Pelagius and company promoted asceticism. But there is no evidence of any Pelagians founding monasteries or convents. Pelagius is traditionally called a monk,¹²¹ and I do not know of any reasons to doubt this, but the reforms he urged were designed to bolster the ascetic, spiritual, and moral lives of secular Christians. Pelagius did not preach as a monk to monks. He preached to Demetrias Anicia, to Celantia the married lady, and others.

These factors need to be borne in mind when we compare his message to Cassian's so that extraneous factors do not conflate the results of the comparison. Despite the need to account for differences that stem from the exigencies of addressing different audiences, it is still possible to make a valid comparison and to ensure that those differences do not distort the comparison. This is because the Pelagians explicitly predicated their message on the belief that the same demands apply to all Christians. Because the Pelagians claimed their

¹¹⁹ Cf. Prosper, *c. Conl* 1.1 (PL 51: 215): 'Siquidem habentes speciem pietatis in studio, cuius uirtutem diffitentur in sensu, trahunt ad se multos ineruditos, et non habentia spirituum discretionem corda conturbant . . . Non ergo negligendum est hoc malum, quod ab occultis paruisque seminibus augetur quotidie, et ab ortu suo latius longiusque distenditur'. The hidden seeds are sprouting from monasteries, not least Cassian's: *ibid.* 2.1 (PL 51: 217–18).

¹²⁰ e.g. at *conl* 21.33.2–4, Cassian addresses sex in marriage.

¹²¹ e.g. Augustine, *gest. Pel* 19.43 (CSEL 42: 98): 'His recitatis synodus dixit: "quid ad haec quae lecta sunt capitula dicit praesens Pelagius monachus?"' This is also how Photius describes Pelagius: *cod* 53 (ed. Henry [1959–91]: 42).

message had universal application, we can take Pelagianism as the basis for our comparison.

Pelagian preaching presupposes the autonomous and indefectible operation of the will and this presupposition is an integral part of the Pelagian message such that it cannot be called into question without compromising the platform on which the message is based. It will therefore be convenient for us now to consider what Cassian teaches about the will. In particular, we will want to assess what Cassian says about God's interaction with the will.

The problems of the wilful monk

Beginning with Cassian's *Institutes*, we find at once that he espouses a view of the will and of willing that is more complicated than that presupposed by the Pelagian message. In the context of coenobitic life, which is the end to which Cassian's *Institutes* contribute, wilful monks are a serious problem and so he devotes considerable attention to analysing the will, treating the corrupt will, and ultimately subordinating even the good will to the needs of the community and chiefly to the will of God. (It would be axiomatic for Cassian there is and can be no conflict between the legitimate needs of the community and the will of God, who teaches that we are to love God above all and our neighbours as ourselves.) It is therefore significant that Cassian begins his discussion of prayer—the first practical and theological topic he discusses—by asserting the foundation of monasticism in the tradition of the elders with an unflattering contrast to fancies of individual will.¹²²

In placing the will to the fore, Cassian has already departed from the style of Pelagianism in which the will is generally assumed to operate without ado. But this is merely the initial departure. What Cassian is prepared to find, and what he consequently prepares his readers to find, is that the will can be ineffectual,¹²³ inadequate to the necessities

¹²² Cassian, *inst* 2.3; note, too, his similarly harsh denunciation of the will of Nestorius, who capriciously leads his flock astray by now endorsing, now rejecting the Creed: *inc* 6.10.6.

¹²³ Cf. Cassian, *inst* 5.22.

preliminary to salvation,¹²⁴ and even corrupt and wicked.¹²⁵ From time to time, he talks of temptations like avarice as ‘the will to possess’¹²⁶—which opens up a possibility of criticizing the will that is not present for Pelagians. Cassian even allows for condemning sins where the will is present but the opportunity wanting.¹²⁷ All this is preliminary evidence that Cassian understands the will to be insufficient for spiritual progress and in fact to be often bankrupt.

Cassian traces these problems back to the initial and archetypal sin of pride. All the conditions he has described are advanced cases of the will’s pathology, which tellingly began when man ‘believed himself capable of attaining the glory of the Godhead by his *freedom of will* and hard work’.¹²⁸ Cassian proposes radical measures to deal with this problem. The renunciant must conquer his will, overcome it, even kill it.¹²⁹

Christ’s will and the monastic will

More than this, though, Cassian says the will must be crucified—a deeply resonant metaphor, because Cassian identifies Christ’s abrogation of his will as part of the Incarnation.¹³⁰ Such dramatic

¹²⁴ Cassian, *inst* 12.4.2: ‘et ob hoc elatus, tamquam qui ad perseuerantiam puritatis huius diuino non egeret auxilio, Deo se similem iudicauit, utpote qui nullius indigeret quemadmodum Deus, *liberi scilicet arbitrii facultate confisus*, per illam credens adfluenter sibimet omnia subpeditari, quae ad consummationem uirtutum uel perennitatem summae beatitudinis pertinerent’ (author’s emphasis); cf. 12.10, 12.11.2–3; *conl* 9.7.1–2, 10.13.1.

¹²⁵ Cassian, *inst* 7.3.2 (‘malae uoluntatis arbitrio’), 7.5 (‘corruptae ac malae uoluntatis arbitrio’), *conl* 12.2.4, 17.16.2, 24.23.1. Theodore says at *conl* 6.16.1 that the fallen angels also have corrupt wills; cf. *conl* 8.6.

¹²⁶ Cassian, *inst* 7.21 (‘uoluntas possidendi’), cf. 7.25 (‘reseruandi uoluntas’), 7.31 (‘uoluntas ultionis’); *conl* 5.4.4.

¹²⁷ Cassian, *inst* 7.22, cf. 8.20.3; *conl* 5.7.1, 16.18.1. He also suggests that a person can be commended for a good will even if the results of his actions are bad, *conl* 17.12.3, 17.17.5.

¹²⁸ Cassian, *inst* 12.5: ‘Dum enim gloriam deitatis arbitrii libertate et industria sua creditit se posse conquirere, etiam illam perdidit, quam adeptus fuerat gratia conditoris.’

¹²⁹ Cassian, *inst* 4.8, 4.39, 4.43; *conl* 7.6.1, 24.5.2, 24.26.13.

¹³⁰ Cassian, *inst* 4.34–5; cf. 3.3.6: Christ is capable of laying down His life willingly because His life is characterized by renouncing His own will in obedience to the Father. See also *conl* 3.4.10, 16.6.4, 18.7.7, 19.6.6, 19.8.3, 24.23.4, 24.26.14.

measures are needed in order to restore control over one's will so that, in accordance with the mystery of the Incarnation, one can subordinate one's own will and desires for the good of oneself and of others.¹³¹ Once the will has been remanded to the control of the renunciant, the renunciant can offer 'voluntary' sacrifices, which are especially pleasing to God, as David testifies (Pss. 54:6, 119:108).¹³² Once more, the pre-eminent exemplar is Christ himself.¹³³

From this point in spiritual maturation, people can meaningfully be said to will their salvation,¹³⁴ because their will has been assimilated to God's will; whereas before, there is an abiding danger that they do not in fact will for salvation, but instead for some arbitrary satisfaction.¹³⁵ This is the pre-eminent lesson of life in the monastery, which novices must learn if they are to progress in Christian monasticism.¹³⁶ The contrast between, on the one hand, voluntarily sacrificing oneself and, on the other hand, voluntarily allowing oneself to be dominated by passions,¹³⁷ and so handing oneself over to Satan,¹³⁸ gives us a sense for the span that separates a healthy will from a corrupt will. In what is perhaps evidence of the greatest success according to this way of thinking, Cassian relates the valediction of a dying monk: *numquam meam feci uoluntatem*.¹³⁹ This anecdote makes it clear that Cassian takes a very strong line on Phil. 2:13: God does indeed work in us the willing.¹⁴⁰ This precludes pride, but it also enabled the humble monk to say truthfully at the end of his days that he had not done his own will: for he had done God's will.¹⁴¹ This is the mark of perfection.¹⁴²

¹³¹ Cf. Cassian, *inst* 5.23. Contrast to this Abba Joseph's denunciation of those who prefer their own will to their brothers' refreshment: *conl* 17.23. His discussion of friendship also turns on unanimity of will: *conl* 16.3.2,4-5, 16.5-6.1, 16.23.1.

¹³² Cassian, *inst* 3.2, some examples of which include extra prayers and study (2.6), fasting (5.24), and indeed the offering of the good will itself (12.14.2); cf. *conl* 12.12.4, 21.3, 21.29.2, 21.30.2-3, 21.33.6-7, 24.23.2, 24.26.11.

¹³³ Cassian, *inst* 3.3.6.

¹³⁴ Cf. Cassian, *inst* 10.10, 11.4; *conl* 11.12.1, 12.15.1; from this stage, a person can also have a praiseworthy will: cf. *conl* 1.10.5, 1.14.9.

¹³⁵ Cassian, *conl* 21.14.5, cf. 24.9.1.

¹³⁶ Cf. Cassian, *conl* 18.7.3-4, 24.26.14.

¹³⁷ Cassian, *inst* 5.22.

¹³⁸ Cassian, *inst* 2.16, *conl* 7.8.3.

¹³⁹ Cassian, *inst* 5.28, cf. 12.32.2.

¹⁴⁰ Cassian, *inst* 12.9-10; cf. *conl* 3.14-15.4. Note also Cassian's use of Rom. 9:16: *conl* 4.5.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Cassian, *conl* 9.20, 9.34.8-9.

¹⁴² Cf. Cassian, *conl* 11.8.2-3.

Cassian's early anti-Pelagian polemic

The high-water mark of Cassian's early discussion about the will is *inst* 12.18. Here, we find Cassian expansively working out his account of what God does for our salvation that elaborates on earlier, almost furtive remarks about Christ's active involvement in the extirpation of vice.¹⁴³ But whereas the relevant implications have to be teased out of those remarks, this paragraph marks a complete and decisive rejection of Pelagian values, as we shall see. First, it is convenient to provide that passage:

Let us thank Him not only for these [deeds], that He made us rational or gave us the power of free will or bestowed on us the grace of baptism or granted the knowledge and assistance of the law. Let us also thank Him for these which are conferred on us by His daily providence, namely, that He free us from the plots of the adversaries, cooperates on our behalf so we can suppress the vices of the flesh, protects us even when we do not know it from dangers, keeps us from falling into sin, helps and enlightens us so we are able to recognize and understand this very help of ours (which some want to be understood as nothing other than the law); that we are secretly made contrite at His inspiration for our negligent and delinquent acts, we are reproved by the most healing condescension of His visitation, we are drawn to salvation by Him even when we are unwilling sometimes, since lastly He redirects our very free will, which is readily inclined to vice, to better moral performance [*frugem*] and twists it towards the path of virtue by the prompting of His visitation.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ e.g. Christ is proactive in his desire for our salvation, even 'pulling out the occasions of wrath from our hearts by the roots' (*inst* 8.14).

¹⁴⁴ Cassian, *inst* 12.18: 'Non solum pro his ei gratias referentes, quod uel rationabiles nos condidit uel liberi arbitrii potestate donauit uel baptismi largitus est gratiam uel scientiam legis adiutoriumque concessit, sed etiam pro his, quae erga nos cotidiana eius prouidentia conferuntur, quod scilicet aduersariorum nos insidiis liberat, quod cooperatur in nobis, ut carnis uitia superare possimus, quod a periculis nos etiam ignorantes protegit, quod a lapsu peccati communit, quod adiuuat nos et inluminat, ut ipsum adiutorium nostrum, quod non aliud quidam interpretari uolunt quam legem, intellegere et agnoscere ualeamus, quod pro neglegentiis delictisque nostris eius inspiratione latenter conpungimur, quod dignatione eius uisitati saluberrime castigamur, quod ab eo nonnumquam etiam inuiti trahimur ad salutem, postremo quia ipsum liberum arbitrium nostrum, quod procliuius fertur ad uitia, ad meliorem dirigit frugem et ad uirtutum uiam instigationis suae uisitatione contorquet.' Cf. *conl* 13.7.3–8.1, 13.9.1, 13.17.1–2, 13.18.2–3.

This paragraph is characteristic of Cassian's early thought and of his later thought as well. There is not much need for intellectual development to account for the author of this passage writing the famous (or notorious) *Conference* 13. Already we find here, amongst the numerous ways God protects us, an assertion that God cooperates with us. Typical, also, is Cassian's effort to retain both the priority of God's gracious dealings with us and the responsibility that we all bear for our actions. To maintain such a position, Cassian must be quite clear that God does not act upon us in such a way as to jeopardize our responsibility for our actions. Pelagius could entertain all this, if he were in an expansive mood, though probably the Sicilian would have balked at the call for thankfulness at being preserved from we know not what. (That does have a simpering ring to it, after all.)¹⁴⁵ But Cassian has more to say. He would have us thank God for converting our wills, and thus drawing us, who had been unwilling, to salvation. In saying this, Cassian intensifies his earlier account both of the will's inconstancy and of God's ability to intervene.¹⁴⁶

And he does so in a polemic way. About halfway through, Cassian's catalogue of blessings shifts abruptly from using active, third-person singular verbs to describe God's actions (*condidit, donauit, largitus est, concessit, liberat, cooperatur, protegit, communit, adiuuat et illuminat*) to using passive, first-person plural verbs (*conpungimur, castigamur, trahimur*). This shift draws our attention to the last way God acts upon us (before the first way we are acted upon by God), which is this: God 'helps and enlightens us so we are able to recognize and understand this very help of ours (which some want to be understood as nothing other than the law)'. All that follows expands on this by explaining how God acts internally upon us. But the force of the parenthetical remark is distinctly anti-Pelagian and it recalls Augustine's exasperated complaint that the Pelagians 'are unwilling for grace to appear to be anything but the law'.¹⁴⁷ Now because in the

¹⁴⁵ But when it next occurs, the context is altogether heroic: Cassian, *conl* 13.14.9.

¹⁴⁶ Codina (1966): 69 notes: 'Solo Dios puede unirse intimamente con el alma, ya que solo Dios es incorpóreo... Solo la Trinidad puede penetrar el alma, no solo abarcarla y ceñirla, sino infundirse e introducirse en ella.' This observation can help us understand how Cassian understood God's transformation of the will to take place.

¹⁴⁷ Augustine, *c duas epp Pel* 4.11.30 (CSEL 60: 563): 'gratiam, quam diuersis locutionibus Pelagiani nolunt nisi legem uideri'; cf. *grat Chr* 1.10.11 (CSEL 42: 133-5). Alard de Gazet (PL 49: 455) noted this similarity.

Institutes Cassian twice addresses himself to Bishop Castor, Petschenig set the probable dates of composition to c.419–26;¹⁴⁸ this means that the first salvos in the controversy between Pelagius and Jerome had been fired long since and that the battle between Augustine and the Pelagians was really heating up when Cassian wrote this chapter. So Cassian himself enters the fray with this thinly veiled rejection of Pelagianism. He follows this up with a toothed analysis of God's grace, and the teeth are Cassian's firm declaration that the will is readily disposed to vice and his affirmation that God is capable of interfering with the operation of the will. The foregoing examination of Pelagian theology enables us to appreciate how diametrically opposed these propositions are to the fundamental tenets of Pelagian morality.

Diversity in Catholic opposition to Pelagius

Before this study advances to Cassian's other works, a word of caution is appropriate. We have observed that Cassian's dismissive remark fits the contemporary debate between Pelagius and the Pelagians on the one hand, and Augustine and Jerome on the other. Force of scholarly habit might dispose us now to align Cassian to Augustinianism and measure him by those standards; but any such inclination should be resisted. Scholars have corrected the slovenly habit of thinking of Pelagianism as a theological monolith, citing the diversity of views comprehended within the Pelagian movement. For similar reasons, we should be extremely wary of oversimplifying the rejection of Pelagianism. A ready example is the case of Jerome. Evans has made a serious case for Jerome's enormous influence in the early stages of the controversy as an objector to Pelagius. But because Jerome refuted Pelagius, is he therefore an Augustinian? Not at all. Just as it is unreasonable to assimilate Jerome to Augustine, so too is it unreasonable to assimilate Cassian to Augustine: Augustine did not have an exclusive claim on right belief.

More than that, it is historically imprudent to conflate Cassian's view and Augustine's because doing so will inescapably cause

¹⁴⁸ Petschenig (CSEL 17: x).

Cassian's thoughts on the subject to be eclipsed, as the far more numerous works by Augustine overwhelm our attention. The debate about Pelagius' reforms was not a bilateral contest between Pelagius and Augustine. It involved many other parties. Of course, Cassian for his part was not an Augustinian in any meaningful sense of the term. But, to reiterate a theme, he need not have been in order to resist Pelagianism. It should also be noted that Cassian's alleged objections to Augustinian theology are topical and infrequent. This is in contrast to his objections to Pelagianism, which run right through his writings, sometimes in unlikely places.

God 'turns our will'

By the time Cassian began writing his *Conferences*, the Pelagian controversy was well under way—and Cassian had already weighed in on the debates against Pelagianism.¹⁴⁹ So it is noteworthy that from the first *Conference* Cassian reiterates and refines his claim that God, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, 'reveals to us the heavenly sacraments and *turns our will* and way of life to better acts'.¹⁵⁰ In *Conference 3*, he fleshes out the principles already sketched in the *Institutes* with stories of the great abbas of the desert. Thus, with the entertaining story of a roguish novice who at night secretly ate a biscuit he would daily steal from the table, Cassian emphasizes the complicity of the will in disobedience.¹⁵¹ Similarly, with the edifying account of Paphnutius' youth, Cassian extols the value of obedience and mortifying one's own will.¹⁵² Cassian touts Moses as an outstanding exemplar of proceeding from conversion to perfection through offering voluntary sacrifices to God.¹⁵³ Looking to the Bible, Cassian refers to St Paul's conversion as an instance of God

¹⁴⁹ Again, basing his claim on the dates of Castor's episcopacy, Petschenig (CSEL 13: xi) dates the beginning of the *Conferences* to 'before 426... but not before 419'.

¹⁵⁰ Cassian, *conl* 1.19.1. It is not clear from the context what the *caelestia sacramenta* are, but the context is Evagrian (cf. Evagrius, *orat* 62), so perhaps Cassian has in mind contemplation of the mysteries of creation.

¹⁵¹ Cassian, *conl* 2.11.1.

¹⁵² Cassian, *conl* 3.1.2; cf. 4.21.4.

¹⁵³ Cassian, *conl* 3.5.2.

converting the unwilling to Himself.¹⁵⁴ (Cassian also chillingly claims that Satan can similarly infiltrate our minds with the result that, ‘unknowing or unwilling, we are drawn from our best intentions.’)¹⁵⁵

This is preliminary to Cassian’s tour de force: he baldly asserts that God’s grace, not human free will, is responsible for ‘everything which pertains to salvation’—even faith.¹⁵⁶ And he even adds a justification for affirming all this while maintaining the validity of God’s judgement, which can be taken as an effort to supplant Pelagian thinking entirely. Cassian would have his cake in the form of God’s overriding sovereignty, and eat it, too, in the guise of human responsibility.¹⁵⁷ All this is still firmly anchored in the typically monastic warnings against pride Cassian issued in the *Institutes*, and it is further secured to the Evagrian tradition by Cassian’s reference to abandonment by God.¹⁵⁸ The final word goes to Paphnutius who corrects Germanus’ hasty assertion of free will by chastising anyone who, in defending free will, ‘would try to take away from man the daily grace and providence of God’.¹⁵⁹ In view of Cassian’s sustained critique of Pelagianism, this correction alleges Pelagian emphasis on free will deprives Christians of God’s grace.

¹⁵⁴ Cassian, *conl* 3.5.4; cf. *conl* 7.8.2, 13.9.1, 13.15.2, 13.18.2. However, Cassian also reports Chaeremon’s view that unwilling people are unstable; this diminishes their prospects of salvation considerably: *conl* 11.8.2–3; cf. 23.12.4. Stability derives from conforming to the will of God: *conl* 12.6.8.

¹⁵⁵ Cassian, *conl* 4.3: ‘De inpugnatione uero diaboli, cum etiam bonis nonnumquam studiis dediti callida subtilitate mentem nostrum aduersario penetrante uel ignorantes ab optimis intentionibus abstrahimur uel inuiti.’ Cf. Isaac’s description of ‘being drawn most unwillingly to desire for these things’, *conl* 10.10.6. But note Moses’ caveat regarding demonic influence, *conl* 1.17.1, and Theodore’s Stoic claim that a holy person cannot be harmed unwillingly, *conl* 6.4.1—for which he finds a convenient example in Job. This is a topic that Serenus discusses at length because of Germanus’ disquiet about it: *conl* 7.9–28.

¹⁵⁶ Cassian, *conl* 3.16.1. He goes so far as to suggest that God grants persistence ‘omni uolenti’, *conl* 9.34.4. To understand this as ‘name it and claim it’ spirituality we would have to forget deliberately the ascetic transformation of the will that is a persistent feature of Cassian’s writings.

¹⁵⁷ See Cassian, *conl* 3.19.

¹⁵⁸ See Cassian, *conl* 3.20.1; cf. Driscoll (1997).

¹⁵⁹ Cassian, *conl* 3.22.1; he goes further at *conl* 5.15.2–3, citing Deut. 9:4–5 to the effect that it is clear scriptural testimony ‘contra perniciosam opinionem praesumptionemque nostrum, qua totum quod agimus uel libero arbitrio uel nostrae uoluntatis industriae deputare’.

'We do what we do not want to do'

Cassian's *Conference* 4 centres on Abba Daniel's explication of Gal. 5:17.¹⁶⁰ Daniel reproves Germanus for failing to see that St Paul teaches in this passage 'that we do what we do not want to do'.¹⁶¹ This is of a piece with Cassian's affirmation of the will's debility. After Daniel elaborates on the meanings of *caro* and *spiritus*, he takes up *uoluntas*, which, he says, occupies 'a rather blameworthy middle position' between the two.¹⁶² It must be borne in mind, though, that Daniel speaks of the will of a Christian ascetic—as is clear from his description of the ludicrous compromises the will attempts: 'to practise the humility of Christ without casting off worldly honours, to pursue the simplicity of religion along with secular ambition, to serve Christ with the praise and favour of men'.¹⁶³ This vacillating will is clearly not a will in its natural state—instead, it is a monastic will and as such it lives in Christian grace—so when we read these things, we are justified in taking as read the intervening measures of God that Cassian described earlier. Interestingly, Daniel echoes the Sicilian when he points to the natural checks on unfettered willing and he even goes one better than the Sicilian by noting that we hold the demons and evils spirits to be even 'more detestable' because their evil will is not restrained by the limitations of a physical body!¹⁶⁴

The inevitability of sin

When Cassian comes to retell his discussions with Abba Chaeremon, the will is much in evidence. Chaeremon teaches that even 'any holy person you like' commits small, but nonetheless culpable and reprehensible, faults, 'by word, thought, ignorance, forgetfulness, need, will, or surprise'.¹⁶⁵ Because Cassian comes out strongly against sinlessness,¹⁶⁶ it is interesting that in this context he includes sins of will amongst the causes of inevitable sin. This is perfectly consistent

¹⁶⁰ Cassian, *conl* 4.9.1–4.17.

¹⁶² Cassian, *conl* 4.12.1.

¹⁶⁵ Cassian, *conl* 11.9.6.

¹⁶¹ Cassian, *conl* 4.2.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* ¹⁶⁴ Cassian, *conl* 4.13.2.

¹⁶⁶ Cassian, *conl* 23.

with Cassian's line on the instability of the will. Chaeremon also takes the farmer as a metaphor for the Christian monk—just as the farmer's effort is necessary, but insufficient for a good harvest, so too the monk's effort and his will are necessary, but insufficient for salvation.¹⁶⁷ (This is, incidentally, quite at odds with the lessons Pelagius draws from the farmer, who is a model for working hard and being satisfied by the fruits of one's labour.)¹⁶⁸

If any doubts remained about the origin of a good will, Chaeremon dispatches them: 'Wherefore the source of not only good acts, but even good thoughts is clearly inferred to be from God, who also inspires in us the beginnings of a good will and provides the strength and opportunity for us to complete those things which we rightly desire to do.'¹⁶⁹ Moreover, he attributes to God's grace not only the propitious disposal of external circumstance, but even the proper ordering of internal desires.¹⁷⁰ It is therefore clear that Chaeremon and Cassian are prepared to accept a high level of divine intervention within the very soul of the monk, which is inconsistent with the very principles of Pelagianism.

Then Chaeremon embarks on the deep waters of controversy. He claims that God's 'kindness, when it observes even the tiniest spark of good will spring up in us, or which He Himself struck from the hard flint of our heart, supports it and kindles it and strengthens it by his inspiration'.¹⁷¹ The innocuous disjunctive *uel* is all-important in the history of the controversy about Cassian. Though it is not as decisive as *aut*,¹⁷² nonetheless with it Chaeremon introduces the possibility of good will springing up in us apart from God. But to be anxious that Cassian would endorse holiness apart from God is to make a crass misjudgement: the whole of Cassian's advice for coping with pride

¹⁶⁷ Cassian, *conl* 13.3.

¹⁶⁸ Pelagius, *Dem* 28 (PL 33: 1119); at *uit chr* 8 (PL 50: 391), Pelagius likens the farmer tilling the earth to God preparing the chosen people by means of divine commandments.

¹⁶⁹ Cassian, *conl* 13.3.5.

¹⁷⁰ Cassian, *conl* 13.6.5.

¹⁷¹ Cassian, *conl* 13.7.1: 'Cuius benignitas cum bonae uoluntatis in nobis quantumcumque scintillam emicuisse perspexerit uel quam ipse tamquam de dura silice nostri cordis excuderit, confouet eam et exsuscitat suaque inspiratione confortat'; cf. *conl* 13.8.4.

¹⁷² Gildersleeve (1997): 309–10, §§ 495–6.

tends to nothing else than a constant emphasis of man's dependence on God.

It is important to recall Cassian's expectation that the readers of the *Conferences* will have already familiarized themselves with the practices set down in the *Institutes*.¹⁷³ That does not mean that Cassian is talking to insiders and that we are obliged to suspend any disagreements if we are to make sense of the passage; but it does mean that by the time Cassian writes these fateful lines, he will already have the expectation that his readership (if it is at all faithful to him as a spiritual guide) will have put into practice the earlier instructions.

In other words, here and in the other problematic passages about the will and the need for grace,¹⁷⁴ Cassian can reasonably expect his readership to assume a highly specific relationship with God, as delineated in everything he had written up to this point. It will not do to treat *Conference* 13 as an isolated document.¹⁷⁵ So it is largely irrelevant that Chaeremon does not explicitly mention the redemption of the naturally good will in his encomium on the kindness of the Creator:¹⁷⁶ Cassian has already addressed himself to the status of the will and pronounced it fallible, inadequate, and generally prone to sin (though he will stipulate as the Conference continues that he does not think the will is totally debilitated).¹⁷⁷

A warning against overemphasis

This reading of *Conference* 13 is satisfactory until we come upon Chaeremon's critical remarks about those 'who believe one [claim about the origins of good will] alone and assert it more than is just' and are consequently 'wrapped up in a variety of self-contradictory mistakes'.¹⁷⁸ He expresses dissatisfaction with too much emphasis on

¹⁷³ Cassian states this expectation very clearly at *conl* 1 praef 5. Cf. also Cassian's approach to teaching about prayer: *inst* 2.9.1, 3 for external practices; *conl* pref. 5 for inner meanings. Readers impatient with the abrupt transition from monastic practice to the deadly sins in the *Institutes* should keep in mind this habitual movement in his thought.

¹⁷⁴ e.g. *conl* 13.9.4–10.4.

¹⁷⁶ Cassian, *conl* 13.9.5.

¹⁷⁸ Cassian, *conl* 13.11.1.

¹⁷⁵ This was rightly noted by Macquoen (1977).

¹⁷⁷ Cassian, *conl* 13.12.

the divine origin of the good will on the one hand, and with too much emphasis on the human origin of good will on the other. Now it would be out of character for Cassian to wrap himself up in abstract discussions, so we are motivated to identify the groups Chaeremon denounced. In the first case, probably Cassian has in mind people of Prosper's ilk—admirers of Augustine with a bad case of tunnel vision; and in the second, probably Cassian intends to rebut the same people he has denounced throughout his works for Pelagian tendencies.

Chaeremon expresses his misgivings about the radical solutions proffered for this problem by anticipating Abelard's *Sic et non*: Chaeremon lays out mutually contradictory scriptures with respect to the question under discussion.¹⁷⁹ Like Abelard, Chaeremon and Cassian make no attempt to adjudicate the dispute after they set it forth. Unlike Abelard, who arguably did so in order to undermine appeals to authority by showing that authorities can be adduced for any proposition, Chaeremon and Cassian are motivated by a desire to suspend judgement; in any event, particular cases are more relevant in their view than are trends or abstractions. They are therefore content to insist on the cooperation of God and man, so as to preserve 'the rule of the Church's faith',¹⁸⁰ without arriving at a satisfactory solution to the dilemma.

Chaeremon does not push a solution to the problem, but merely sounds a few warnings; this does not constitute a volte-face by Cassian and it does not necessitate a revision of our working hypothesis about his understanding of the will. While Cassian makes it clear that he can envisage 'sparks' of good will that are not directly caused by God, he insists that these sparks are hopelessly inadequate and that direct divine intervention is needed for any real progress. Only one significant qualification of Cassian's perspective is advanced in this *Conference*: whereas we have found Cassian to endorse God's ability to override free will, in *Conference* 13 he stipulates that

¹⁷⁹ Cassian, *conl* 13.11.1–4.

¹⁸⁰ Cassian, *conl* 13.11.4. Certainly, Augustine was likewise interested in preserving grace and freedom: e.g. *ep* 214.2, 7 (CSEL 57: 381–2, 386–7); but, like Chaeremon and Cassian, our concerns are elsewhere at the moment and we need not judge the adequacy of Augustine's solution.

God cannot *eliminate* free will.¹⁸¹ This safeguards the attribution of responsibility, but in no way is it a concession to Pelagianism.

4 HOW THE WILL DYSFUNCTIONS ACCORDING TO CASSIAN'S CHRISTOLOGICAL WORK

In *On the Incarnation*, Cassian has little to say directly about the will though he does consolidate a number of disparate observations about the will with respect to Christ that we have seen in his 'monastic works'. In addition to reinforcing a number of those points,¹⁸² Cassian categorically rejects the reduction of Christ to a role model for Christians, which is precisely what he accuses the Pelagians of having done.¹⁸³ Oddly, he links this accusation to his claim that Pelagius believed Christ to have been a 'mere mortal'.¹⁸⁴ In fact, we have no evidence that Pelagius thought so (although it is possible that Cassian attributed to Pelagius what local advocates of Pelagianism were advocating). Furthermore, Pelagius frequently used the same phrase Cassian uses to describe the humanity of Christ: *homo assumptus*.¹⁸⁵ That term requires comment.

The 'assumed man'

The *homo assumptus* has a motley history. It is broadly, but not exclusively, associated with Origenism,¹⁸⁶ and it ultimately fell out

¹⁸¹ Cassian, *conl* 13.18.5.

¹⁸² See the subsection 'Christ's will and the monastic will', above.

¹⁸³ Cassian, *inc* 6.14. This may not be entirely accurate, but it is certainly an understandable impression to take away from reading Pelagius and others; cf. Pelagius, *uirg* 15 (CSEL 1: 245).

¹⁸⁴ Cassian, *inc* 6.14.

¹⁸⁵ Cassian: *inst* 12.17; *conl* 7.22, 9.34.10, 16.6.4, 22.12.1; *inc* 1.2.5, 1.5.4, 2.3.10, 2.6.1, 5.6.3; cf. 5.12.1, 7.22.2–3; Pelagius: *lib fid* 4–5, 11 (PL 45: 1717–18), *leg diu* 1 (PL 30: 105), *exp Rom.* 8:34 (ed. Souter [1926]: 70).

¹⁸⁶ e.g. Origen, *Glo* 1.28.30.191–2 (SC 120: 154–6); Apponius, *CCt* 3.3, 5.32, 9.47, 12.12, 12.46, 12.50 (CCSL 19: 61, 130, 233, 273, 288, 290); and cf. Evagrius, *in Pss.* 44.8ζ; 88.7 δ; 104.15ι, 118.3β; but see also Hilary of Poitiers, *Trin* 1.11, 13, 16, 2.25 *et passim* (PL 10: 33–4, 36, 67) and Augustine, *epp* 137.2.6, 137.4.14, 140.3.9, 148.2.10,

of favour with the condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's Christology.¹⁸⁷ It is probable that Cassian's frequent use of this suspicious phrase accounts for the comparatively pathetic circulation of this treatise,¹⁸⁸ and it almost certainly contributes to the general disdain most scholars express for this work.¹⁸⁹ Be that as it may, it is only through attending to Cassian's use of this term that we are able to understand why he has such contempt for Pelagius' Christology which is, in Cassian's eyes, fundamentally inadequate. The reason the Pelagian Christ does not inspire hope in Cassian is bound up with Cassian's comparatively less optimistic expectations of human will.

We have already seen how Cassian understands the operation of the will to be far more problematic than the Pelagians do—and this difference in theological anthropology is directly related to their differences in Christological charitology. People require more than a good example or a good teacher, in Cassian's view, because proper motivation does not guarantee the desired results. For this reason, Cassian's Christology is predicated on an anti-Pelagian premise, not withstanding the fact that they both use the same phrase to describe Christ.

An anti-Pelagian Christology?

Because of his recourse to the *homo assumptus*, Cassian can talk of the second person of the Trinity bestowing grace, in addition to

148.4.15, 169.2.8, 187.13.39–40, 238.3.18 (CSEL 44: 103–05, 116–17, 161, 340–1, 344–5, 617; 57: 116–18, 546–7), *uer rel* 17.33.89 (CSEL 77²: 24), *Gn litt* 8.27.50, 10.18.32–3, 10.20.36–21.37 (CSEL 28¹: 265–7, 319–21, 322–6), *gest Pel* 14.32 (CSEL 42: 87–8), *an et or* 2.5.9 (CSEL 60: 342–3), *praed sanct* 15.30 (PL 44: 982), *preseu* 24.66 (PL 45: 1033). Unfortunately, I have not had access to Diepen (1963–4). For further discussion of Cassian's *homo assumptus*, see ch. 6, below.

¹⁸⁷ Theodore, *hom cat* 5.11, 19 (ed. Tanneau [1949]: 114–17, 126–7) and *inc* 7 (ed. Swete [1882]: 296). Theodore was condemned in 553 at Constantinople II; see esp. *can* 12–13 (ed. Straub [1971]: 218–19).

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Petschenig (CSEL 13: xiii).

¹⁸⁹ Such views can be found in the assessments of Stewart (1998) and Vannier (1993). Before Victor Codina's admirable study of Cassian's Christology, only one modern publication on the subject is known to me: Déodat de Basly (1928), a curious attempt to vindicate *homo assumptus* Christology.

divinity, upon his human nature.¹⁹⁰ He makes this point to rebut putative adoptionist tendencies in Nestorius, but the point has broader implications. Cassian repeatedly affirmed that Nestorianism and Pelagianism are two sides of the same coin.¹⁹¹ We may therefore well want to ask whether Cassian's assertion that, in Christ, humanity received divine grace as well as deity, has any bearing on his argument against the Pelagians.

Although there is no conclusive evidence that Cassian deliberately conceived of the *homo assumptus* as an anti-Pelagian device, we nevertheless have abundant circumstantial evidence that suggests he did. Most of the circumstantial evidence comes from the anti-Pelagian posture that Cassian consistently adopted throughout his earlier works, which has already been considered in detail earlier in this chapter. As we have seen, in the *Institutes* and *Conferences* Cassian showed great interest in how monks ought to emulate Christ (not least through abjuring their wills) and in how God graciously shores up the inadequate human will. At various points in Cassian's discussion, traces of anti-Pelagianism are evident in key phrases that can be identified from other anti-Pelagian polemic. For these reasons, we can justifiably speak of a latent disposition to reject Pelagianism in Cassian's works. It also bears pointing out that there is a striking similarity between Cassian's use of the *homo assumptus* against Nestorians and Augustine's use of the *homo assumptus* against Pelagians.¹⁹² All these factors indicate it would be no injustice to Cassian for us to see in his reference to the *homo assumptus* the capstone of his strong denunciation of Pelagianism.

¹⁹⁰ Cassian, *inc* 2.6.1. This should not be taken to mean that Cassian conceived of a separate, human person receiving grace from the Logos. Instead, Cassian means that Christ gives His own grace to His own human nature. The parallel teaching found in Cyril's Christology has been excellently described by Fairbairn (2003): 99–103.

¹⁹¹ Cassian, *inc* 1.3.3–4.2; 5.2.1–2; 6.14.1–2; 7.21.4; cf. 2.1.1–2. See Codina (1966): 153–71. Cassian was not alone in perceiving this connection. Both Augustine and Prosper also connected the two; see Plagnieux (1956). This claim had impressive staying power: even Photius relates it, *cod* 54 (Henry [1959–91]: 1: 42).

¹⁹² e.g. Augustine, *gest Pel* 14.31 (CSEL 42: 85–6), *praed sanct* 15.30 (PL 44: 982). For Christology in the Pelagian controversy, see Dewart (1982); for Pelagius' Christology, see Greshake (1972): 125–34.

An evaluation of Cassian's polemic

How fair in the end was Cassian's argument against Pelagius and his fellows? In their defence it should be acknowledged that they espoused a broadly sacramental view of salvation that belies Cassian's insinuation about the Pelagian Christ being merely a teacher.¹⁹³ So Cassian seems to have been hasty in respect of that accusation. And yet the presumptions about the will that are consistent for all the Pelagians are diametrically opposite to Cassian's teaching on the will. In this case, Cassian appears to have correctly identified an aspect of Pelagian moral philosophy that was probably unreflected and certainly far more facile than was his own account of the struggles needed to transfigure the will. The intense focus of monastic practice enabled Cassian to isolate and critique an aspect of Pelagian moral philosophy that is genuinely objectionable.

Indeed, Cassian's evaluation of the will as implicated in moral struggle is far more resonant with a broad swathe of human experience than is the comparatively jejune Pelagian treatment of the subject. Even though Cassian began his teaching with the need for humility and obedience in the monastery, he quickly moved beyond the particularities of monastic life to expose the reasons why humility and obedience are necessary in general application. When he did that, the results were uniform: Cassian was a tireless critic of the will. He leaves his reader to understand that man is not meant to live in splendid isolation from God and that even the will—that 'strong citadel' of the Pelagians—is grossly defective and in constant need of divine support and correction.

We have seen, then, that Cassian gradually develops a teaching about the will according to which the will is incompetent and must be healed so that it can be controlled. Furthermore, Cassian taught that God brings about this healing. He takes Christ Himself as the archetype for this process: Christ not only sets a good example for us to emulate, He also provides a theological basis for claiming that divine grace is necessary at all levels for the Christian life. Such is the lesson of the *homo assumptus*, for by invoking that phrase Cassian points to the fact that grace was communicated to the human nature

¹⁹³ See e.g. the various Pelagian comments on baptism as cited above.

of Christ when that human nature was undeserving of it. The same superabundant bestowal of divine favour to unworthy humans is the basic experience of every Christian life. This same grace intervenes in the Christian life by arranging circumstances to the advantage of Christians (even when the circumstances appear disadvantageous), but even more than that by re-ordering the Christians' wills.

Because Cassian taught these things about the will, there was no common ground for him and the Pelagians. Even if both parties were keen to promote moral reform (as they indubitably were), their respective messages were fundamentally unlike. This unlikeness is far more important than any other factor—of which there are many—which could be mentioned by way of overturning the claim that Cassian is tainted with Pelagian heresy. What is more, as Cassian works out this teaching, he periodically inserts into his writings comments that indicate his deliberate and principled opposition to Pelagianism. Not only had he nothing to do with the Pelagians, he was in fact an outspoken critic of Pelagianism (which is, incidentally, more than can be said of his supposed opposition to Augustine's teaching—but there will be more to be said about that anon). This means in the end that, much as we saw a diverse band of Pelagians who shared a common cause in preaching Christian reform, Cassian takes his place in a diverse band of anti-Pelagians who shared a common cause in objecting to the theological dangers of Pelagianism.

5 CASSIAN'S POLEMIC AGAINST PELAGIANISM AND THE DATING OF CONFERENCE 13

The argument that across his career Cassian was concertedly and even polemically anti-Pelagian will obviously have a bearing on how we read Cassian's *Conference* 13. But there is a preliminary consideration about that text for which this argument is also relevant. It concerns the dating of the *Conference*.

Just over sixty years ago, Sir Owen Chadwick noted that the standard chronology of the Pelagian controversy does not allow sufficient time for Cassian to respond to Augustine's *De correptione*

et gratia in his *Conference* 13.¹⁹⁴ The problem comes down to the fact that *Conference* 13 and the rest of the second block of Cassian's work are dedicated to Honoratus 'frater', before he became Bishop of Arles (the 'beatus episcopus' of the third block of his works), c.426. In other words, Cassian wrote *Conference* 13 about three years before Augustine's writings began to stir up the controversies that Prosper reported to Augustine, c.428–9.¹⁹⁵ Cassian must have been prescient! Barring that, something has to give.

Chadwick's solution—and some problems with it

Chadwick offered an inspired solution. He suggested an emendation to the standard chronology of the bishops of Arles for the years 426–30, arguing that a certain Euladius was bishop from 426 to late 427 or early 428. Manipulating the dates in this way allowed Chadwick to defer Honoratus' episcopacy until c.428–9, thereby allowing Cassian's treatises dedicated to him to be 'an act within the theological crisis' that was brewing during those years.¹⁹⁶ The argument is ingenious, based on a MS variant in Prosper's letter to Augustine and carrying the considerable weight of a much earlier endorsement by the good and learned Tillemont. But it is unnecessary, for two reasons.

First, Chadwick's argument is unnecessary because we have no good reasons to assume that Prosper took up his pen to advise Augustine of breaking news. In fact, nearly eighty years ago (roughly twenty years before the publication of Chadwick's note), Desiderius Franses had advanced a plausible account of the relevant events of c.426–30, in which he suggested that debates about grace and freedom had been going on for some years before Cassian's *Conference* 13 was brought to Prosper's attention—in other words, that the discussion (including Cassian's contributions to it) began several years before Prosper's decision to write to Augustine.¹⁹⁷ Franses's

¹⁹⁴ O. Chadwick (1945).

¹⁹⁵ This letter is preserved in Augustine's corpus of letters as *ep* 225 (PL 44: 947–52).

¹⁹⁶ O. Chadwick (1945): 201.

¹⁹⁷ Thus, Franses (1927): 155: 'Tenslotte meenen we dan ook, op boven geformuleerde vragen te moeten antwoorden: de tweede serie der *Collationes* is inderdaad in

reconstruction of the sequence of events tends to displace Prosper from the centre of the action. That tendency is of course in keeping with one of the main purposes of this study, in which it is being urged that conventional views of those events have been beholden to Prosper's frankly idiosyncratic claims for far, far too long.

Franses's claim deserves serious consideration and it gives us pause: after all, why should we suppose that Prosper immediately received a copy of Cassian's works and, having read them through voraciously, wrote to Augustine at once to advise him of the content? If Franses's argument is correct, then one can accept that Cassian's *Conference* 13 appeared in 426 and that two or three years passed before Prosper took note and determined to notify Augustine. Even so, it should be noted that Franses, like Chadwick, presupposes that Cassian was writing against Augustine. This presupposition brings us to the other reason Chadwick's ingenious emendation is not needed.

Second, Chadwick's argument is unnecessary because he generates the problem for which the episcopate of 'Euladius' is his answer by interpreting *Conference* 13 as 'a controversial piece of writing containing Cassian's famous opposition to Augustine upon the predestinarian controversy'.¹⁹⁸ On the basis of what we have seen, we can cut the Gordian knot: Cassian was not 'responding' to Augustine's writings at all. This claim needs further explanation.

The anti-Pelagian trends that recur right across Cassian's writings are particularly dense in *Conference* 13; it is the supposedly anti-Augustinian bits that are unusual. A simple reading suffices to show that the burden of Abba Chaeremon's reported teaching is to insist categorically on the utter necessity of God's grace in protecting Christians—which is of a piece with the anti-Pelagian message that we have found to recur right the way through Cassian's writings.

By contrast, the supposedly anti-Augustinian remarks do not recur when Cassian returns to the question of grace and freedom, for example, in *Conference* 23. The bits in *Conference* 13 that agitated

426 voltooid, maar nog niet in breederen kring gepubliceerd. Prosper kent ze nog niet in 429, waarschijnlijk echter wél in 430.' A similar view is advanced by de Letter (1963): 8–9 and by Markus (1990): 178.

¹⁹⁸ O. Chadwick (1945): 201.

Prosper are in fact peripheral to the primary thrust of Cassian's dialogue; they are a clarification of his major argument, and even then they serve primarily to safeguard moral accountability rather than to undermine a leading figure in the Catholic community. So when we try to make sense of *Conference* 13, our attention ought to be devoted to the preponderate objections to Pelagius, rather than the incidental corrections of Augustine—if indeed that is what they are. More will need to be said about that in a moment.

At present, let us note that if the interpretation of *Conference* 13 as primarily anti-Pelagian is accepted, there is no need for Chadwick to force the chronology of bishops so that it 'fits its subject matter';¹⁹⁹ it already does. Its subject matter is the ongoing resistance to Pelagian reformers. Chadwick's observations on the MS variant in Prosper's letter notwithstanding, there is no reason to conjecture an ephemeral episcopacy for an otherwise unknown figure: the traditional chronologies for the see of Arles, the correspondence of Augustine, and the writings of Cassian are not bedevilled by the problem Chadwick claimed to have found. Simply put, Cassian did not write *On the protection of God* as 'an act within the theological crisis' or 'a controversial piece of writing containing Cassian's famous opposition to Augustine upon the predestinarian controversy', so there is no need to try to defer the date of its composition so that some really racy treatise by the African doctor could have preceded and even provoked it.

The alleged anti-Augustinianism of *Conference* 13

But what of the unmistakable, heated rejections of propositions that strike us as roundly Augustinian?²⁰⁰ If we reject Chadwick's arguments, we must be prepared to accept what he could not: that *Conference* 13 was written *c.*426, *before* the beginning of those reactions against Augustine that Prosper described. To accept this is to accept the burden of explaining where Cassian got the ideas to which he objects so decisively.

¹⁹⁹ O. Chadwick (1945): 201.

²⁰⁰ e.g. Cassian, *conl* 13.11.1.

We can ease that burden somewhat by noting that Cassian never actually quotes Augustine's *On admonition and grace*.²⁰¹ In fact, we have only 'a strong presumption' (in Chadwick's admirably forthright phrase)²⁰² that he was objecting to that treatise in particular. I am inclined to weaken that presumption.

What we find in *Conference* 13 are at best paraphrases that approximate to an Augustinian view. Now, we know Cassian was perfectly capable of unacknowledged direct quotation.²⁰³ That being the case, surely if it were his purpose to chip away at Augustine, he could just as easily have quoted the offending treatise without acknowledging his source—yet he did not do that. Even if the view that Cassian rejects bears some resemblance to the view that Augustine propounds, we do not have direct evidence that Cassian was responding to Augustine himself. Along the lines suggested by Franses, Cassian certainly could have been inspired to reject those views after encountering them in some other way, such as through conversation with his peers. So in the absence of further evidence (such as a direct quotation, verbal echoes, or at least a close paraphrase; Prosper's claims do not constitute further evidence), we are justified in refraining from the presumption that Cassian's *Conference* 13 was his response to Augustine. The argument that he was doing so is a logical fallacy: *similis huic, ergo propter hoc*.²⁰⁴

A possible source of the objectionable Augustinianism

Even though it is surely possible that Cassian was responding to unwritten ideas current amongst his peers, it may not be entirely satisfactory to posit a non-literary source. It is always more enjoyable

²⁰¹ The passages in Cassian that seem closest to direct responses to Augustine are Cassian, *conl* 13.7 (contrast to Augustine, *corrupt* 14.44: on the availability of salvation) and *conl* 13.11 (contrast to Augustine, *pec mer* 1.16.31, 1.23.33: on the fate of unbaptized infants). But, at the risk of being tedious, these are at best paraphrases of Augustine.

²⁰² O. Chadwick (1945): 202.

²⁰³ The classic example is Cassian's unacknowledged quotation of Evagrius, *prak* 15, at *conl* 10.14.1.

²⁰⁴ For a different objection to Chadwick's conclusion, see Jacob (2001). I thank S. T. Loseby for drawing my attention to this article.

to uncover texts behind texts behind texts, not least because that gives us a feeling of security. Happily, there is known to us one possible target for Cassian's disapproval: Prosper himself. In his letter to Augustine, Prosper complains of the obstinacy of the alleged hypocrites who are attacking Augustine's teaching. Prosper explains to Augustine the various means he has been attempting in trying to win over (or perhaps simply stamp out) the wily opponents. It is particularly interesting to note the final measure he took: 'I offered up Your Blessedness's teachings written with countless, strong proofs from the sacred Scriptures and *I crafted one, following the style of your arguments, by which they would be silenced*' (author's emphasis).²⁰⁵ It would go a very long way indeed towards accounting for Prosper's fiery attack against Cassian (and, for that matter, against Vincent) if he had cobbled together his own arguments after the manner of Augustine, only to have them spiritedly attacked by those obdurate monks.

Perhaps Prosper was not the only enthusiast for Augustine's works who spent his time in crafting arguments in the style of the master. A brisk trade in homespun Augustiniana would inescapably include Predestinationist tracts of the sort that drew heavy fire from Vincent, not to mention the disapproving remarks that Cassian relates on behalf of Chaeremon. It is easy to envisage *Conference* 13 as being directed against precisely such an outburst of ill-considered or otherwise amateurish theological blathering.

Added support in favour of a non-literary target for Cassian's objections can be taken from the previous observation that the 'famous opposition to Augustine' is extremely localized in Cassian's works. It occurs in neither *Conference* 3 nor 23, though both of them treat the same themes.²⁰⁶ What is more, the latter was certainly written after *On admonition and grace* had begun to circulate; even the former was written well after Augustine's treatise to Sixtus that grieved the monks of Hadrumetum! If Cassian were aiming to eradicate Augustine's theological legacy in Gaul, it would have hardly been in his interests to have suddenly taken up and just as suddenly

²⁰⁵ Prosper, *ep ad Aug.* 3 (PL 51: 70): 'Et cum contra eos scripta beatitudinis tuae validissimis et innumeris testimoniis divinarum Scripturarum instructa proferimus, ac, *secundum formam disputationum tuarum*, aliquid etiam ipsi quo concludantur astruimus' (author's emphasis).

²⁰⁶ Cf. de Vogüé (1979): 268, 270.

left off his campaign. But in fact there is no evidence for such a campaign at all, so we would do well to reconsider any tendencies we might have to find anti-Augustinian sentiment just around every corner in Cassian's works.²⁰⁷ Again, since there is no evidence for such a campaign, it is likely that the concentrated vehemence of Cassian's refutation is a measured response to a local eruption of objectionable theology.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The points that can be taken from this chapter are many. In the first place, Cassian was a committed critic of the Pelagians' doctrine of the will. Secondly, his criticisms rested upon his principles of asceticism. Third, he was not prepared to allow arguments to strip humans of their responsibility in order to give greater glory to God—precisely because this would undermine the ascetic imperative of Christianity. Prosper informed Augustine, and so informs us, that some of Augustine's writings were read precisely in this way by his peers, of whom Cassian was one. Despite this, there is no literary evidence that Cassian's *Conference 13* was designed as a rebuttal of Augustine's *On admonition and grace*; in fact, by the standard chronology, Cassian's work is the earlier writing of the two. Furthermore, when Cassian returns to the controversial topics in *Conference 23*, he provides no further evidence of preoccupation with Augustinian themes, although an anti-Augustinian disclaimer would have been completely natural there.²⁰⁸

None of this means that Cassian was an Augustinian. But all of it means that he did not devote his energy to the tasks for which Prosper blasted him—undermining Augustine, introducing Pelagianism by the backdoor, and generally fomenting disquiet. Instead, Cassian was preoccupied with a different, ascetic task: cultivating a kind of humility inconsistent with Pelagian preaching.

²⁰⁷ A particularly perverse example of this process in action is the conventional discussion of Cassian, *inc 7.27*; see Casiday (2001a).

²⁰⁸ For instance, the encomium on grace at Cassian, *conl 23.10.1–2*, calls out for qualifications—if Cassian is indeed preoccupied with opposing Augustine.

Cassian's tradition

Throughout his writings, Cassian constantly emphasizes tradition. His explicit assertion that his writings report the Egyptian elders' traditions has long constituted one of his most impressive claims on the attention of Western Christians. Particularly when travel and commerce within the Roman Empire were strained by circumstance, or when theological controversy separated Egypt from Gaul, Cassian's eyewitness accounts were a palliative for those who wished to see with their own eyes, but could not.¹ A major question about Cassian's tradition therefore suggests itself: what does the tradition that he relates actually represent? To answer this question, we will compare the traditions reported by Cassian with other contemporary sources about Egyptian monasticism and see how much confidence should be placed in his writings. This exercise will give us a better sense of what Cassian was up to in his writings, which will in turn enable us to read his writings more critically.

A more critical reading of Cassian will not necessarily need to be a more hostile reading. In a strange twist of history, what had earned Cassian the rapt attention (and, one imagines, the deep gratitude) of medieval Christians has become in modern times a cause for sharp criticism as the reliability of his works has come under attack. Several factors might motivate such attacks on the accuracy of Cassian's account of Egypt. The most important factor is that, as interest in Coptic Christianity has grown, there has simultaneously grown an awareness of the limits of the conventional Latin and Greek sources

¹ e.g. Eulalius, Bishop of Syracuse, encouraged Fulgentius of Ruspe to read the *Conferences* when he announced to Eulalius his intention of going on a pilgrimage to Egypt. The *Conferences* were actually much sounder, according to the bishop, because the Egyptians were now non-Chalcedonian heretics! See (?ps-)Ferrandus, *u Ful* 12.24 (PL 65:128–9).

on Christianity in Egypt. This dissatisfaction is found, for instance, in scholarship on Pachomian monasticism, where there is a need to draw attention to the different forms of Christian asceticism that developed in Upper Egypt and where this can only be done by critically evaluating ancient Greek and Latin material against Coptic versions. The question of how to incorporate Coptic sources into a developing account of Egyptian monasticism is beyond the remit of this research, but it does bear on the important question of how representative of 'authentic' Egyptian tradition is Cassian's work.

Owing to a number of modern convictions about how Copts and Greeks related to each other and about how the saints of the desert tended to think about intellectual activities, Cassian is sometimes thought to have described a strictly limited and marginal phenomenon of Lower Egypt—namely, the experience of intellectual monks in Scetis and Nitria. Together with Evagrius and Palladius, he is easily shunted to one side in favour of witnesses to a more authentically Egyptian experience of Christian asceticism. The practical consequence is the blunt assertion (rarely stated, but often implied in recent evaluations of his historical reliability) that Cassian's *Conferences* are a tissue of fabrications—since, for example, one knows that this perspective or that advice was simply not to be heard from the Desert Fathers. Here, then, we have a backhanded compliment: once scholars have begun taking Cassian's writings as serious works of theological insight, many of them have begun to assert that the historical value of the works is nugatory.

We need to consider the kind of thinking about the Desert Fathers that would prompt such a sharp dichotomy between theology and history. As we shall observe in due course, there is an entrenched view according to which the Desert Fathers were opposed to intellectual culture. But in recent years there have been some important developments indicating that a change of perspective is in order. Several recent studies have forcefully challenged key presuppositions about, for instance, the relative intellectual poverty of Coptic monks or the theological literacy of the Desert Fathers—both of which underlie the kind of disbelief in Cassian's writings that we have just described. After surveying both the reasons that some have given for distrusting Cassian and the developments of research on Christian monasticism in Lower Egypt, we shall see in the second section of

this chapter that Cassian's claim on being a spokesman for the 'tradition of the elders' is not especially far-fetched.

To argue that Cassian's teaching is in line with a more widely represented form of ascetic culture is, however, merely to redress a factual claim. It may also be possible to respond to these dissatisfactions and misgivings at a more systemic level. Along these lines, we can make a distinction between the historical claims that we meet in Cassian's writings, and Cassian's work itself as an object of historical scrutiny. As an example of drawing this distinction, let us consider Cassian's claim that coenobitic monasticism preceded anchoritic monasticism.² In point of fact, this claim is not accurate. This is not to say that Cassian knew no better. Immediately before he made this claim, Cassian described Christians gradually relocating to rural areas 'to practise privately and individually' the teachings of the earliest days,³ a description not far from the mark historically. (That pattern is in keeping with what we find in the *Life of Anthony*, for instance.) Since he obliquely refers to the origins of monasticism in private practice, Cassian could presumably have described the development of monasticism with tolerable factual and historical accuracy, but he opted not to do so. In this particular instance, what matters for Cassian is not the historical claim. Here, and perhaps elsewhere, by way of making a claim about the history of monasticism he is actually describing the ideal pattern of monastic formation for those who are following his teaching. This point is confirmed in the following *Conference* when Cassian calls the coenobium 'a school for juniors'⁴ and thereby confirms that his earlier account of the development of monasticism corresponds directly to his programme for Christian monastic development.

Even though his claim about history is not sound, his claim itself has historical significance: it provides a fine example of how Cassian's pedagogical concerns impact upon his writings—and it may well be the case (as we shall see) that his pedagogical concerns are far more important for their historical continuity with his predecessors' teachings than they are for providing historians of late Roman Egypt with evidence about Egyptian monasticism. After all, Cassian's chief concern is not to provide an account of the history of Egyptian

² Cassian, *conl* 18.5.4.

³ Cassian, *conl* 18.5.3.

⁴ Cassian, *conl* 19.2.4.

monasticism. Instead, he allows his aim of inculcating good values in his readers to override the factual accuracy of his account.⁵

A final word is in order. To emphasize the importance of 'tradition' for Cassian is in no way to play down his originality or creativity. (Tradition, after all, is a process of creative fidelity to one's origins.) Rather, it is to dissent from the unhelpful practice of criticizing Cassian by appealing to standards of modern historiography.⁶ Cassian did not claim to offer a chronicle of the Desert Fathers in the style, for example, of the anonymous author of the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*; instead, he claimed to be an interpreter of their traditions.

In sum, in this chapter I will argue that Cassian's writings propagate a teaching that he acquired in Egypt, refined and contemplated over the years, and eventually put forward with the explicit aim of providing something useful for his readers in Gaul. Tradition in this case indicates much more than the unthinking transmission of thoughts and beliefs. Tradition is itself an enterprise that creates and forms historical perspective and it therefore has a complex relationship to history. Even though there is no evidence whatever that Cassian thought he was producing a history of the Nitrian saints, there are nevertheless reasons to think that the tradition he aims to advance is itself not without historical interest. For that reason, I want to insist that, even after we have given appropriate consideration to the historical shortcomings of Cassian's writings, we cannot therefore write off his works as a serious (if not straightforward) witness to Egyptian monasticism in the last decade or two of the fourth century.

1 HOW TRADITIONAL ARE CASSIAN'S TRADITIONS?

Over the last half-century, there has emerged a vigorous critique of Cassian's value for the historiography of Egyptian monasticism. In

⁵ I owe this point to Mark Sheridan, though of course he is not responsible for the use to which I am putting it here.

⁶ Examples of such a practice at work can be found in Guy (1966) and Frank (1996).

this section, we will consider the most systematic of the critiques and find that the critique itself is open to sharp criticism, chiefly because it fails to make allowances for the difference between Cassian's goal of disseminating a tradition on the one hand and the subsequent (overly simplistic) use of Cassian's works for straight history on the other. There is in fact an important difference between what Cassian wrote and how historiographers subsequently appropriated his writing. Here, it will be argued that the spirited criticism of Cassian is misdirected; whereas it is good to have a sense for the factors that constrain the usage of Cassian's writings for historical purposes, this does not vitiate the value of his works precisely because there is no reason to suppose that they were ever intended as documentary evidence of life in Lower Egypt in the latter decades of the fourth century.

This section will describe the tradition to which Cassian's works belong. That tradition, I will argue, cannot be restricted to Greeks who had immigrated to Lower Egypt. In fact, there are also numerous traces of tradition from which Cassian derives his teaching that can be found in the teachings of the Coptic monks. These traces have not always been appreciated, which is not surprising since they tend to disconfirm some fairly widely held ideas (the word 'prejudices' might not be too strong) about the character of the typical Coptic monk. But, as we shall see, there is an increasing scholarly awareness that this evidence needs to be incorporated into our understanding of Egyptian monasticism. The evidence from Cassian, I shall argue, has a part to play in this process.

But first we need to trace the connections between Cassian's teaching and the tradition that was shared by Copts and Greeks in the Wadi 'n-Natrûn. That task will be facilitated by considering the monk whose writing provides the most points of contact between the Desert Fathers on the one hand and Cassian on the other: Evagrius Ponticus. Much of the discussion that follows will consequently focus more on Evagrius than on Cassian. Even if Cassian tends to fall under Evagrius' shadow in this section, there is no cause for great concern; it is the inevitable consequence of working with the limited historical sources that have survived. In practical terms, this means that we will see how Cassian's teachings derive from a community of monks whose views are most fully available to us through the works of Evagrius.

The modern critique of Cassian

Many modern scholars have tended to put little confidence in Cassian's value as a source for historical research. Of recent writings on this question, the most comprehensive in scope is a paper delivered at the International Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford by the eminent scholar of patristic monasticism (not to mention the editor and translator of Cassian's *Institutes* for *Sources chrétiennes*), J.-C. Guy, SJ.⁷ Guy takes as his point of origin the preface to the *Institutes* and, from this, derives a pithy account of Cassian's scheme:

Brief, eye-witnessed, unedited, the author refusing to modify or adapt on his own authority: such is the aim explicitly announced by Cassian at the moment he begins to write about the monks of Egypt for the first time.⁸

Noting at once that Cassian's descriptions of monastic life in Tabennesi are in all probability derived from Jerome's Latin translation of Pachomiana, Guy faults Cassian for relying on somebody else's testimony.⁹ Guy then queries Cassian's and Germanus' itinerary. Following the earlier work of Maïeul Cappuyns, he voices his reservations about whether Cassian visited the Thebaïd or Tabennisi, and goes further than Cappuyns by even calling into question whether Cassian was ever in Mesopotamia.¹⁰ From these two observations, Guy concludes that Cassian was not content to restrict himself to writing about only what he could personally attest to having seen. This is the nub of Guy's analysis.

Next he offers three categorical observations about the historical value of Cassian's works. The first category consists in 'properly historical events'. Guy notes that Adalbert de Vogüé has shown Cassian's history of the apostolic origins of monasticism to be untenable.¹¹ But for his own purposes, Guy is more interested in Cassian's conspicuous silence in the matter of Theophilus of Alexandria's

⁷ Guy (1966); mention might also be made of comparable treatments that are available in Frank (1996) and Veilleux (1968): 146–54.

⁸ Guy (1966): 365.

⁹ Guy (1966): 366: 'Contrairement à son affirmation explicite et répétée, ce ne sont donc pas des informations inédites que Cassien donne à ses lectures dans les douze livres des *Institutions*.'

¹⁰ Guy (1966): 366–7.

¹¹ Guy (1966): 368, citing de Vogüé (1961): 218.

expulsion from Nitria of the Tall Brothers and their colleagues. While acknowledging that there are good reasons why Cassian might not have wished to bring this incident to the attention of 'les rudes moines gaulois', Guy nevertheless insists that this lacuna must diminish Cassian's reputation as 'a faithful witness to the history of Egyptian monasticism'.¹²

Guy's second category is made up of historic information. He turns first to Cassian's claim about not bending the knee to pray during Pentecost (*conl* 21.11–20) and about following the usual eating habits for a Sunday through the whole of Pentecost (*inst* 2.18). Citing the thesis of R. Cabié, Guy argues that 'this is not so much a monastic habit, as Cassian alleges, as it is a habit long and vigorously observed by the Church of Alexandria'.¹³ He also draws attention to Cassian's notoriously contested description of the *nouella solemnitas matutina* (*inst* 3.4—about which, more anon), and asserts that Cassian could not possibly have witnessed its inauguration as he claims to have done.¹⁴

Guy's third category features topographic and prosopographic information.¹⁵ He gives one example of each. The first is Cassian's claim that Kellia lies about seven kilometres from Scetis (*conl* 6.1); Guy notes that three other sources give the distance as being between thirteen and eighteen kilometres. The second concerns Cassian's references to Moses of Scetis and Moses of Calamus. Guy suggests that Cassian is wrong to insist that they are different men.

In his conclusion, Guy states that it is not his purpose 'to cast doubt upon [Cassian's] person or his works'.¹⁶ He does, however, insist that 'Cassian is no historian: he is a theoretician of remarkable originality and profundity.' And his final word on the matter is a provocative question: 'Isn't the best way to give weight to his teaching to put it in the mouth of the most celebrated monks of Egypt?'¹⁷

Guy offers these claims as 'the result of some surveys' of the literature, with no pretence of exhaustiveness.¹⁸ So it would be

¹² Guy (1966): 369.

¹³ Guy (1966): 369, citing R. Cabié, *La Pentecôte. L'évolution de la Cinquantaine pascale au cours des cinq premiers siècles* (Tournai: Desclée, 1965)—which I have been unable to consult.

¹⁴ Guy (1966): 370, citing Matéos (1963).

¹⁵ Guy (1966): 370–1.

¹⁶ Guy (1966): 371.

¹⁷ Guy (1966): 372.

¹⁸ Guy (1966): 363.

churlish to answer his points one by one. And it should be acknowledged that Guy is perfectly right to call for historiographers to use care in appealing to Cassian as a witness. However, insofar as his argument reflects some fundamental attitudes towards Cassian's writings that this monograph seeks to redress, it is appropriate to explain the points of divergence and justify the position adopted here. In doing so, we will advance the foregoing analysis of tradition in Cassian by way of suggesting that it is best to approach Cassian without muddled expectations about what it meant for him to be 'a faithful witness' to Egyptian monasticism.

Cassian's programme of propagating tradition

First, contrary to Guy's claim, Cassian never promised an 'unedited' account of what he had learnt. The glaring admission by Cassian that he will modify the *regulas* and *instituta* of the Egyptian and Palestinian monks for the benefit of his Gallic readers (at *inst* pref. 8–9) undermines Guy's claim that Cassian's avowed intention 'is not his own judgement'.¹⁹ In fact, Cassian endorsed an informed and selective transmission of monastic practice; he offered in his works a modified version of Egyptian and Palestinian practice for Westerners (rather than offering them an 'unedited' history). So in the matter of modifying Egyptian rules and teachings (their 'institutes'), Cassian can be seen to have acted as a discerning purveyor of what he had seen and learnt rather than as, let us say, a chronicler.

Cassian gives us no reason to think that he aimed to reproduce the *ipsissima uerba* of the Desert Fathers, as Guy's criticisms seem to suppose. Indeed, Cassian uses the phrase '*ipsa uerba*' very scarcely and, even when he does, it is chiefly to flag up scriptural expressions.²⁰ Twice he relates that an abba claimed to report the 'very words' of his predecessor;²¹ but only once, in talking of the fathers,

¹⁹ Guy (1966): 365.

²⁰ Thus, Cassian, *conl* 8.23 and 9.13, *inc* 4.2.

²¹ Cassian, *conl* 15.10 (where Abba Nesteros is evidently quoting Abba Paphnutius); *conl* 18.14 (where Abba Piamun relates the tale of the religious woman who approaches Athanasius of Alexandria).

does he say that he will relate 'their words'.²² Even there, however, Cassian gives no indication that his works are, or are intended to be, basically stenographic records. We need to be quite clear on an important matter, though: denying that Cassian's writings were a vehicle for the Desert Fathers' *ipsissima uerba* is not tantamount to saying that they are fictional; it would be far better to think of them as interpretive. In this matter, Cassian differed only in degree from the practice of Thucydides, for example, who noted that

it has been difficult to recall the precise words of the speeches that I listened to myself—and it is likewise with my informants. So each person shall say concerning the situation at hand what is, in my view, most necessary, while I keep close to the complete sense of what was actually said.²³

'Keeping close to the complete sense of what was actually said'—as a principle of interpretive recollection, this is a viable description for what Cassian did. But his overall project was not to compose an historical account comparable to Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian war. Since Cassian never claimed to offer a report along those lines, most of Guy's criticism is ultimately misplaced.

Secondly, Guy moves very abruptly from showing that Cassian ought to be treated with care in the matter of historical claims, to insisting that he is no historian. It is significant that, at the transition from one claim to the other, we find Guy extolling Cassian's worth as a 'theoretician of the spiritual life'. There seems to be at back of Guy's claim the assumption that Cassian's account of the Fathers is misrepresentative of their history to the extent that it ascribes to them a developed theory of the spiritual life. This is a seductive assumption, because it has long been presumed that the Desert Fathers were not interested in theology and that such habits as allegory and theory were contaminants introduced into the desert by 'Greeks seeking

²² Cassian, *inst* 2.9: 'Et quia nos ad orationum canonicarum modum consequenter institutorum ordo prouexit, quarum plenior tractatum licet in conlationes seniorum reseruerimus ibidem plenius digesturi, cum de earum qualitate seu iugitate uerbis eorum disserere coeperimus'.

²³ Thucydides, *hist* A.1.22.1 (ed. Jones [1900]): ... χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεύσαι ἦν ἐμοὶ τε ὧν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθεν ποθεν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγγέλλουσιν. ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται.

knowledge'.²⁴ The impression that this sort of suspicion lingers at back of Guy's criticism is, I think, strengthened by the fact that Guy faults Cassian for using other writings in the composition of his works. More will be said about presumptions concerning the theological culture of Egyptian monasticism anon. For the moment, it may suffice to point out that Guy's criticism rests upon an arbitrarily sharp distinction between history and spirituality that, if pursued rigorously, would eliminate virtually all the surviving writings from that period as historical sources.²⁵

Thirdly, we should just pause at Guy's suggestion that Cassian foisted his own teachings off on 'the most celebrated monks of Egypt'. Any reader as yet unfamiliar with Cassian's works who was told, by way of a preface to a first reading, that they contain the teachings of celebrated monks would assuredly be deeply confused, not to say disappointed, by the decided *lack* of celebrity of Cassian's informants. Even if *obiter dicta* from Poemen and Anthony are met (albeit infrequently) in Cassian's pages, the fact remains that Cassian recorded remarkably few discussions with monks of any renown whatever.

Abba Piamun is arguably the best known of Cassian's sources, as he is mentioned both in the *History of the monks of Egypt* and by Sozomen.²⁶ Abba Paphnutius is probably identical to the man of that name whom Palladius mentions.²⁷ Because Abba Isaac seems to have known St Anthony, he may tentatively be identified with a person by that name whom Palladius also mentioned,²⁸ though it may be

²⁴ In the first edition of his monograph, O. Chadwick offered an elegant statement of this view, which was not reprinted in the second edition. He writes (1950): 163, 'When hellenized savants, unable to escape the categories of their philosophical training, entered the desert, they seem, as a tradition of German scholarship from Mosheim to Reitzenstein has maintained in extreme or moderate forms, to push the Gospel aside, to submerge it under the weight of Oriental mysticism, to pursue an ideal claiming to be Christian but fundamentally Gnostic.'

²⁵ If Cassian is eliminated for mixing theology with history, then so surely must Palladius, the *Life of Anthony*, and the Pachomiana be eliminated as well. Furthermore, it has been shown recently that agendas apart from historiography can be isolated in *HM*: see G. Frank (2000). And since critical scholarship has begun to question the motives behind the redaction of the *Apophthegmata patrum* (see below), perhaps that collection should be eliminated, too.

²⁶ *HM* 25 (ed. Festugière [1961]: 134); Sozomen, *HE* 6.29 (PG 67: 1376).

²⁷ Palladius, *HL* 47.3–17 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 226–36).

²⁸ See Ramsey (1997): 323.

doubted whether a distant connection to a famous person is itself enough to constitute fame. Cassian's Abba Moses is manifestly *not* the famous reformed robber St Moses the Ethiopian, because Cassian's Moses entered the monastery in his youth.²⁹ Abbas Daniel, Theodore, Serenus, Pinufius, and Theonas are otherwise unknown; there is simply not enough information to come to any conclusion about whether Cassian's Serapion, Chaeremon, and John may be identified with any of the other men by those names who are otherwise known to us. Likewise, Abbas Nesteros, Joseph, and Abraham might also appear in the *Apophthegmata*, though again we cannot be sure.

In short, the dramatis personae of Cassian's writings are obscure and, in many cases, otherwise unknown. This might not simply be an accident of history. If we are to judge from the pains that Cassian takes to describe the personalities (and, in some instances at least, the appearances) of his interlocutors, it is possible that he never expected his readers to know who they were.³⁰

It is possible to call into question Guy's claim that Cassian tried to put his personal teachings into the mouths of monastic celebrities, for even more important reasons than have been adduced so far. We can begin by posing a question: what evidence do we have that the substance of the *Conferences* ought not to be attributed to the abbats to whom Cassian attributes them? One immediately thinks of the discussion about grace and freedom that is ascribed to Chaeremon in *Conference* 13—a discussion that would have been of enormous interest in Gaul, c.425, but that does not correspond particularly closely to any discussions known to have taken place in Egypt about thirty years earlier. On a related note, we have also found rather a lot of evidence for Cassian responding to the Pelagian controversy in his writings. Does this mean, though, that Cassian's claim to relate the teachings of the elders has been undermined? In fact, it does not.

Cassian's entire corpus is founded on his belief that the content of tradition can justifiably be adapted by a discerning teacher to meet the needs of his disciples. This being so, Cassian can be expected to

²⁹ Cassian, *conl* 2.11.

³⁰ Cf. the considered opinion of Butler (1898–1904): 1: 205, who concluded from the level of detail about the monks offered by Cassian that the accounts were probably substantially accurate.

have retouched the reported conversations so as to make them more relevant to the current circumstances than they otherwise would have been. Such a creative appropriation of the teachings of the desert saints is in keeping with Cassian's purpose of furthering a tradition. But even though it was not his goal to record a chronography of late fourth-century Lower Egypt, we need not suppose that Cassian plucked his conferences out of thin air, since he had a rationale for adapting earlier material that would have justified (in his own mind, if not in the eyes of critical patrologists) a reworking of Chaeremon's basic teaching in order to make it salient on the far shore of the Mediterranean, some thirty years on. So in the case of *Conference 13*, all we need accept is that Cassian, having recalled that Chaeremon once said things about how God protects monks and that those things were worthy of repeating, decided to retell Chaeremon's message in such a way that its contemporary relevance would become obvious.

To accept this perspective on Cassian's project is to accept a further departure from Guy's account: we have no real grounds for insisting that Cassian's teaching would have been incomprehensible or otherwise foreign to Chaeremon and the rest, had they been confronted with it. In other words, it is perfectly reasonable to think that Chaeremon really was interested in how God's protection safeguards (and thus interacts with) human endeavours; that Isaac personally endorsed an account of prayer that is in line with the teaching of Evagrius Ponticus; that Serenus indulged in allegorical interpretations of Genesis when propounding his understanding of angels; that Joseph, along with a host of other early Christians, was prepared to acknowledge the usefulness of a white lie.

In default of compelling reasons not to do so, we are at liberty to take the *Conferences* as Cassian invites us to take them—as recollections of talks that he and Germanus heard from a number of saintly men, which he is writing down a few decades after the fact, as best he can, for the benefit of his readers. We can therefore reasonably claim that the substrate of Cassian's writings is attributable to the ascetics of the Egyptian desert. That is to say, his writings are a representation (in the strictest sense of that word) of the teachings that he encountered during his travels with Germanus.

This interpretation of Cassian's project in no way inhibits our ability to speak seriously about Cassian's own beliefs as they are

reflected in the monastic works. After all, Cassian is the person who edited the material, so we can be confident that in the process of editing he allowed his own views to be expressed through the conversations as he recollected them. Prosper had already come to a similar conclusion when he wrote:

In a book entitled *On the protection of God*, a certain priest (one who surpasses all those with whom he dwells in the art of discussion) introduces a certain abba speaking on divine grace and free will. The writer shows that he entirely approves and makes his own the abba's teaching. So we have no need to deal with the abba, who might well respond by denying these opinions or clean them up by correcting them; [our concern] is rather with the writer. . . .³¹

The relentless criticism to which Prosper's evaluation was subjected in an earlier chapter notwithstanding, he has made a very good point. Cassian does indeed 'clearly [show] that he approves and makes his own the abba's teaching'—not just here, but throughout the collection as a whole.

Prosper also raises an interesting question: is it likely that Chaeremon would have responded by denying that the opinions were his own, or by correcting them? We need not assume that the litmus test would be hypothetically to put to Chaeremon the question, 'Are you an opponent of Augustine?' Beyond stipulating that Cassian was not obviously affirming (or affirming that Chaeremon had affirmed!) the views of which Prosper accuses him, there is actually very little that we can confidently say in answer to Prosper's hypothesis about Chaeremon's response. What we can do, however, is look to other sources about the teaching of the Nitrian fathers and try to ascertain from them whether Cassian's claims about their teaching are plausible.

2 INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL HORIZONS IN LATE ANCIENT EGYPT

In evaluating Guy's critique of Cassian's historical reliability, I noted that he seems to suppose that, in Cassian's works, we are confronted

³¹ Prosper, *c Coll* 2.1 (PL 51:218).

with a teaching that had been transplanted into the Egyptian desert by Greeks and other sordid types—which Owen Chadwick roundly asserted in 1950. The dichotomy that Chadwick proposed is, however, not as recent as his references to Mosheim and Reitzenstein would suggest; it is in fact quite ancient and can be traced back to Cassian's own time. Thus, the highly educated Abba Arsenius contrasts himself (unfavourably) to illiterate Egyptian peasants; Archbishop Theophilus refers contemptuously to the uneducated monastic rabble and their overeducated monastic enemies; Socrates Scholasticus paints an extremely unflattering picture of the illiterate and reactionary multitudes.³² This dichotomy requires further consideration.

'Copts v. Greeks'

The conjunction of ancient witnesses is heady, and subsequent generations have shown a marked tendency to accept it as an axiom of scholarship. Lucien Regnault has expressed the position quite clearly in his introduction to the *Apophthegmata* in French translation:

We will, however, take care to flag the roughly 250 'intrusions' that we have been able to identify. They are in particular extracts from Evagrius, Cassian, Palladius, Abba Esaias, Hyperêchios, Moschus, Anastaius, *et c.* [sic]—from authors who are certainly interesting, but who do not represent the pure tradition of the Egyptian monastic field. For the special appeal of the *Apophthegmata* lies in the ancient source it represents for the fourth and fifth centuries, in particular at Scetis, in the entourage of Abba Poemen. This is the most ancient and most authentic thread that one must make an effort to extract in order to rediscover in all its force and vitality the first sap of the origins of monasticism. So in the aggregation of apophthegmatic literature there is a pressing need for sorting.³³

In taking up this position, Regnault finds himself in a distinguished company of scholars.³⁴ For example, Antoine Guillaumont had

³² *Apoph* Arsenius 5, 6 (PG 65: 88–9); Theophilus, *ep Const scripta*, fr. 7 (ed. Richard [1975]: 63); Socrates, *HE* 6.7 (PG 67: 687–8).

³³ Regnault (1976): 8; NB: the inverted commas and italics are Regnault's.

³⁴ For the overview that follows, I am indebted to the clear and comprehensive account found in Hombergen (2001): 233–6.

characterized Evagrius as 'appearing at once foreign and intellectual' in the midst of 'monks who were, for the most part, illiterate Egyptian peasants'.³⁵ Karl Heussi had asserted that 'the majority of the monks had come from among the illiterate'³⁶—and Derwas Chitty, Jérôme Labourt, and A.-J. Festugière subscribed to much the same view.³⁷ Manlio Simonetti has gone even further and asserted that 'the monks, by an overwhelming majority, were not only ignorant—they were also happy to remain so.'³⁸ Frances Young claims that an attitude very much like the one described by Simonetti is in evidence in the *Apophthegmata*.³⁹ These accounts are generally also quick to draw attention to the piety and devotion of the benighted peasants. But not every portrayal of Copts as illiterates (or even anti-intellectuals) stresses their simple piety and devotion to God. In his survey of monastic agitation and violence in Egypt, W. H. C. Frend gives his reader the distinct impression that Copts were violent and psychologically unstable thugs.⁴⁰ In brief, the received account of Egyptian monasticism portrays it as being made up of a core of rural, unrefined Copts with an overlay of intellectual Greek *parvenus*.

This broad consensus is self-perpetuating. Although it ultimately looks back to some sayings in the *Apophthegmata* or to Socrates Scholasticus' unfriendly depiction of Alexandrian Christians, it is more obviously reliant upon other scholarly interpretations. There are some exceptions (for example, the *Vita Antonii* sometimes enters the discussion; elsewhere, instead of the *Apophthegmata*, Frend has recourse to sources such as Pachomius). But it is generally the case that the received account is based on a very small sampling from the overall material that has come down to us. In point of fact, we have far more evidence than the handful of references that are regularly brought out—and the difference is made up especially by the works of those early figures whose names appeared in Regnault's blacklist.

³⁵ Guillaumont (1962): 52–3: 'Parmi ces moines, qui sont, la plus part, des paysans égyptiens illettrés, Évagre figure tout à la fois d'étranger et d'intellectuel.'

³⁶ Heussi (1936): 278: 'Die Mehrzahl der Mönche wird aus Analphabeten bestanden haben.'

³⁷ Chitty (1966): 86; Labourt (1949–54): 4: 128; Festugière (1961): 77 n. 4.

³⁸ Simonetti (1986): 30: 'I monaci infatti, nella stragrande maggioranza, non solo erano ignoranti ma erano anche ben contenti di esserlo.'

³⁹ Young (1983): 47. ⁴⁰ Frend (1990).

This prompts a number of questions. Is there actually any reason to suppose that illiteracy was unusually widespread among the Coptic monks? Is it really the case that the Coptic and Greek monks lived in an uneasy truce? What basis have we for supposing that Egyptian monasticism was characteristically anti-intellectual?

These are probative questions with respect to the received account concerning Egyptian monasticism. This account—which is particularly evident in research on the ‘Anthropomorphite Controversy’ (research, that is, which necessarily involves Cassian in some way or other)⁴¹—is that Egyptian monasticism fundamentally *was* anti-intellectual because Coptic monks *were* largely illiterate and were consequently indifferent, if not actively hostile, to intellectual activity. And yet a great deal of recent research has arrived at conclusions that are strikingly different. So we will want to take stock of the research of several scholars of late ancient Egypt.

Intellectual culture in late ancient Egypt

The findings of contemporary papyrologists, historians, and theologians collectively tend to suggest a much higher level of literacy amongst the Coptic population in general than the received account would lead one to expect. If the overall level of literacy within the population can be estimated at a reasonably high level, one would assume that the level of literacy within the monastic subset of that population would likewise be reasonably high. This assumption has in fact been confirmed by theological research that has documented a marked affinity amongst Coptic monastic authors for applying Hellenistic techniques of allegorical interpretation to the spiritual life. These findings suggest a higher level of intellectual activity within the Coptic monastic scene than the received account would allow and thus constitutes the first step towards a full-scale revisionist account of the place of Cassian (not to mention Evagrius and Palladius) within Egyptian monasticism.

⁴¹ See, e.g. Labourt (1949–54): 4: 186; Carruthers (1998): 71–2; and especially E. Clark (1992), whose ‘elite networks’ (11–42) curiously fail to include any Egyptians at all, though the Egyptians are mentioned elsewhere (151–8) and so presumably constitute ‘provincial networks’ of their own.

We should begin our examination of late ancient Egyptian culture with a few basic observations about the Coptic language.⁴² 'Coptic' in the first instance describes the script that was adapted from Greek and augmented with seven characters (to represent sounds that do not occur in Greek) and that superseded the cursive glyphs of Demotic Egyptian. By extension, the term 'Coptic' has been used to refer to the final evolutionary stage of the Egyptian language. Coptic literature is overwhelmingly Christian literature, and can be dated as beginning c. AD 200. Already, from this brief description of the language, an important theme is emerging—namely, that Greek had an enormous impact upon the development of Coptic. This impact cannot be limited to the distinctive script. After all, by the time Coptic emerges, the Greek cultural influence that Alexander the Great introduced into Egypt had been felt—and not simply in Alexandria—for nearly five centuries.

In consequence of this, we have no reason to affirm a priori that the Egyptians were linguistically and culturally insulated from Greek thought, even if they had no working knowledge of Greek as such.⁴³ Even if it can be established that some particular Egyptian had no Greek, it does not follow that the person in question was 'untainted' by Greek culture. Greek vocabulary is found 'scattered throughout every class of text' in Coptic.⁴⁴ Indeed, Roger Bagnall has concluded that 'it is clear that Coptic was developed, and its literature produced, predominantly through bilingual milieus'.⁴⁵

Bilingualism

More to the point, we have considerable evidence that bilingualism (not least in the monasteries) and literacy are regular features of the Christian clergy in Egypt during this period. The best primary source for anecdotal evidence about bilingualism is the *Letter of Ammon*, in

⁴² For what follows, see Mallon (1956): 1–7 and Till (1955): 29–45.

⁴³ See Lefort (1950): 65–71, Orlandi (1986) and, more generally, Bagnall (1993): 230–60.

⁴⁴ Crum (1939): viii: 'The book being a dictionary of the Coptic language, the countless Greek words, scattered through every class of text, cannot claim inclusion.'

⁴⁵ Bagnall (1993): 238.

which Ammon relates hearing Theodore of Alexandria simultaneously translate Theodore's Coptic catechetical lectures into Greek, and how he himself relatively quickly came to be able to speak with Theodore's monks.⁴⁶ In all likelihood, this means that Ammon was conversant in both the Sahidic and the Bohairic dialects of Coptic as well as in Greek.⁴⁷ This may not have been an uncommon achievement. Chiefly on the basis of papyrological research, Bagnall has argued that 'the very lack of self-consciousness about language in both documentary and literary sources suggests that bilingualism was common in rural areas, despite the survival of a considerable number of peasants who spoke only Egyptian'.⁴⁸

Literacy

As regards literacy, the publications of Ewa Wipszycka are of the utmost importance, not least because of their copious references. Following her studies of the literary and documentary sources, Wipszycka has argued that literacy needs to be understood as a graded phenomenon (that is, there are degrees of literacy) and that the evidence points to a rather high standard of reading ability within the Egyptian Church. Her first point can be grasped if one thinks of the term 'literacy' as embracing everything from mastery of a language in its written form, through competence in dealing with all aspects of the written language, down to penmanship. On this scale, a Copt could be considered 'unlettered' for many reasons—for instance, if he signed his name badly on a document; if he had to engage a scribe to file legal paperwork on his behalf; if he is totally ignorant of Greek.⁴⁹ (To put this in a modern frame of reference, one could conclude that a professor with atrocious handwriting who

⁴⁶ *Letter of Ammon* 4–7, 17, 28–9 (PTS 26: 127–9, 136–7, 150–2).

⁴⁷ Following Halkin, Goehring (PTS 26: 247–8) explains that Ammon probably spoke the Bohairic dialect already and had to learn to speak in the Sahidic dialect in order to communicate.

⁴⁸ Bagnall (1993): 245; see also Dummer (1968). This finding justifies the assertion made earlier in this section that the impact of Greek culture was not limited to Alexandria, but also made itself felt in rural Egypt.

⁴⁹ See Wipszycka (1996*b*): 107–9.

could neither write in French nor prepare his own will without legal assistance was 'unlettered'.)

Wipszycka therefore glosses the term ἀγράμματος as meaning 'not an illiterate, but one who is not competent to write in a given situation'.⁵⁰ She has argued with respect to merchants and landlords (that is, working-class people) that 'it is beyond doubt that all these people knew how to read and write'.⁵¹ She also speculates that the shift from Demotic to Coptic script facilitated an overall increase in levels of literacy.⁵² And she points to abundant evidence that clergy and monastic leaders especially promoted literacy as a desirable skill for Christians to possess.⁵³

Here, it should be noted, we are passing higher up the scale of literacy. Although it would obviously be in the interests of a monastery to have monks who could engage in legal and commercial transactions on behalf of the community, no broad mandate for education is required for such activities. The monastic and ecclesiastical leaders were promoting literacy by way of promoting intellectual culture, not least the study of Scripture.

On Wipszycka's analysis, the claim that most Copts were illiterate peasants is unpersuasive because no compelling evidence has been produced in support of it, whereas information deriving from many sources indicates that literacy was a skill valued and even inculcated in the monasteries and elsewhere.⁵⁴

Now the evidence that Wipszycka has provided does not translate into quantifiable measurements of literacy levels.⁵⁵ But it does tend overwhelmingly to the conclusion that literacy was not an uncommon phenomenon amongst Egyptian Christians. Since Wipszycka's research is based on documentary sources no less than on religious literature, it has a significant claim to be more accurate than research that is based simply on inferences from theological, hagiographical, or devotional literature. It is worth considering the possibility that the image of a simple monk who has been educated by God (if by anyone at all!) may itself be a deliberate distortion introduced

⁵⁰ Wipszycka (1996*b*): 131.

⁵¹ Wipszycka (1996*a*): 112.

⁵² Wipszycka (1996*a*): 114.

⁵³ Wipszycka (1996*a*): 117–26.

⁵⁴ See also Bagnall (1993): 248–9.

⁵⁵ Wipszycka (1996*b*): 128–9; so, too, Roberts (1979): 24–5.

by Christian authors who were motivated by any of a number of reasons.⁵⁶ The composite image of the Coptic monk that emerges from this research is remarkably unlike the pious rustic who has so captivated the imagination of scholars.⁵⁷ Equally intriguing and, in historical terms, better substantiated, is the image of the monk acting as a scribe.⁵⁸

Evidence from theological literature

But one may go further. Mark Sheridan has built upon Wipszycka's and Bagnall's research to offer a compelling account of the intellectual climate of early Egyptian monasticism. Sheridan's analysis is based on a wide sampling of the literature:

not only the *Vita Antonii* of Athanasius but also his other ascetical works, Anthony's letters, the Pachomian corpus, Ammonius' letters, the works of Paul of Tamma, Evagrius Ponticus, Didymus of Alexandria, the *Historia Monachorum*, Palladius' *Lausiatic History*, the one letter of Macarius that is probably authentic, and to some extent the *Apophthegmata*.⁵⁹

Sheridan is rightly hesitant to rely too heavily on the evidence from the Pachomian corpus or the *Apophthegmata* because they have a long and complex history of compilation and redaction.⁶⁰ He also notes that the use of Cassian's writings must also be cautious.⁶¹ Based on a close examination of the terminology used to describe the

⁵⁶ Thus, Wipszycka (1996a): 122; see, too, Hombergen (2001): 243–7 *et passim*, for his arguments concerning the complex use of literary conventions by Cyril of Scythopolis in promoting the lives of fiercely anti-intellectual monks.

⁵⁷ Wipszycka has subjected this stereotype to scrutiny and found it wanting in another important publication: Wipszycka (1996c): 329–36.

⁵⁸ Most famously, Evagrius himself was highly regarded for his 'Oxyrynchus' script: Palladius, *HL* 38.10 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 200, and 374 n. to line 89 for a discussion of what precisely that script was). We also have an intriguing letter (in Koenen [1974]) from a certain Dionysius to Abba Honorius who requests that the monk copy out a book for him. For further references and discussion, see Casiday (2005b).

⁵⁹ Sheridan (1997b): 183.

⁶⁰ See further Faraggiana di Sarzana (1997).

⁶¹ Sheridan makes a fair point, but in view of the hostile scepticism with respect to Cassian that I am arguing against in this book, I would want to underline that all these sources have to be used with caution. In that sense, Cassian is not a special case. Admittedly, Cassian was engaged in retelling his anecdotes for the benefit of an audience far removed from the desert—but, then, so was Palladius.

Christian life and the techniques used to expound Scripture in these writings, Sheridan demonstrates that they share a consistent and strikingly sophisticated view of the spiritual life. He has further shown that the fountainhead for this tradition is not Origen, important though Origen's role doubtless was. That distinction belongs to Philo of Alexandria, who had himself used these techniques and categories in applying Scripture to the ascetic (though, of course, not monastic) life and who thus had a momentous impact upon the Fathers of the Desert.⁶²

What emerges from the publications of Bagnall, Wipszycka, and Sheridan is a nuanced view of the Coptic intellectual world generally, and the Coptic monks' intellectual world more specifically. They have shown that the presumption that Coptic monks were largely illiterate (because largely of peasant stock) is baseless. As we have noted already, their arguments do not mean that literacy was normative. Bagnall and Wipszycka explicitly disavow the prospect of extracting from written sources quantitative data concerning levels of literacy. Meanwhile, Sheridan shows that it is wrongheaded to suppose that Egyptian monasticism had limited intellectual horizons by drawing our attention to a widely represented use of Alexandrian exegesis amongst the abbas. In sum, their work puts paid to the notion that Egyptian monks were largely illiterate, uncultured, and uncouth. So to our first question we can give a reasonably confident answer of no—there are in fact no good reasons to suppose that Coptic monks were as a rule illiterate.

3 EGYPTIAN MONKS AND THEIR THEOLOGICAL LITERACY

As for the second question (the purported anti-intellectualism of the Desert Fathers), the best way to come to a satisfactory response is to look to particular abbas and see whether we encounter any such trend.

⁶² Sheridan (1997*b*): 197–8 and Rufus of Shotep, ed. Sheridan (1998): 241–3, for Sheridan's discussion of the 'Alexandrian exegetical tradition'—a concept that will be very important in the following analysis.

Anthony the Great, Didymus the Blind, and Paul of Tamma

The composite Coptic monk, as we have seen, would quite possibly have been able to read and probably lived in a society where literacy was valued. Keeping this in mind, let us turn from the composite monk to the ideal monk: Anthony the Great. In the *Vita Antonii*, we read in no uncertain terms that Anthony was uneducated.⁶³ In his confrontations with worldly philosophers, Anthony is revealed in all his glory as a 'man taught by God' (*theodidaktikos*) who has thus acquired an astounding knowledge of philosophy and contemplation.⁶⁴ Once asked by a philosopher how he could endure a life without the consolation of books, Anthony is reported to have answered, 'My book, o Philosopher, is the nature of creation, and it is to hand when I wish to read the words [λόγους] of God.'⁶⁵

This arresting image of Anthony reading the world merits further attention. It elegantly summarizes a number of his debates with pagan philosophers, as recorded in the *Life*.⁶⁶ It should not escape our notice that Anthony's claim precisely states an insight that Evagrius develops in his teaching about *theoria* and Cassian in his teaching about *philosophia naturalis*: the Christian can learn of God and be edified by contemplating the created order. Anthony thus stands in a line that leads to (and through) Evagrius. In his letters, Anthony articulates a related teaching that is so sophisticated that many scholars, appealing to the image of Anthony as unlettered that

⁶³ Athanasius, *u Ant* 1.2–3, 72.2, 78.1 (SC 400: 130, 320, 332). NB: At *u Ant* 1, Athanasius is not claiming that Anthony had an aversion to learning. His point rather is that Anthony showed an almost preternatural maturity and did not want to associate with other children. This is evident from the immediately following anecdote about Anthony's exemplary behaviour in church.

⁶⁴ Athanasius, *u Ant* 66.2 (SC 400: 308).

⁶⁵ Evagrius, *prak* 92 (SC 171: 694); cf. Socrates, *HE* 4.23 (PG 67: 516). The anecdote cannot be written off as Evagrius' invention, since it is also found in Pelagius and John's *Vitae Patrum* 6: *Verba Seniorum* 4.16 (PL 73: 1018). So although the saying is not found in the extant Greek collections, it is more likely that it fell out after Pelagius and John had made their translation than that they surreptitiously incorporated it into their collection after reading it in Evagrius (or indeed in Socrates). For a discussion of the various collections and how they could be related, Bousset's *Apophthegmata* remains indispensable (see Bousset [1969]). On Pelagius and John, see esp. Bousset (1969): 3–10.

⁶⁶ Cf. Athanasius, *u Ant* 72.1–80.7 (SC 400: 320–40).

is found in the *Life* and the *Apophthegmata*, are unwilling to accept as authentic. It is unnecessary to trundle through the arguments now, when that has been done satisfactorily elsewhere.⁶⁷ It is enough to note that the cosmology which Anthony advances in his letters significantly resembles what we find in Evagrius and Cassian;⁶⁸ and that, according to Athanasius, Anthony acquired a 'love of learning' (that is, of learning the Scriptures) during his training, and that he required his monks to write out their thoughts at the end of each day.⁶⁹ It therefore seems prudent to take Athanasius' claim that Anthony was illiterate as a device that is at once hagiographical and polemical, rather than as a straight bit of biographical information.

But even if we opt to take Athanasius at his word and believe that Anthony was totally illiterate, we could nevertheless still affirm that the letters are genuine and that Anthony was possessed of a remarkable theological sophistication. We can get a sense for how this could be possible from the case of Anthony's illustrious peer and fellow monk, Didymus of Alexandria.⁷⁰ Didymus was an enormously prolific theologian—and yet he was most certainly illiterate, because he was blind from four years of age and therefore had no formal education.⁷¹ Rufinus of Aquileia attributes Didymus' vast learning to his habit of patiently listening to the reading of Scripture.⁷² But this practice alone cannot account for the breadth of Didymus' learning, for he was also knowledgeable in ancient sciences such as geometry, and he knew Philo's works quite well.⁷³ Presumably these

⁶⁷ I am persuaded by the arguments of Rubenson (1995*b*) that the seven letters attributed to Anthony in the Georgian tradition (and surviving in part in other ancient versions) are authentic. It may be noted, however, that although I agree in broad outline with his interpretation of their contents, I am not committed to his interpretation in every particular.

⁶⁸ See Casiday (2002).

⁶⁹ Athanasius, *u Ant* 4.1, 55.9 (SC 400: 138–40, 284); see the discussion by Sheridan (1997*b*): 185 n. 29 and, on the meaning of 'love of learning', see Girardet (1970).

⁷⁰ Evidence of Didymus' acquaintance with Anthony and of his monasticism are provided by Palladius, *HL* 4 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 26–8); for a general study, see Leipoldt (1905).

⁷¹ Palladius, *HL* 4.2 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 26).

⁷² Rufinus, *HE* 11.7 (ed. Mommsen [1903]: 1012).

⁷³ For Didymus' secular knowledge, see Rufinus, *HE* 11.7 (ed. Mommsen [1903]: 1012) and Jerome, *uir inl* 109 (TU 14: 50); for his use of Philo, see Runia (1993): 197–204.

subjects were not read aloud in church! Socrates Scholasticus' comments about Didymus' education are helpful in this connection: 'In place of physical eyes, God gave him spiritual ones: and such things as he was unable to be trained in by the eye, he mastered by the ear.'⁷⁴ It would seem, then, Didymus had tutors who adapted their style of teaching to his disability. In this way, Didymus was able to be incorporated into a literary culture whilst remaining illiterate.

However he came to be educated, it is certain that he had a wide reputation for learning. Students travelled to Alexandria for the sake of studying with him; we know, for example, that Jerome spent a month with him in Alexandria.⁷⁵ It is also reported that Anthony paid Didymus a visit—and this connection is very suggestive in view of Anthony's own intellectual attainments.

In addition to his theological and exegetical writings, Didymus also produced a commentary (now regrettably lost) on Origen's *De principiis*.⁷⁶ Through his writings and personal contacts, then, Didymus was a central figure in the spread of Alexandrian theology, and it can be supposed that he exercised a great influence upon his monastic readers. So in the person of Didymus, we find an illiterate monastic exegete who was superbly trained in the techniques of Alexandrian allegorical interpretation and whose writings were read, and valued, by monks in the desert. His extensive learning and theological acumen, coupled with his illiteracy, should serve as a caution against supposing that literary erudition depends upon the ability to read and write.

At approximately the same time that Didymus was directing the catechetical school in Alexandria, another adept ascetic whose writings are characterized by Alexandrian exegesis flourished in Middle Egypt, near Memphis and Šmun (modern Ashmunein): Paul of Tamma. Because his writings were never translated into Latin or Greek, and he himself was never mentioned by the pilgrims' travelogues of the day, Paul has been largely neglected.⁷⁷ Happily, Paul's

⁷⁴ Socrates, *HE* 4.25 (PG 67: 525).

⁷⁵ Jerome, *CEph* prol. (PL 26: 440): 'Denique nuper ob hanc uel maxime causam Alexandriam perrexi, ut uiderem Didymum, et ab eo in Scriptoribus omnibus quae habebam dubia sciscitarer.' Cf. *ep* 84.3 (ed. Labourt [1949–54]: 4: 127).

⁷⁶ Socrates, *HE* 4.25 (PG 67: 528).

⁷⁷ Ed. Orlandi (1988): 10.

works are now available in a diplomatic edition with an Italian translation and also in an English translation, which we may hope will draw attention to Paul so that his works can gain the attention that they rightly deserve.⁷⁸ We have at present four writings by Paul, though it is possible that there may at one point have been as many as ten of them in a collection.⁷⁹ From the works that come down to us, it appears that Paul was a master of aphorism. The writings are filled with lapidary insights and well-turned phrases. They call to mind at once the writings of Paul's better-known and slightly older contemporary, Evagrius Ponticus.

Paul was born in Tamma, in the nome of Koeis (Kynopotis).⁸⁰ It is not clear when he was born, but one report describes him as being fully mature and established at Arsinoë when Scetic was sacked, c.407.⁸¹ His monastic career began at the age of eighteen, when he apprenticed himself to Abba Hyperichus at the mountain of Touho (Theodosiopolis). We do not know when or under what circumstances Paul relocated to Arsinoë, but we do know that, when he was about seventy-two years old he was joined there by his disciple and biographer, Ezekiel.⁸² The time and circumstances of his death are likewise unknown to us, but it seems probable that he died peacefully in his old age.⁸³

Paul spent his life in Middle Egypt, where his peers would have included Apollo, Phib, Anup, Pamoun, and Aphu; he is the only father from this region whose writings are known to us, but it has been reasonably conjectured that those writings represent a distinctive Middle Egyptian voice.⁸⁴ This is not to say that Paul's horizons were limited, however. His *Life* indicates that Paul was familiar with the monks of Lower Egypt—at least to the extent that he registered no surprise when he met Abba Aphou and requested no further information when Aphou reported that he had been made a monk

⁷⁸ Text and Italian trans.: ed. Orlandi (1988); English trans. of the works, and supporting documents: Vivian (1997). The English translations will appear in Dr Vivian's forthcoming *Words to Live By*, and I thank him for an advance copy of the material.

⁷⁹ Thus, Pezin (1995): 20.

⁸⁰ See Amélineau (1888–95): 2: 765.

⁸¹ Evelyn White (1932): 159.

⁸² Coquin (1991): 1923–5.

⁸³ See the biography related in the Arabic Jacobite Synaxarion for 7 Babeh (PO 1.3: 322).

⁸⁴ Orlandi (1988): 12.

by Anthony.⁸⁵ In a later tradition, he is connected with Abba Bishoi of Scetis: the two are so close that they are even joined in death. When attempts are made to remove Bishoi's relics to the Monastery of Abba Macarius and Paul's relics are left behind, the boat transporting Bishoi miraculously refused to move until Paul was loaded on it too.⁸⁶ Whatever kernel of historical information may be found in these tales linking Paul to Scetis, it is clear from Paul's own teachings that he moved in the currents of thought that are familiar to us from the writings that originated in the Wadi 'n-Natrûn.

In the Arabic Synaxarion, Paul is celebrated for the exceptional lengths to which he pursued his asceticism. Six times he mortified his body until he died, and six times the Lord restored him to life. The accounts of his deaths are pithy and gruesome in equal measure.⁸⁷ In contrast to these shocking tales, the asceticism that Paul promotes in his writings seems, at first, astoundingly moderate. His primary message is the importance of staying put. Voluntarily constricting oneself to a small room, however, is no mean feat—and Paul is uncompromising in his insistence on the need of cutting oneself off.⁸⁸ In this, Paul's teaching resembles the saying of Abba Moses: 'Go, sit in your cell and your cell will teach you everything.'⁸⁹

Moses' saying ends there, but Paul goes on, as it were, to say what it is that one learns from the cell. 'Indeed,' he says, 'you will find God in it.'⁹⁰ This bold claim is founded on an experience that Paul describes in some detail. Offering no distractions, the cell drives the monk to introspection. This experience is wearisome and prayer becomes difficult; but this is necessary so that one may learn that 'without God you will not be able to do anything.'⁹¹ This is a fundamental lesson. Another is similar: sitting in the cell provides an excellent environment for putting one's heart in the right place—that is, for

⁸⁵ Amélineau (1888–95): 2: 762.

⁸⁶ Arabic Jacobite Synaxarion, 7 Babehe (PO 1.3: 322).

⁸⁷ Arabic Jacobite Synaxarion, 7 Babehe (PO 1.3: 321–2).

⁸⁸ See esp. Paul, *De cella* 78–82, 93 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 98, 100); references to *De cella* are to the first recension unless otherwise specified.

⁸⁹ *apoph* Moses 6 (PG 65: 284).

⁹⁰ Paul, *De cella* 13 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 90): 'κινδρε γαρ επινουτε ηρωμητ'; cf. *De cella* 34 (ibid: 92).

⁹¹ Paul, *Opus sine titulo* 102–6 at 106 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 116), Vivian's translation.

making one's body a temple and directing one's thoughts (μενε) towards God so as to acquire healthy thinking.⁹² Persistence in this endeavour is a struggle (αγων), but the result is purity of heart (τββο μπρητ).⁹³ To put it another way, mastering the heart and subjecting it to God is of the utmost importance.⁹⁴ In this way, the cell promotes one's thoughts 'becom[ing] conformed to God'.⁹⁵ This is achieved in solitude,⁹⁶ but the process inevitably opens onto the blessed community of the saints.⁹⁷ The whole process is probably what Paul had in mind when he mentioned 'the blessing of the cell'.⁹⁸

The experience that Paul describes is obviously intense, but some relief is provided by the contemplation of Scripture.⁹⁹ Paul's notable skill in allegorical interpretation is probably to be understood as the fruit of that contemplation.¹⁰⁰ But contemplation is not merely some happy distraction from the difficult business of ordering one's thoughts aright. Instead, ruminating over Scripture provides the categories that are used to order one's thoughts. What is needed, then, is to be steeped in scriptural culture to such an extent that scriptural images are internalized and instantly available for the purpose of subduing one's thoughts and leading them back to God.¹⁰¹ In this way, Scripture promotes wisdom, which is itself a key theme in Paul's works.¹⁰²

In this connection, the fact that Paul frequently wrote in *kephalaia* ('chapters') takes on added significance. The purpose of composing

⁹² Paul, *Opus sine titulo* 110–12 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 116–18); further on thoughts, see *epistula* 3 and *De cella*² 125 (ibid.: 86, 112–14).

⁹³ Paul, *Opus sine titulo* 117 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 118); cf. Paul's use of *hypomonē* at *De cella* 5–6 and *De cella*² 113–14 (ibid.: 2, 88, 112).

⁹⁴ Paul, *Opus sine titulo* 208–11 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 120).

⁹⁵ Paul, *De cella* 93 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 100); πεκενε εωπε κατα πνουτε ρητρι.

⁹⁶ Paul, *De cella* 78–83 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 98).

⁹⁷ Cf. Paul, *De cella* 92 and *De cella*² 99 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 100, 108).

⁹⁸ Paul, *De cella* 88 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 100).

⁹⁹ Paul, *De humilitate* 12–14 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 128).

¹⁰⁰ e.g. Paul, *epp* 5, 6; *De cella* 14, 52–8, 90–2; *De humilitate* 24 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 86, 90, 94, 100, 130). For an analysis of *De cella* 14, see Sheridan (1997b): 204–5.

¹⁰¹ Paul made use of a broader canon of Scripture than one might have expected: at *De cella* 2 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 88), Paul alludes to *Apocalypsis Pauli* 22–3 by mentioning 'Lake Acherousia' and he juxtaposes that image with one taken from Hebrews, so perhaps he regarded both as equally Scripture. Similarly, at *De cella*² 117 (ibid.: 112), he refers to the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the city of the Cannibals*. I owe these references to Tim Vivian.

¹⁰² e.g. Paul, *De cella* 38, 44–58, 68, 73, 75–7 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 92, 94, 96, 98).

such aphorisms, certainly for Christian monks, is to call one's readers to engage with the message that is contained in them through acquiring a disciplined manner of thinking. Jeremy Driscoll has established that Evagrius' kephalaic work, *Ad monachos*, is structured precisely to bring about that kind of engagement with the text.¹⁰³ In particular, Driscoll has drawn attention to Evagrius' use of catenae to signal shifts in the instruction and cue the reader in to cases where serious reflection is necessary. It may be important that structurally similar elements can be found in Paul's writings. But in any case it is abundantly clear that Paul's *De cella* no less than Evagrius' *Ad monachos* cries out to have its teaching put into practice.

It is not inappropriate to compare Paul to Evagrius in this way. The fixed points in Paul's ascetic vocabulary are common to both authors.¹⁰⁴ Some examples from Paul, immediately and recognizably derived from the Greek, are οὐδὲν πομπή,¹⁰⁵ οὐκ ἀρρησία,¹⁰⁶ ἀναχωρήσ/τ ἀναχωρήσις,¹⁰⁷ παθεῖς,¹⁰⁸ ἐλιψίς¹⁰⁹ and, perhaps less obviously, ἐφ' ἀναχωρεῖ.¹¹⁰ Even more interesting by comparison is Paul's characteristic emphasis on a number of themes that are robustly treated by Evagrius. We have already noticed that Paul is particularly concerned about the struggle for purity of heart, which he describes in terms of one's thoughts. It is also noteworthy that he warns his readers of the 'spirit of disturbance' and the 'spirit of lying'.¹¹¹ But most striking of all are Paul's description of demons attacking monks openly,¹¹² and his extended treatment of the limitlessness of God.¹¹³ The former is clearly taught by Evagrius (along with the corollary that demons use fellow monks to attack coenobitic monks);¹¹⁴ the latter is one of the first principles of theology that

¹⁰³ Driscoll (1991).

¹⁰⁴ See esp. Sheridan (1997b): 204–7.

¹⁰⁵ Paul, *De cella* 5–6, *De cella*² 113–14 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 88, 112).

¹⁰⁶ Paul, *De cella* 7 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 88).

¹⁰⁷ Paul, *De cella* 37, 43 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 92, 94).

¹⁰⁸ Paul, *De paupertate* 3 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 122).

¹⁰⁹ Paul, *De humilitate* 18 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 128).

¹¹⁰ Paul, *De cella*² 113–14 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 104).

¹¹¹ Paul, *De cella* 28–9 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 92).

¹¹² Paul, *De cella* 60 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 94–6).

¹¹³ Paul, *De cella* 44–50 (ed. Orlandi [1988]: 94).

¹¹⁴ Cf. Evagrius, *orat* 137, 139–40 (ed. Tugwell [1981]: 25), *prak* 5 (SC 171: 504).

Evagrius announces in his *Gnostic Chapters*.¹¹⁵ These features of Paul's thought indicate that he was not cut off from the ways in which Hellenistic Alexandrian thought was applied to the monastic life, not least by Evagrius and other contemporaries in Lower Egypt.

The fathers of the Wadi 'n-Natrûn

Associating Paul with Evagrius and Evagrius with the fathers of Scetis is a provocative thing to do. It will be recalled that Regnault asserted that Evagrius, Cassian, and Palladius (amongst others) did not represent the 'authentic spirit' of Scetiot monasticism. Although he did not explicitly speak to the point, Regnault probably thought that they should be distinguished in that way because of their intellectual, theological, and exegetical culture. But when we look to the fathers of Scetis, Kellia, and Nitria, the very heartland of the *Apophthegmata*, what we find is simply that Regnault was too hasty in supposing that Evagrius, Cassian, and Palladius were distinct from Poemen and his monks in this regard.

For a start, if Poemen, Pambo, Macarius the Great, and Macarius the Alexandrian were ill-disposed towards intellectuals from abroad, it is difficult to imagine why foreigners like Evagrius and Cassian would have taken pains to go to them in the first place. It is far more plausible to think that they would have gravitated towards that area because they expected from its reputation that they would find there an atmosphere conducive to their spiritual pursuits. We know precious little about Cassian's life before he went to Egypt, but Evagrius' story bears out the foregoing conjecture. His monastic career began in Pontus, Asia Minor, under the tutelage of Basil the Great. In due course, he came to Constantinople where he was a deacon in the entourage of Gregory the Theologian. After a crisis there, he was moved to seek out Melania and Rufinus in Jerusalem. Melania sent him to Egypt, where she herself had visited several times. After arriving, he settled in Kellia.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Evagrius, *KG* 1.1 (PO 28: 17), 1.2 (ed. Muyldermans [1931]: 56).

¹¹⁶ For more details, see the biography in the introduction to Casiday (2006).

At every transition in his life, Evagrius was in contact with ascetically inclined admirers of Origen. It would be very strange indeed if that were purely coincidental. It is more sensible to suppose that, from a relatively early point, Evagrius began to seek out monastic guides who were theologically sophisticated. This is the most economic explanation for the pattern that is seen in his life. If this claim is accepted, it provides us with a *prima facie* reason for thinking that Evagrius' decision to settle in Kellia was based at least in part on a perceived affinity with the monks who were already there.

Evagrius probably went to the deserts of Lower Egypt to pursue advanced theological and ascetical formation, precisely because he knew the reputation of the elders there and expected to be able to develop his spiritual life under their tutelage. An anecdote from the *Apophthegmata* bears out this claim. It tells of a meeting in Kellia, during which Evagrius gave his opinion in the matter under discussion. He was taken up short by one of the abbas, who told him, 'Abba, we know that if you were in your own country, you would have long since been a bishop and chief over many; but now you sit here as a stranger.'¹¹⁷ Evagrius, we are told, learned humility from them. It is not unheard of for this story to be taken as evidence for the hoary old simpletons putting an upstart intellectual in his place. But actually it says nothing of the kind. Instead, it stresses Evagrius' readiness to submit to his elders so as to acquire virtues at their feet.

In the event, Evagrius would in time come to have his own circle of followers and become a prolific author—but he was not unique in this. If he seems unique, it is because his teachings were preserved in writings that are available to us now, whereas the teachings of (for example) Ammonius the Tall are not. According to Rufinus, it was Ammonius whose learning in every field was unparalleled and who was deserving of praise in lavish superlatives. Certainly, Rufinus thought Evagrius important, but it would appear from comparing his words about each of them that he regarded Ammonius as being the more significant of the two.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, we have no reason to think that Evagrius' circle was particularly large and certainly no reason to think it was sectarian in its outlook. What we can suppose

¹¹⁷ *Apoph* Evagrius 7 (PG 65: 176).

¹¹⁸ Cf. Rufinus, *VSP* 23.3.1 (PTS 34: 359) to *VSP* 27.7.1 (*ibid.*: 363).

with a measure of confidence is that Evagrius' following developed after he had attained a certain stature and recognition from his elders.

This conjectural account of Evagrius' time in Kellia is supported by a number of Coptic fragments that relate Evagrius' manner of living and connect him closely to Abba Macarius the Great.¹¹⁹ We know from Evagrius' own writings, and from those of Palladius, that he was welcomed by the renowned ascetics whom he visited and, in some cases, was known to them before his arrival.¹²⁰ These connections tell against assuming that Evagrius was on the margins of the community. Unfortunately, apart from Anthony's letters (mentioned above), we possess little by way of primary sources from Evagrius' predecessors and peers. So it would be enormously helpful if it were possible in some way to cast light on Evagrius' contemporaries by consulting Evagrius' own writings. Of course, such research would have to be conducted with the utmost caution and with the awareness that the results could only be provisional, since we simply do not have enough evidence to corroborate them. But three publications over the last two decades have shown that it can be done.

Gabriel Bunge and Jeremy Driscoll have shown that Evagrius' writings can be useful, indirectly, for purposes of reconstructing the teachings of earlier monks. Taking cues from Evagrius' remarks about those from whom he learned, or whom he admired, they have identified key figures and reread their writings (or the sayings attributed to them, as the case may be) while keeping in mind Evagrius' writings. By comparing Evagrius' teaching to the teachings of the earlier figures in question, Bunge and Driscoll have been able to sketch the lineaments of a shared tradition. Bunge has examined in some detail Evagrius' indebtedness to both Macarius the Great and Macarius of Alexandria.¹²¹ He has concluded that Macarius of Alexandria influenced Evagrius especially in matters of asceticism, in his teaching of *antirrhesis*, and in his doctrine on the eight evil thoughts. Meanwhile, according to Bunge, Macarius the Great was particularly

¹¹⁹ The relevant material is now available in English translation: Vivian (2004).

¹²⁰ e.g. Evagrius, *ant* 6.16 (ed. Frankenberg [1912]: 524–5), Palladius, *HL* 12.1, 24.2–3, 35.3–5, 47.3 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 54, 132–4, 168–70, 226).

¹²¹ Bunge (1983).

influential for Evagrius' doctrines of discernment and of anger, of the memory of God, *apatheia*, and monologistic prayer. Driscoll has shown that the exegetical techniques reflected in Poemen's sayings in the *Apophthegmata* are identical to those that Evagrius employed regularly.¹²² He has further demonstrated that Poemen's teaching about the experience of being abandoned by God was influential on Evagrius' teaching about the same topic.¹²³ Taken together, these findings indicate that Evagrius was directly influenced by the intellectual practices of the Desert Fathers no less than by their ascetic practices.

In addition to the Macarii, Poemen, and Evagrius, there were other monks in and around Nitria who very likely observed similar practices of interpreting Scripture and of using allegory to propagate their practices and teachings. One noteworthy example is Palladius, who went on from the desert to become Bishop of Hellenopolis and to write a history of the fathers and mothers of the desert for the imperial chamberlain, Lausus. René Draguet has convincingly shown that Palladius' *Lausiaca History* is 'Evagian' in its inspiration and technique.¹²⁴ And indeed in that work Palladius refers to Evagrius as 'my teacher'.¹²⁵ But in view of the subsequent research that has just been mentioned, matters might not be quite so simple.

Even though Palladius was one of Evagrius' circle, it is quite clear that Evagrius' teachings on many important topics were common currency. So we should be wary about thinking of Palladius' work as 'Evagian' in a limited way. What we have seen about the prevalence of ideas and practices that were espoused by Evagrius *and others* is sufficient to keep us from summarily dismissing the *Lausiaca History* as a piece of propaganda for a perverse and eccentric viewpoint.

Of other monks in the area who may have shared Evagrius' views (and who would thus have contributed to the traditions that Cassian encountered there), we have several names. Most of them are known to us because they were expelled from Egypt by Theophilus during the so-called 'First Origenist Controversy'.¹²⁶ The 'Tall Brothers'—

¹²² Driscoll (1995).

¹²³ Driscoll (1997).

¹²⁴ Draguet (1946–7).

¹²⁵ Palladius, *HL* 23.1 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 128).

¹²⁶ For a general treatment, see E. Clark (1992).

Dioscorus, Ammonius 'the One-eared,' Euthymius, and Eusebius—are easily remembered because of their unusual nicknames. They were famous for their rigorous asceticism and their intellectual accomplishments, and appear to have been the core of the expelled party.¹²⁷ We also know that Cronius was expelled during this purge, which may cast some light on his penchant (as revealed in the *Apophthegmata*) for offering spiritual instruction through allegorical interpretation of Scripture.¹²⁸ It may also be noted that, when he was struggling with *akedia*, Cronius sought out the counsel of Anthony the Great—who has been shown to have had very good relations with his intellectual kindred-spirits in that area.¹²⁹

Of approximately the same generation among the expelled monks were Isaac, the disciple of Macarius, and Isaac, a priest from Kellia and the disciple of Cronius.¹³⁰ Cronius' Isaac is described in the *Apophthegmata* as an associate of Poemen's who had 'great boldness' in speaking with Poemen.¹³¹ After living for a time with Cronius, Isaac also lived with Theodore of Pherme.¹³² Mention might also be made of Origen of Nitria, a priest and the steward of Nitria, who was an associate of the Tall Brothers and who also appears to have been expelled.¹³³ Furthermore, since the final datable event that Cassian mentions witnessing in Egypt is the reception of Theophilus' paschal encyclical for 399, and since he later states that he was close to John Chrysostom, it seems overwhelmingly likely that Cassian himself was included in the number of monks who were driven from Egypt and eventually found refuge with John in Constantinople. (Because Evagrius is never mentioned in the lists of expelled monks, it is presumed that he died c.399 and was thus spared the ignominy of being forced

¹²⁷ See Socrates, *HE* 6.7 (PG 67: 684–8); Sozomen, *HE* 6.30 (PG 67: 1381–8); Palladius, *HL* 10–11 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 46–54); *HM* 20.9–11 (ed. Festugière [1961]: 121–2); Rufinus, *VSP* 23.3.1–3.10 (PTS 34: 359–61).

¹²⁸ See *apoph* Cronius 1, 2 and 4 (PG 65: 247–9); *HM* 20.13 (ed. Festugière [1961]: 122); Palladius, *HL* 7.3, 21 *passim* and 22 *passim* (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 38, 104–26).

¹²⁹ Palladius, *HL* 21.1 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 104).

¹³⁰ Palladius, *u Chrys* 17.101–19 (SC 341: 340).

¹³¹ *Apoph* Poemen 107, 144, 184 (PG 65: 348, 357, 368).

¹³² *Apoph* Isaac, priest of Kellia, 2 (PG 65: 224).

¹³³ Palladius, *HL* 10 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 46–50); Sozomen, *HE* 6.30 (PG 67: 1381–8).

out of his adopted homeland.) But the standard-bearer of the party, according to Theophilus, was Isidore.¹³⁴

According to Socrates and Sozomen, Theophilus' hostility towards Isidore is to be attributed to Isidore's blocking Theophilus from misappropriating funds that were in his care.¹³⁵ But in the *Apophthegmata* there is preserved a saying of Isidore's that bespeaks his familiarity with the views that were shared by the expelled monks:

The prudence (*σύνεσις*) of the saints is to recognize God's will. Indeed, a man surpasses everything else by obedience to the truth, for he is the image and likeness of God. Of all the spirits, the worst is that of following one's own heart—that is, the individual's thought (*τῷ ἰδίῳ λογισμῷ*)—and not the law of God. Suffering (*πένθος*) will come upon him later, because he has not known the mystery, nor has he found the way of the saints to labour in it. For now is the time to work for the Lord, since salvation is in the time of affliction (*θλίψεως*), as it is written, 'In your long-suffering you will keep your souls' (Luke 21: 19).¹³⁶

Insofar as we can judge from this saying, what is striking is the interconnection between Isidore's affirmation of wisdom, the image and likeness of God, mystery, and affliction; his casual reference to 'spirits' as temptations; his gloss of one's heart as one's thought; and his crowning of the whole teaching with a verse from Scripture. The configuration of these elements indicates that Isidore could meaningfully have been considered a follower of Origen and that Theophilus' accusations were probably not pure fabrication—opportunism, maybe, but not pure fabrication.

These, then, are the men who represent the ostensibly tainted heritage of the desert, to whom Regnault contrasts 'the most ancient and the most authentic thread of the pure teaching' found 'in particular at Scetis, in the entourage of Abba Poemen'. But Regnault's contrast is quite simply wrong. Most of the 'Origenists' who were driven out from the Wadi 'n-Natrûn, were long-time disciples of Poemen, Pambo, or Macarius—and as such were trained by the leading figures of Coptic monasticism. (We have not yet had the

¹³⁴ Theophilus *ap.* Jerome, *ep* 92.3 (ed. Labourt [1949–54]: 4: 153): 'iste est signifer haereticæ factionis'.

¹³⁵ Socrates, *HE* 6.2 (PG 67: 661–4), Sozomen, *HE* 8.12 (PG 67: 1545–9).

¹³⁶ *Apoph* Isidore 9 (PG 65: 221).

occasion to mention Pambo, but about him it may be said in fairness that circumstantial evidence connects him with the Tall Brothers.)¹³⁷ Without cavalierly attempting to attribute the disciples' teachings to the masters, we have nevertheless found some suggestive connections between the sayings of those elders and the writings of Evagrius.

The confluence of so much circumstantial evidence admittedly fails to make an overwhelming argument. A number of common sense notions would enable a sceptic to shrug off these similarities as uninformative coincidences. But, as we have seen, much common-sense about late ancient Egypt does not stand up under scrutiny. To recapitulate the salient points, there is no reason to presume that Coptic monks were theologically naive or uninformed; there is no basis for thinking that, as a rule, they were hostile to intellectual activity; furthermore, it is difficult to explain why intellectual foreigners would have flocked to the Copts if the two groups despised each other. A better account of the intellectual parameters of the Desert Fathers would need to acknowledge that the foreigners tended to come in order to learn from the natives, and that the natives tended to admit the foreigners into their midst. With those beliefs as our presuppositions, we can begin to see how an enthusiasm for allegory and its master practitioners (Philo and Origen) could very well have been as typical of figures who are central to the *Apophthegmata*, such as Poemen, as it was for marginal figures, such as Evagrius and Cassian.

Monastic theology in Egypt: 399 and beyond

Evidence from before 399 strongly indicates that many Egyptian monks were receptive to Alexandrian exegetical techniques. But Epiphanius, who would certainly have sniffed out this sort of thing if anybody had, notes that Origenism could be found in the Thebaïd as well as in Lower Egypt.¹³⁸ The evidence for monks throughout Egypt making use of the allegorical techniques that Origen popularized is very strong—so strong, in fact, that some have even argued

¹³⁷ See Palladius, *HL* 10.1–4, 11.1, 11.4 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 46–8, 50–4).

¹³⁸ Epiphanius, *anc* 82 (ed. Holl [1915]: 102–3).

that opposition to Origen probably did not have local roots and in all likelihood was imported from abroad (specifically, from Caesarea).¹³⁹ This claim is bolstered by the wealth of evidence that Coptic and Greek monks in Egypt freely exchanged ideas that were heavily influenced by allegorical exegesis and that Coptic monks could be well versed in Alexandrian hermeneutics even in Middle Egypt. The claim is further corroborated by the fact that several later Coptic authors were still receptive to the appeal of furthering one's ascetical and monastic life by means of allegorically interpreting Scripture. About some of them, we can be even more specific and point to their reading of Evagrius' works and similar writings. This trend is completely at odds with the supposition that there was amongst Copts an endemic hostility towards Hellenistic culture.

We know, for instance, that Pisenhius of Keft, a model of classical Egyptian asceticism,¹⁴⁰ quoted Evagrius approvingly on the three different sorts of tempting spirits that beset the monk:

Apa Evagrius the Anchorite said, 'There are three demons who travel together as companions. The first of them is the spirit of fornication [πιπνα πτε †πορνεια], linked to man at all times, stirring up fornication in him. The second is the spirit of forgetfulness [πιπνα πτε †εβωμ], who does not allow him to perceive or remember that *God is* [ΦϜ γωπ] until he commits the sin that he has undertaken. The third is the spirit who draws a veil over one's face lest he see the sin that he has committed.'¹⁴¹

The quotation is an interesting one in that it features Evagrius' theoretical teachings along with his monastic instruction, as is particularly clear from the analysis of the spirit of forgetfulness.

The source of Pisenhius' quotation has not been identified, but it is entirely possible that it is a genuine saying of Evagrius'. Certainly, the flavour of the saying is Evagrian and we know that his works were translated into Coptic and circulated.¹⁴² In the Coptic tradition, we find a fulsome account of the *Life of Evagrius*, full of praise and admiration, replete with sayings otherwise unattested.¹⁴³ An

¹³⁹ Sheridan (1997b): 187 n. 37; Junod (1993): 277–8.

¹⁴⁰ On Pisenhius, see Winlock and Crum (1926): 1: 223–31.

¹⁴¹ *u Pis* (ed. Amélineau [1889]: 337–8); cf. PO 22.3: 354.

¹⁴² See Muyldermans (1963) for an indispensable orientation. The present treatment brings his list up to date.

¹⁴³ Ed. Amélineau (1887).

extremely brief series of Evagrius' reflections on the Our Father is preserved in a Coptic catena on the Gospels.¹⁴⁴ Some apophthegmata attributed to Evagrius which do not appear in the Greek collections are found in the Coptic versions.¹⁴⁵ A complete translation of his *Ad monachos* and fragments of a translation of his *On the eight spirits of evil* have also been identified.¹⁴⁶ It is not clear how extensive the Coptic corpus was, but if the Arabic corpus derived from the Coptic, it may have been huge.¹⁴⁷ From the tatters that remain, one begins to suppose that Evagrius probably enjoyed a higher reputation in the past than he does now.

Pisenthius is not the only Coptic figure who took an interest in this approach to the spiritual life. In the early seventh century, Rufus, bishop of Shotep, preached a series of remarkable homilies. From the surviving fragments, it is clear that Rufus was versed in Greek and proficient in Alexandrian exegesis.¹⁴⁸ The homilies are a tour de force of allegorical exposition, and it is worth pondering the impact that his homilies would have had: through them, the audience received a thorough exposure to how allegorical exegesis can be made to support the ascetic life. Caution is needed here, as ever, but perhaps it is not too much to suppose that some of the people who listened to Rufus were already equipped to understand what he was telling them. (At the very least, someone cared enough to have the sermons taken down.) So Rufus' preaching gives us some reason for thinking that there were Copts who maintained a lively interest in ascetically orientated allegorical exegesis of Scripture long after the First Origenist Controversy had come to an end.

We also find points of interest in the writings of ps.-Agathonicus of Tarsus.¹⁴⁹ Like Pisenthius, ps.-Agathonicus quoted Evagrius in an 'apologia on faithlessness' and knew a work by him which he calls 'his *Kephalaia*'.¹⁵⁰ The source of the quotation has not yet been identified,

¹⁴⁴ Evagrius, *in orat dom* (de Lagarde [1886]: 13); English trans. in Casiday (2006).

¹⁴⁵ (Ps.-) Agathonicus, ed. Crum (1915): 95 n. 2; ed. Chaîne (1960): 17, 156.

¹⁴⁶ *Ad mon*: Quecke (1989); *octo spir mal*: Schenke (1984) and (1989).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Samir (1992).

¹⁴⁸ Ed. Sheridan (1998).

¹⁴⁹ See A. Ehrhard in (ps.-)Agathonicus of Tarsus, ed. Crum (1915): 155–8, 169; Orlandi (1980).

¹⁵⁰ (ps.-)Agathonicus of Tarsus, ed. Crum (1915): 38.

but in view of the context it is tempting to think that ps.-Agathonicus may have had access to some version of Evagrius' *Antirrhetikos*—a kephalaiaic work in which he had much to say about demons. Ps.-Agathonicus also carried on a brisk debate against anthropomorphites,¹⁵¹ and again this is entirely consistent with an approach to Scripture that is fundamentally allegorical. In all likelihood, ps.-Agathonicus was a Pachomian monk,¹⁵² and the Pachomians were known to have actively promoted literacy. A detailed treatment of Pachomian exegetical practice is not possible here, but it is reasonable to suppose that ps.-Agathonicus was not the only such educated monk to come from the Pachomian communities.¹⁵³

Some final index of the status of Coptic monastic literacy in the late sixth century is available from the library of the Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes. This library had, among other things, copies of Evagrius: we know of ostraca from the site of that monastery on which were found requests for books by Abba Evagrius or lists of books (including some by Evagrius) that were in the collection there.¹⁵⁴ But this is the tip of the iceberg. W. E. Crum compiled an extensive list of works that were available in that monastery. Of special interest are a collection of *Apophthegmata*, a selection from Athanasius' letters, writings by Basil the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, and Severus of Antioch, not to mention a variety of texts on liturgics, canon law, the lives of the saints and a Coptic–Greek glossary.¹⁵⁵ It hardly needs to be said that a monastery would only be so well stocked if its residents had a deep and abiding commitment to fostering the Christian mind.

From the writings of Pisenhius, Rufus, and ps.-Agathonicus, and from the library of the Monastery of Epiphanius, we see that the currents of thought which are familiar to us from the writings of

¹⁵¹ (ps.-)Agathonicus of Tarsus, ed. Crum (1915): 21–5.

¹⁵² (ps.-)Agathonicus of Tarsus, ed. Crum (1915): 169: 'die dem Bischofe Agathonicus von Tarsus zugeschrieben Schriften sind Pseudepigraphen. Ihr wirklicher Verfasser ist ein pachomianischer Mönch, der sich "nach berühmten Mustern" eines bischöflichen Decknamens bediente, um ihnen eine größere Autorität zu sichern.'

¹⁵³ Sheridan (1997b): 211–15 has found evidence for Alexandrian exegesis by the Pachomians which is in some (though not all) cases distinctly Origenian.

¹⁵⁴ See Winlock and Crum (1926): 1: 256.

¹⁵⁵ Winlock and Crum (1926): 1: 196–208.

Evagrius and his peers were not simply redirected out of Egypt at the expulsion of the 'Origenists'. Instead, these currents continued to flow through Egypt for centuries, nurturing Coptic monasticism all the while. This being so, it is a gross oversimplification to claim that Cassian and Evagrius represent an inauthentic or otherwise alien trend that is to be distinguished from the authentic or indigenous teachings of the Desert Fathers.

The *Apophthegmata*

But what, then, of the *Apophthegmata* and its sometimes strident opposition to books?¹⁵⁶ Certainly, it is an important record and it cannot be ruled out. Indeed, several spirited arguments in favour of its value as a source for historical information have appeared in the last two decades.¹⁵⁷ If the *Apophthegmata* is approached with the same critical awareness that one would use in dealing with any late ancient book, we can learn much from it.

Even so, it must be recalled that, despite the immediacy with which it presents itself, the *Apophthegmata* has been subjected to compilation and redaction for centuries. (Indeed, it is less a work and more a genre.) The witness of the *Apophthegmata* is therefore not less problematic than the witnesses of other sources. It could even be argued that Cassian and other sources are preferable to the *Apophthegmata* inasmuch as Cassian never pretends to offer verbatim quotations or stenographic records; on the contrary, he makes it sufficiently clear that he is adapting traditional material. The redactors of the *Apophthegmata* were not so forthcoming. The 'Sayings'-literature therefore presents special problems for scholars.

Samuel Rubenson has rightly decried the practice of attempting to study the *Apophthegmata* as a collection of meaningful, coherent teachings on the one hand, and simultaneously taking it as preserving pure records about fourth-century Egypt on the other.¹⁵⁸ The

¹⁵⁶ Some choice examples are reported in Burton-Christie (1993): 115–16.

¹⁵⁷ See esp. Gould (1986), (1993a): 9–25 and (1995).

¹⁵⁸ Rubenson (1995a): 144–52.

coherence and consistency of the collection is *prima facie* evidence that a later hand has reworked the records to support a later agenda. So it is not advisable to invoke the *Apophthegmata* for evidence of what the Desert Fathers were 'really like' and, in doing so, to trust that the venerable antiquity or seeming purity of the utterances will trump any competing accounts from other ancient sources.¹⁵⁹

By scholarly consensus, the first redaction of the major Greek collections is dated to c.530–60.¹⁶⁰ In other words, the earliest form of the text available to us postdates Evagrius' death by roughly a century—and an eventful century, at that! Noting especially Justinian's involvement in the Second Origenist Controversy, Hombergen observes that his reign was characterized by 'outspoken hostility' against Hellenistic intellectual culture.¹⁶¹ Not only was the Platonic Academy in Athens dealt a blow from which it never recovered,¹⁶² but also Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus were hotly denounced for their detrimental influence (via Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius, it should be noted) on Christian theology.¹⁶³ Keeping in mind, then, that the *Apophthegmata* was redacted at a late date and in an intensely anti-Hellenistic atmosphere, we can entertain reasonable doubts as to whether the apparent hostility towards intellectual activity found in it is an accurate reflection of earlier times.

Regardless of how each scholar ultimately resolves those doubts, it is prudent to appeal only rarely to the *Apophthegmata* against other (often earlier) sources. And even if the dating of the earliest redaction slips a bit one way or the other, it is not immediately apparent that the single witness of an anonymous compilation could ever trump the combined witnesses of Cassian, Evagrius, and Palladius, not to mention the other authors whom we have surveyed in this section.

¹⁵⁹ This observation was already made in essence by Lefort (1937).

¹⁶⁰ Guy (1993): 80; cf. Rubenson (1995a): 150 n. 3.

¹⁶¹ Hombergen (2001): 247.

¹⁶² See Blumenthal (1978) and Irmscher (1990).

¹⁶³ The earliest connection of these names I can find is that of Cyril of Scythopolis, in his *u Cyriac* 12–13 (TU 49.2: 229–30); but see the searching critique of Cyril's reliability in Hombergen (2001).

4 CONCLUSIONS

A wealth of research has shown that Egyptian monasticism before, during, and after Cassian's visit was intellectually vibrant. Though it is undoubtedly the case that some monks were illiterate, we have seen that this does not mean that they were splendidly isolated from the influence of theological culture, even if there undoubtedly were at least some monks who were philistines. We have also seen that the fathers of Lower Egypt cannot be assigned their roles in the controversies about Origen on the basis of ethnicity. Copts no less than Greeks were actively involved in disseminating the ascetically informed practices of allegorical interpretation that were denounced as 'Origenist'.

The evidence suggests that this was not a one-off. We have seen that some comparable preoccupations are evident in the writings of Anthony the Great, Didymus the Blind, and Paul of Tamma (which, incidentally, shows that the perspective in question is not geographically restricted). We have also seen that monastic writers continued to use Alexandrian techniques of scriptural interpretation in furtherance of their asceticism well after Theophilus expelled the 'Origenists' from Scetis and even after Scetis was sacked in 407. Here again, the evidence stems from solidly Coptic authors: Pisenhius of Keft, Rufus of Shotep, ps.-Agathonicus of Tarsus.

The upshot of these findings is quite simply that the dichotomy of 'simple Coptic churls v. degenerate Greek intellectuals' should be totally abandoned.

If that dichotomy is abandoned, Cassian can be taken seriously as a source on Egyptian monasticism once again. That does not mean that Cassian's perspective is the norm against which all else must be measured, but it does mean that Cassian cannot be dismissed as a crank and a toiler. When we compare his account of the discussions held by the fathers in the Wadi 'n-Natrûn to other information we have about who was there and what they were doing, it must be admitted that Cassian's accounts fit comfortably.

To be sure, the warnings that have come down to us about this particular point or that, in which Cassian's version is not trustworthy, must be heeded. But there is no reason to perpetuate another false

dichotomy that has crept into the scholarly discussion: simply because Cassian is particularly concerned with theological matters is no basis for rejecting him as a representative of the teaching of the Desert Fathers. It is instructive in this connection to recall that even the *Apophthegmata* (which is not a simple record of utterance, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding) has been edited to bring it in line with the editors' values. Care must be used in reading both works.

In fact, there are some senses in which Cassian's reader is better served than is the reader of the *Apophthegmata*. Cassian's intense concern about tradition is crucial in this connection. Since we have spent so much time reflecting on what he means by that term, we are well prepared to recognize that what he promised was a practical, useful, and beneficial set of books—not a stenographic record. We also know from considering Cassian's views about tradition that he affirmed the legitimacy of that kind of editorial treatment. Cassian thought it completely appropriate for a spiritual father to rework old tales so as to benefit his disciples. Even though he may have disavowed the idea, Cassian probably thought of himself as being just such a discerning spiritual father; or anyway he certainly cast himself in that role.

Prayer according to Cassian

Prayer is a pervasive theme in Cassian's writings. Like Evagrius Ponticus, who famously asserted that 'if you are a theologian, you will pray truly; and if you pray truly, you will be a theologian',¹ Cassian regards prayer as the wellspring of theology inasmuch as prayer is a privileged venue for encountering God. (We shall have occasion to note that Cassian takes very seriously the exhortation to 'pray without ceasing'; it is precisely because prayer can and should be 'without ceasing' that it can be regarded as a privileged means of meeting with God.) But when Cassian relates prayer to God, he is thinking specifically of the Holy Trinity. Prayer for Cassian involves all three Persons of the Trinity, so we do well to consider the Christological and Pneumatological dimensions of Cassian's teaching. As we shall see, his position in these matters represents a development that has not been fully appreciated hitherto.

Another aspect of Cassian's theological vision of prayer that will occupy our attention is the emotional richness of his account. His descriptions of the sensation of being at prayer are so vivid and fervent that some have suggested that he may have been in contact with, or otherwise moved within, a milieu of monastic prayer that is represented in the Macarian Homilies and other documents associated with the so-called Messalian movements. This is an intriguing suggestion and it deserves serious consideration. But before we can turn profitably to either of these topics, it behoves us to study carefully Cassian's instructions about how one ought to pray.

¹ Evagrius, *orat* 61 (ed. Tugwell [1981]: 12): *Εἰ θεολόγος εἶ, προσεύξῃ ἀληθῶς· καὶ εἰ ἀληθῶς προσεύχῃ, θεολόγος ἔσῃ*. Cf. *KG* 4.90 (PO 28: 175); *errp* 56.1–3, 61 (ed. Frankenberg [1912]: 602–4, 610; Bunge [1986a]: 271–2, 281–2).

1 THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

Cassian only explains what prayer is after he gives extensive teachings on how to pray.² His first discussion of prayer begins with an almost furtive remark: ‘meanwhile we might at least make a preliminary sketch of some lineaments of prayer, by which especially those who dwell in coenobia will be able to be somewhat informed’.³ But the self-abasement ought not to mislead us. It veils a pedagogical decision of great importance.⁴ Cassian’s writings time and again presuppose that we learn by doing and by observing the consequences of our actions. Guidance is important for the process, since a knowledgeable guide facilitates this process. Such a guide also ensures continuity with and fidelity to the tradition of the elders—something of great significance for Cassian’s thinking. This experiential foundation of Cassian’s teaching, like that of all Desert Fathers (even when it is not immediately evident to us), is basic to understanding that teaching; and failure to appreciate it can only end in misunderstanding. So, after considering what Cassian teaches about how to pray, we will examine the functions of prayer. This will lead us to Cassian’s statements about what prayer is. Once we have examined Cassian’s position, we will be able to understand how prayer relates to other aspects of the Christian life.

Public prayer in the coenobium

Cassian provides a relatively large amount of information about how the monks at Scetis prayed.⁵ Communal prayer also provides the

² Cassian, *inst* 2.1, 9.1. Cassian sets out the old traditions of the East, deferring questions of their character and how to ‘pray without ceasing’ till *conl* pref. 1.5; 9–10; 23.5.9.

³ Cassian, *inst* 2.9.2: ‘saltim quasdam tantisper orationum lineas praesignemus, quibus hi uel maxime, qui in coenobiis commorantur, ualeant aliquatenus informari’.

⁴ Cf. Stewart (1998): 37–9.

⁵ Scholars have turned to Cassian’s writings to supplement previous gaps in our knowledge of Egyptian monasticism in general; e.g. Van der Mensbrugge (1957). The overextension of Cassian’s witness has been corrected by recent scholarship on the Pachomian establishments; see, e.g. Veilleux (1968): 146–54 (Cassian’s accuracy),

rhythm for his *Conferences*, since many of them occur immediately before or after prayer.⁶ He devotes *Institutes* 2 to the rule of evening prayers, and *Institutes* 3 to the rule of daily prayers. Throughout both books he constantly insists that prescriptive norms are provided by the traditions of the elders: ‘*per successiones ac traditiones maiorum*’, as he puts it.⁷ For the sources of this tradition, Cassian peers past the first Desert Fathers to the earliest Christian communities as described in the Acts of the Apostles. Following Eusebius’ history of Egypt’s earliest Christian communities,⁸ Cassian notes that the rigours of the first Christian ascetics included devotion to prayer as well as strict fasting.⁹ How to safeguard this devotion was a matter of ‘holy division of pious dispute’¹⁰ among the Desert Fathers, until the problem was resolved by angelic visitation.¹¹ It is this settlement, the ‘Angelic Rule’, which is the norm for all communal prayers in Scetis,¹² and which Cassian therefore describes at some length.

After being summoned by a brother appointed for that task,¹³ the monks assemble with perfect silence in the oratory.¹⁴ They sit on low

334–9 (the Angelic Rule); and Stewart (1998): 140. We must remember, though, that this problem was not Cassian’s. Throughout the *Institutes*, Cassian distinguishes the Thebaïd (2.3.1, 4; 4.1, 23, 30.2) and Tabennisi in particular (4.1, 10, 17, 30.2) from ‘all Egypt’ (=Scetis; pref. 3, 8; 2.2.2, 3.1, 4, 5.5; 3.1; 4.17, 30.2, 30.4, 31–2; 5.24, 36.1, 39.2; 10.22–3), as at 2.3.1, 4; 4.1, 17, 30.2. Though his use of the term ‘all Egypt’ for Scetis is confusing, this does not undermine his reliability.

⁶ Thus, Cassian, *conl* 13.1, 15.1, 17.3, 21.11, 22.1.1.

⁷ Cassian, *inst* 2.3.1; see also 2.2.2, 2.3.1–5, 2.4. At *inst* 2.9.1, Cassian again defers full treatment of canonical prayer until it can be properly contextualized ‘earum (sc., orationum) qualitate seu iugitate uerbis eorum (sc., maiorum)’. At *conl* 21.12, Abba Theonas gives a programmatic statement of Cassian’s traditionalism: ‘Oportet quidem nos auctoritati patrum consuetudinisque maiorum usque ad nostrum tempus per tantam annorum seriem protelatae etiam non percepta ratione concedere eamque, ut antiquitus tradita est, iugi observantia ac reverentia custodire.’

⁸ Cf. Cassian, *inst* 2.5.1–3 to Eusebius, *HE* 2.17 (SC 31: 72–7); see de Vogüé (1961).

⁹ Cassian, *inst* 2.5.2. ¹⁰ Cassian, *inst* 2.5.4.

¹¹ Cassian, *inst* 2.5.4–2.6; cf. Palladius, *HL* 32.6–7 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 165–6); *u ter Pach* 29–32 (ed. Halkin [1932]), where an alternate account of the provenance of the ‘Angelic Rule’ is related; and John of Gaza, *ep* 143 (SC 426: 520–4), in which he describes the ‘Angelic Rule’ in some detail according to the tradition of Scete; see also Veilleux (1968): 334–9. For some apposite observations on angelic dispute-mediation in other contexts, see Mayr-Harting (1998).

¹² Cf. Cassian, *inst* 2.4, 6.2.

¹³ Cassian, *inst* 2.17; 4.12: the monks drop what they were doing to come to prayer or obey any other summons; cf. *apoph* Mark, student of Silvanus, 1 (PG 65: 293–6).

¹⁴ Cassian, *inst* 2.10.1 (silence); 3.7.1, 4.20 (oratory).

stools and the cantor arises in the midst of them.¹⁵ During the service no fewer than two cantors will sing the prayers, although (regardless of how many monks are present) there are never more than four cantors.¹⁶ Except for the stools, Cassian does not mention any particular furnishings in the room, such as a lectern. Perhaps they simply stood up from their stools and chanted where they stood. Given the importance attached to memorizing Scripture, and the regular repetition of the psalter in particular, it is not unreasonable to suppose that a lectern was not needed: a mature monk would have known the Psalms off by heart anyway.¹⁷ Cassian does not explain what precisely the rest of the monks do while the cantors sing the Psalms and prayers. There are, however, indications that they remain seated. For instance, he heavily emphasizes that the singing of the psalter gives the monks a much-needed opportunity to rest.¹⁸

The cantors sing a total of twelve Psalms antiphonally.¹⁹ Prayers are inserted between Psalms, and even within them.²⁰ The interspersed prayers during psalmody facilitate comprehension and reduce the distracting tedium that would come from long runs of Psalms.²¹ For just this reason, an elder keeps watch to ensure that no longwinded cantor bores the audience. If it appears to him that such a thing is happening, the elder can signal for prayer by clapping his hands.²² Cassian does not take distractions lightly. Perhaps in reference to what he saw in Gaul, he sharply notes that during the services in Egypt, ‘spittle does not fly; snorting does not rumble; coughing does not resound; the sleepy yawn is not protracted by

¹⁵ Cassian, *inst* 2.12.1.

¹⁶ Cassian, *inst* 2.11.3.

¹⁷ Abba Nesteros commends the memorization of Scripture (Cassian, *conl* 14.10.4). Given the prominence of the psalter in the services according to Cassian, the Psalms would be a likely place to start! Some of the Desert Fathers famously had capacious memories; see Ramsey (1997): 531. On the early history of psalmody in eastern monasticism, see McKinnon (1994).

¹⁸ Cassian, *inst* 2.12.1–3.

¹⁹ Cassian, *inst* 2.4, 5.5.

²⁰ Cassian, *inst* 2.11.1–2.

²¹ Cassian, *inst* 2.11.2: Cassian warns against singing *cum confusione mentis effundi*. Cf. *conl* 14.12: Cassian’s own confession, made in the first person (which he rarely uses), that memories from his youthful education distract him during prayer and psalmody. On Cassian’s education and the place of education in his monasteries, see Hammer (1930): 249–55.

²² Cassian, *inst* 2.11.2.

slack and gaping mouths; no groans, not even sighs, burden those present.²³ These uncouth interruptions are designated as ‘double sins’ since they not only betray negligence but also create distractions.²⁴ However, distraction is ultimately one’s own responsibility, as a thought-experiment of Cassian’s shows: ‘But to speak directly, if anyone, turning the matter over in his conscience, finds out that he has celebrated just one service without any interruption by word, deed or thought, he may proclaim himself far removed from sin.’²⁵

Cassian does, however, grant an exception to his strict expectations about silence when describing the reaction of someone who is completely attentive at the service. He mentions the periodic sound ‘which through the mind’s transport emerges from the enclosure of the mouth’—*per excessum mentis claustra oris effugerit*—‘that sound, which the inflamed mind does not succeed in containing in itself, through a certain ineffable groaning attempts to break out from the deepest recesses of his breast’—*per ineffabilem quendam gemitum ex intimis pectoris sui conclauibus euaporare conatur*.²⁶ Elsewhere, Cassian similarly notes that the cantor’s voice can prompt a deep emotional response.²⁷ This is unusual, but it does occur. If the language that he uses to describe them can be taken as evidence, it is clear that such occurrences impressed Cassian very deeply.

Once the cantor has completed the Psalm, the monks kneel to pray.²⁸ Cassian describes the physical procedure as follows:

Before bending the knees, they pray a little and standing they pass the great part of the time in supplication. And so after this for the briefest interval falling to the ground, as ones only adoring divine mercy, with all speed they surge up and, upright once more, with their hands outstretched in the same way as before they stood praying, they linger at their prayers. For those lying

²³ Cassian, *inst* 2.10.1.

²⁴ Cassian, *inst* 2.10.2: ‘dupliciter peccare pronuntiant’; see also *conl* 23.6.3 and cf. *inst* 12.27.2–3, where Cassian describes a proud monk clearing his throat, squirming, and doodling with his fingers during a conference; see too Rufinus, *HM* 29.4.5–9 (PTS 34: 372).

²⁵ Cassian, *conl* 23.19.1.

²⁶ Cassian, *inst* 2.10.1.

²⁷ Cassian, *conl* 9.26.1–2. N.B. Cassian has recourse to the Stoic distinction between ‘emotions’ and ‘passions’; I have analysed this, and commented on some of the practical consequences elsewhere: Casiday (2001*b*): 362–3 (the Stoic distinction), 384–7 (Cassian’s doctrine).

²⁸ Cassian, *inst* 2.7.1.

on the ground too long are beset upon not only by thoughts, they say, but also more seriously by sleep.²⁹

The process is arduous. We should have in mind these regular prostrations when we read Cassian's description of Abba Chaeremon, whose great old age and devotion to prayer have curved his back dramatically.³⁰ The danger of falling asleep (which must have been great when this strenuous regimen was observed at night!) compounds the risk of intrusive thoughts. The process is also time-consuming. Everything is done at a measured and dignified pace,³¹ which is monitored, as we have noted, by the elders. Cassian contrasts this to the undisciplined practice of his contemporaries, who rush through their prayers.³²

The monks take their cue for when to arise from the one who then says a prayer.³³ So it goes for the first eleven Psalms. But since Cassian makes a point of telling that the angel of the eponymous Rule sang eleven of the Psalms 'in the same tone',³⁴ and in this way distinguished them from the twelfth Psalm, we should expect something different in the case of the concluding Psalm. Cassian is unclear on the matter. But he does stipulate that the response is only 'Alleluia' when the Psalm has the word 'Alleluia' in its title.³⁵ Comparing this to the Angelic Rule, and recalling that the Angel finished the twelfth Psalm with the response 'Alleluia' before vanishing,³⁶ we can deduce that the practice at Scetis was that the last Psalm should end with the response 'Alleluia'.

Finally, the priest concludes the prayers with the 'Gloria'.³⁷ Although this actually concludes the service, many monks remain. Cassian describes these monks as those who are 'willing and eager to retain the memory of the Divine Scriptures by assiduous meditation',³⁸ because they opt to remain for two readings from Scripture.

²⁹ Cassian, *inst* 2.7.2.

³⁰ Cassian, *conl* 11.4.1.

³¹ Cassian, *inst* 2.7.1–3, 11.2.

³² Cassian, *inst* 2.7.1, 7.3.

³³ Cassian, *inst* 2.7.3.

³⁴ Cassian, *inst* 2.5.5: 'parili pronuntiatione'.

³⁵ Cassian, *inst* 2.11.3; Ramsey (1997): 53: 'The Psalms with an Alleluia in their title are, in the Hebrew enumeration, 105–7, 111–14, 116–18, 135–6, 146–50'.

³⁶ Cassian, *inst* 2.5.5: 'duodecim sub alleluiae responsione consummans'.

³⁷ Cassian, *inst* 2.10.1 (conclusion); *inst* 2.8 ('Gloria').

³⁸ Cassian, *inst* 2.6: 'uolentibus tantum ac diuinarum scripturarum memoriam possidere adsidua meditatione studentibus'.

During the week, one reading is taken from the Old Testament and one from the New. But at the weekends, one reading comes from the Epistles or Acts of the Apostles and the other comes from the Gospels.

Cassian devotes such attention to his account of how to pray simply because the correct procedure of prayer is important.³⁹ We get a sense of its importance from *Conference* 21. During Pentecost, Cassian and Germanus say vespers in their cell, accompanied by the visiting Abba Theonas.⁴⁰ Since the meeting took place during Pentecost, they did not kneel during the prayers. They seize the opportunity to ask Theonas why no one kneels for prayer during Pentecost. Theonas explains that bending the knee during prayer is a sign of mourning and repentance, and is therefore unsuitable during the glorious fifty days of commemorating Christ's resurrection.⁴¹ This minor detail bespeaks Cassian's great concern for integrating orthopraxy and orthodoxy. This concern is evident in his decision to dedicate his first work to external aspects of monastic life, thus preparing the way to explain the internal aspects of monastic life in his second work.⁴² Later we will consider the theological significance of prayer, but for now it is important to note Cassian's conviction that right understanding is rooted in right action—or, in this case, right theology is rooted in right worship.

Private prayer in one's cell

In addition to the corporate prayers during the evening, Cassian relates that the monks resume their prayers upon returning to their cells. It was precisely at this time that Abba Theodore once caught Cassian bedding down for the night and reprimanded him.⁴³ Cassian

³⁹ Cassian, *inst* 2.9.1.

⁴⁰ Cassian, *conl* 21.11: 'Igitur abba Theonas cum diebus Quinquagensimae nos in nostra cellula uisitasset, uespertina orationum sollempnitate transacta.'

⁴¹ Cassian, *conl* 21.20.3.

⁴² Cassian, *inst* 2.9.1: 'ut formantes interim exterioris hominis motus et uelut quaedam nunc orationis fundamenta iacentes minore post haec labore, cum coeperimus de statu interioris hominis disputare, orationum quoque eius fastigia construamus.' Cassian makes the contrast explicitly at *inst* 2.9.3 and again at *conl* pref 5.

⁴³ Cassian, *inst* 5.35.

ought to have been doing otherwise. The custom of reading the psalter in *kathismata* had already given the monks ample opportunity to rest. Since they sit during the Psalms, they are sufficiently rested that ‘once more they celebrate the office of prayers as a personal sacrifice more eagerly’⁴⁴ and no one sleeps thereafter. Part of the motivation for working through the night is that the torpor of sleep would deprive the monk of the value of his prayers and Psalms.⁴⁵ Working through the night also reduces the possibility of a nocturnal emission of semen, which would similarly undercut the value of the prayers and Psalms already recited.⁴⁶

Germanus is aware of this possible danger, and draws attention to another consequence of nocturnal emissions. He admits that when this happens, he is reluctant to pray as he ought to when he arises from sleep.⁴⁷ This is a serious problem: monks ought to offer God prayers immediately upon awakening, as the ‘first-fruits of all their movements’.⁴⁸ These anecdotes indicate that monks in their cells spend a great deal of time at prayer during the evening and early morning hours. Prayer at these times is the tissue that connects Cassian’s teaching about evening prayer with his teaching about prayer during the day. Although Cassian knows the three daytime hours (terce, none, and sext),⁴⁹ he discusses them later, since in Scetis they are not observed as a community.

Cassian grounds his discussion on the crashingly obvious difference between daytime prayers and nighttime prayers—the time of day at which they are prayed. By doing so, he opts against another salient difference between the cycles in the Egyptian practice, one to which we have just alluded.⁵⁰ In Scetis, the daily services are further distinguished from the nightly services because they are not celebrated in the synaxis, but rather privately while one continues

⁴⁴ Cassian, *inst* 2.12.3: ‘idem rursus orationum officium uelut peculiare sacrificium studiosius celebrant’.

⁴⁵ Cassian, *inst* 2.13.1–3; 3.8.1–4.

⁴⁶ Cassian, *inst* 2.13.1–2.

⁴⁷ Cassian, *conl* 21.35.

⁴⁸ Cassian, *conl* 21.26.2–3: ‘cunctorum motuum suorum primitias.’ Cf. Evagrius, *orat* 126.

⁴⁹ Cassian, *inst* 2.2.2: ‘diurnis orationum officiis, id est tertia, sexta nonaque id uisum est.’ See Taft (1993): 58–62, and Heiming (1961): 102–13.

⁵⁰ Cassian, *inst* 3.2.

working in his cell.⁵¹ However, this custom could deprive monks of the support of communal worship throughout the day. Following his stated preference for tempering the inimitably demanding rule of Egypt,⁵² Cassian looks elsewhere for a model of daily prayers. For this, he reverts to practices he learned in Palestine and Syria.⁵³

The daytime synaxis

The general principle for each daytime office is that three Psalms are recited with prayers (conforming to the practice of Daniel: Dan. 6:11), which allows the monks to continue their work.⁵⁴ Cassian offers scriptural precedents for praying at the third, sixth, and ninth hours. This is worth noting. Not only does Cassian interweave Scripture and prayer in practice, he also looks to Scripture for the overall structure of the cycle of prayers. Thus, the third hour was when the Holy Spirit was poured forth upon the Apostles while they prayed (Acts 2:14–18).⁵⁵ The sixth hour is related not only to Our Lord's crucifixion (Luke 23:44),⁵⁶ but also to the revelation about the Gentiles that came to Peter during prayer (Acts 10:10 ff).⁵⁷ The ninth hour is justified not only because of Our Lord's harrowing of hell,⁵⁸

⁵¹ This claim is well corroborated: see *apoph* Macarius the Great 33, Abba of Rome 1 (PG 65: 273–7, 385–9); Palladius, *HL* 7.5 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 38–40); Rufinus, *HM* 22.2.3 (PTS 34: 358); and Athanasius, *u Ant* 3.6 (SC 400: 138); see also Dattrino (1986): 170–4.

⁵² Cassian, *inst* 3.1; cf. *pref* 9.

⁵³ Cf. Martimort (1986); Van der Mensbrugge (1957); Taft (1993): 66–73.

⁵⁴ Cassian, *inst* 3.3.1. ⁵⁵ Cassian, *inst* 3.3.2.

⁵⁶ Cassian, *inst* 3.3.3–4: 'Hora autem sexta immaculata hostia Dominus noster atque Saluator oblatu est Patri, crucemque pro totius mundi salute conscendens humani generis peccata deleuit'.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 'Eadem quoque hora Petro in excessu mentis uocatio gentium... reuelatur.'

⁵⁸ The harrowing of Hell is described variously in a number of early Christian writings; e.g. *od Sal* 17.9–16, 42.3–20 (ed. Charlesworth [1977]: 74, 143–4); *ep apos aeth* 37–9 (PO 9: 208–10); *acta Tho* 10 (ed. Bonnet [1883]: 10); *doct Syl* 104.2–14, 110.19–34 (ed. Janssens [1983]: 66, 78); *Hermas, sim* 9.93.16.1–7 (SC 53: 326–8); *eu Nic lat* 18.1–27.2 (ed. Kim [1973]: 35–49) (though this could be a later accretion); *Jer apoch* (= *log.* 45 in TU 30^{3–4}: 320–2, where the passage is cited from both Irenaeus and Justin Martyr); *apos trad* 4.8 (ed. Dix [1992]: 8); Melito, *pas* 100–3 (SC 123: 120–2); Clement, *strom* 2.9.43.5–2.9.44.4 (SC 38: 68–9, 446: 150–8); Origen, *Cels* 2.43 (SC 132: 382). See also Bauckham (1992): 156–8, and, more generally, Trumbower (2001).

but also because at this hour Cornelius was visited by an angel during prayer (Acts 10:3). Furthermore, Peter's vision was explained to him, and elsewhere we learn that Peter and John went to the Temple at the ninth hour for prayer (Acts 3:1).⁵⁹ Cassian even extends his catalogue of scriptural precedents to justify the evening and morning services previously described.⁶⁰

In conclusion, Cassian lists the total number of daily services. With reference to Matt. 10:1–16, he writes: 'At these same times too the householder in the Gospel led workers into his vineyard. And so he is said to have led them in at first light, which time designates our morning service [1], then at the third [2], then at the sixth [3], next at the ninth [4] and finally at the eleventh hour, in which is symbolised the hour of lighting the lamps [5].'⁶¹ Together with the two daily synaxes, this makes a total of seven daily offices. Cassian's description of the development in Bethlehem of *matutinam nostram sollemnitatem*, at which Pss. 50, 62, and 89 are chanted,⁶² has been much discussed by liturgiologists and others.⁶³ For our purposes, the practical aspect of this service is most relevant. Because the monks at Bethlehem were in the regrettable habit of returning to bed after matins, this service was developed to keep them awake.⁶⁴ The motivation for this is identical to that of the Egyptian practice of keeping vigil⁶⁵—to which he likens it, though as but a pale shadow.⁶⁶

That is the order of services for weekdays.

For weekends, and for major feasts, the order of services varies slightly. Cassian notes that the offices are modified on Sundays ('pro reuerentia dominicae resurrectionis') such that one office only is

⁵⁹ Cassian, *inst* 3.3.6–7.

⁶⁰ Cassian, *inst* 3.3.8–11.

⁶¹ Cassian, *inst* 3.3.11: 'In his quoque horis etiam ille euangelicus pater familias operarios conduxit in uineam suam. Ita enim et ille primo mane conduxisse describitur, quod tempus designat matutinam nostram sollemnitatem, dein tertia, inde sexta, post haec nona, ad extremum undecima, in qua lucernaris hora signatur.'

⁶² Cassian, *inst* 3.6.

⁶³ Cassian, *inst* 3.4.1–5. For the recent discussion, see Taft (1993): 195–209, who thinks Cassian describes 'second Matins' (p. 209); O. Chadwick (1948): 179–81, argues it was Prime; Froger (1946) and (1952), who maintains that Cassian is describing the origin of Lauds; and Hanssens (1952): 45, who thinks Cassian is describing the development of Prime or 'quelque office de fonction analogue'. For a convenient synopsis of the debate between Froger and Hanssens, see Raffa (1953).

⁶⁴ Cassian, *inst* 3.4.1–2, 5.1–2.

⁶⁵ Cassian, *inst* 2.13.1–3.

⁶⁶ Cassian, *inst* 3.5.2.

prayed before lunch. In the fulfilment of this office, the monks regard terce and sext fulfilled as well.⁶⁷ The regulations for fasting also differ.⁶⁸ On Saturdays, Sundays, and feasts, supper as well as lunch is served; but the evening Psalm is not said, neither before nor after the meal, in exception to the general practice.⁶⁹ In place of this, they begin the meal with one prayer and end it with one prayer.⁷⁰ Again, as with the practice of not bending the knee during Pentecost, theological principle overrides and modifies customs of worship.

Prayer outside the coenobium

There is also an indication (albeit a modest one) that monks outside the monastery should nonetheless keep the monastery's rule of prayer. Abba Serenus relates the eerie tale of a monk who spied on a meeting of demons and thus learnt of a fellow monk's fall into sin. The monk was holed up in a cave in the wilderness when he beheld the conventicle. The reason he was there is important: 'For when one of our brothers had made a journey in the wilderness, coming upon a certain cave while dusk fell he stopped, wishing to celebrate the evening service in it. While he sang the Psalms there according to custom [*ex more*], it was well past midnight.'⁷¹ The monk sang the Psalms *ex more*; but does this mean according to the custom regarding monks outside the monastery, or according to the monastery's custom regarding which Psalms to sing? Cassian's meaning is unclear.

⁶⁷ Cassian, *inst* 3.11: 'in ipsa tertiam sextamque pariter consummatam reputant'.

⁶⁸ Cassian, *inst* 3.9.1–3.10.

⁶⁹ Cassian, *inst* 3.12: 'Denique etiam in ipsis diebus, id est sabbato uel dominica seu feriatis temporibus, quibus prandium pariter et cena solet fratribus exhiberi, psalmus ad uesperam non dicitur, id est nec cum accedunt ad cenam nec cum ab ipsa consurgunt, ut solet fieri in sollemnibus prandiis uel canonica ieiuniorum refectio, quam et praecedere consuetudinarii psalmi solent et subsequi'.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 'sed tantummodo simplici oratione facta accedunt ad cenam eamque rursus consurgentes ab ipsa sola oratione concludunt'. Cf. Abba Moses' discussion of rules about eating associated with evening prayers and vigils (Cassian, *conl* 2.26.3).

⁷¹ Cassian, *conl* 8.16.1–4: 'Nam cum unus e fratribus nostris in hac solitudine iter ageret, aduesperante iam die antrum quoddam repperiens ibidem substitit, uespertinam uolens in eo synaxin celebrare: ubi dum Psalmos ex more decantat, tempus mediae noctis excessit'. See also Weber (1961): 91–3.

Perhaps the tale anticipates the stipulation of St Benedict's *Rule* that monks ought to observe the offices when outside the monastery on approved business.⁷² But this raises the further question as to what the monk was doing in the wilderness, away from his monastery, in the first place. It seems to contradict the monastic ideal of the stationary life stated so frequently, not least by Cassian himself.⁷³ But Cassian is willing to tolerate some divergence between his stated preference for staying put and the actual practices of the monks. For instance, he casually relates that Egyptian monks sometimes went on pilgrimage to the Holy Lands, to pray there.⁷⁴

Praying against demons

The mention of demons in Cassian's tale about the monk in the cave merits a brief aside, since Cassian gives some attention to them elsewhere. For example, Cassian indicates that that earliest coenobites warded off demons (who were particularly ferocious at night) by means of psalmody, prayer, and readings. They would therefore take shifts, so that someone was always awake, praying, reading, or psalmodizing.⁷⁵ Demons actively oppose the life of virtue, but prayer effectively keeps them at bay.⁷⁶ Cassian particularly endorses David's prayer at Ps. 35: 1–3 for repulsing the evil spirits, who are the appropriate objects for our hatred and for prayers full of invective:⁷⁷

⁷² *RB* 50 (CSEL 75: 133).

⁷³ Cassian, *conl* 6.15, 7.23.3, 24.3.1–2 and 6.1–3; *apoph* Anthony 10, Evagrius 1, Macarius the Great 41 (PG 65: 77, 173, 281); Palladius, *HL* 16.1–6 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 64–70). Related are Cassian's (*conl* 18.7), Jerome's (*ep* 22 (ed. Labourt [1949–55], 1: 110–60)) and Benedict's (*RB* 1.6–9 (CSEL 75: 19–20)) and the Master's (*RM* 1.13–74, 7.22–46 (SC 105: 332–46, 386–90)) harangues against the 'sarabaites', 'remnouth', and 'gyrovagues'.

⁷⁴ Cassian, *inst* 4.31; cf. Evagrius' travels into Alexandria (*HL* syr 72.3 [CSCO 399: 366–7]), sometimes to dispute with philosophers (*Paradisus Patrum* 9 (PG 65: 448)).

⁷⁵ Cassian, *conl* 7.23.1.

⁷⁶ This principle is illustrated by a legend about Anthony the Great known to Cassian: when two magicians send evil spirits to torment him, he defends himself by crossing himself and praying; see *conl* 8.18.2.

⁷⁷ Cassian, *conl* 7.21.6, 8. Cassian anticipates the teaching laid down by Iṣō' bar Nūn in the Arabic version of his *Rule* 16 (ed. Vööbus [1960]: 203): 'The monk shall prevail when thoughts encircle him if he chant a Psalm, since it is a cure for thoughts.' (For

Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take up shield and buckler; arise and come to my aid. Brandish spear and javelin against those who pursue me. Say to my soul, 'I am your salvation.'

But for emergencies, when it is not possible to chant lengthy passages, Cassian endorses the use of short, frequent prayers so as to evade the temptations of the Devil.⁷⁸

Even after this detailed account of prayer, Cassian has not finished. Victor Codina has rightly called Cassian, 'the first pilgrim who recounted to the Latins the secrets of the Easterners' continual prayer.'⁷⁹ So we will want to examine what he makes of the Pauline injunction at 1 Thess. 5:17: 'Pray without ceasing.'⁸⁰ Cassian's strategy for satisfying the Apostle's order is distinctive. In the first place, he decisively rejects any scheme for being supported by others so as to free up time to pray constantly. He and Germanus had put that proposal to Abba Abraham for his blessing.⁸¹ Abraham's crashing rejoinder comes by way of an anecdote about Anthony the Great, who was similarly petitioned by a young man: by hitching his spiritual progress to the shifting fortunes of his family, the young man could not hope to attain the great inner calm needed for prayer; furthermore, he deprived himself of the spiritual fruits of labouring for his own sustenance.⁸² But if leisurely retirement is not an acceptable means to ceaseless prayer, how can it be accomplished?

Prayer and the acquisition of virtues

The solution, at least in part, lies in Cassian's willingness to countenance imperfection.⁸³ Accepting imperfection in no way implies

Išō's 'thoughts', read 'demons'—in the manner of Evagrius—and the parallel is striking.) On Išō' bar Nūn, see Baumstark (1922): 219–20; Ortiz de Urbina (1965): 216.

⁷⁸ Cassian, *inst* 2.10.3; *conl* 9.36.1: 'Quamobrem utilius censent breues quidem orationes sed creberrimas fieri'; cf. *RB* 20.3 (CSEL 75: 82).

⁷⁹ Codina (1966): 100: 'Casiano es el primer peregrino que cuenta a los latinos los secretos de la oración continua de los orientales'... [sic].

⁸⁰ See Cassian, *inst* 8.13: following Matt. 5:23–4, 1 Thess. 5:17 and 1 Tim. 2:8, Cassian asserts the need for constant prayer at all times and places; see further Stewart (1984).

⁸¹ Cassian, *conl* 24.10.

⁸² Cassian, *conl* 24.11.1–12.4.

⁸³ Cassian, *conl* 23 is a great example.

tolerating complacency, however, because it is not a static imperfection. Instead, it is in the process of assimilating to perfection. Ceaseless prayer requires the struggle of the spiritual life (that is, Evagrius' *praktikê*). This struggle and the life of prayer are ultimately identical. From the beginning, prayer is crucial in the effort to overcome vice.⁸⁴ But Cassian also gives many examples of the importance of prayer in the acquisition of virtues, such as chastity,⁸⁵ obedience,⁸⁶ humility,⁸⁷ moderation,⁸⁸ and abstinence.⁸⁹ He crowns his discussion of virtues with the brilliant metaphor of the ambidextrous man.⁹⁰ The spiritually ambidextrous man sends up to God pure and swift prayers with the right hand, but can be abandoned by prayer during assaults from the left hand—for which reason he must turn both hands into right hands. Thus, for Cassian, the aim of the Christian is to become spiritually ambidextrous. So prayer is not only a precondition for attaining the virtues, it also promotes, and ultimately consummates, the ascetic struggle.⁹¹ Prayer is in fact the ultimate goal of the monastic life.⁹²

⁸⁴ Cassian, *conl* 5.14.1—5.

⁸⁵ See Cassian, *inst* 6.1, 17; cf. *conl* 4.12.4; 12.4.4, 8.5, 12.6; and 7.2.1—2: Abba Serenus obtained interior chastity of heart and soul (*interna cordis atque animae castitate*), the answer of his prayers (*orationum suarum . . . uota*), by tirelessly insisting with beseeching day and night, fasts and vigils also (*nocturnis diurnisque precibus, ieiuniis quoque ac uigiis infatigabiliter insistens*).

⁸⁶ Cassian, *inst* 5.40.2: the two obedient boys who die of starvation rather than eating the figs they were ordered to deliver pray before dying (like Christ, no doubt). Thus is their obedience crowned.

⁸⁷ Cassian, *conl* 11.9.3. Cassian recognizes that humility can be feigned. So Abba Piamun's story about how Abba Serapion 'neatly mocked the pretence of humility' (*humilitatis figmentum abbas Sarapion . . . eleganter inrigit*) of a sarabaite, or vagrant monk, who claimed to be too unworthy even to pray with the others (Cassian, *conl* 18.11.2; cf. *apoph.* Serapion 4) can be taken as a proviso that the humility must be genuine.

⁸⁸ Cassian, *conl* 1.17.2: 'idcirco uigiliarum ac ieiuniorum orationumque sedulitas adhibetur, ut extenuata mens non terrena sapiat, sed caelestia contempletur'. Cf. *inst* 5.9; *conl* 1.20.4, 2.16.2—17.1.

⁸⁹ Cassian, *conl* 2.22.2.

⁹⁰ Cassian, *conl* 6.10.2—3; cf. Ramsey (1997): 239 and Sheridan (2000): 287—9.

⁹¹ Cf. Cassian, *conl* 21.33.6: praying for one's enemies is a sign that one *hic peccati reppulit iugum ac uinclâ dirupit*.

⁹² Cassian, *conl* 9.2.1: 'Omnis monachi finis cordisque perfectio ad iugem atque indisruptam orationis perseuerantiam tendit, et quantum humanae fragilitati conceditur, ad immobilem tranquillitatem mentis ac perpetuam nititur puritatem,

It is therefore significant that, in his conference on prayer, Abba Isaac insists that ascetic struggle is never left behind. The monk must always strive to pray without ceasing. If this struggle ends, the monk's prayer is immediately 'plunged into earthly things'.

Whoever is used to praying only at such time as the knee is bent, prays very little. But whoever, even on bended knee, is distracted by any sort of wandering heart, prays not at all. And for this reason, it behoves us even before the time of prayer to be such as we would wish to be found at prayer. For it is necessary that the mind be formed at the time of its supplication by its previous condition, and by those thoughts on which it had tarried before prayer its prayer is either elevated to heavenly things or else plunged into earthly things.⁹³

Cassian goes further. He envisages not just passive acceptance of trials, but even prayerful solicitation of them. Thus, he interprets Ps. 25:2 ('Examine me, O Lord, and prove me: try my reins and my heart') as David's prayer for the 'salutary cleansing' that comes of tribulations.⁹⁴ Abba Daniel cites Ps. 119:8 as evidence that David prayed, not so that he would not be abandoned (which is spiritually profitable),⁹⁵ but rather so that he would not be abandoned indefinitely.⁹⁶ This is the experience of the vicissitudes of prayer, a trial that teaches the need for 'instance of prayers'.⁹⁷

The instruction to pray without ceasing, like the biblical command 'Be ye perfect', does not admit of an easy solution. Instead, it necessitates a concerted, lifelong effort. The Egyptian regimen of working in one's cell, especially through the night, is an important part of this effort as Cassian presents it.⁹⁸ We might compare this to the later

ob quam omnem tam laborem corporis quam contritionem spiritus indefesse quaerimus et iugiter exercemus.' On the 'immobile tranquility and perpetual purity of the mind', see Marsili (1936): 12–16; *tranquillitas* may be taken as the Latin for *hesychia*: see Miquel (1986): 143–80.

⁹³ Cassian, *conl* 10.14.2.

⁹⁴ Cassian, *conl* 6.11.3: 'salutari emundatione'; comparing this with Evagrius, in *Ps* 25.2 $\acute{\alpha}$, reveals Cassian as more Evagrian than Evagrius! Cf. *conl* 5.15.2: 'Non enim orasset propheta dicens: ne tradas, domine, bestiis animam confitentem tibi [Ps. 74:19], nisi scisset propter inflationem cordis quosdam, ut humilientur, eisdem rursus uitiiis quae uicerant tradi.' This is evidence at least of praying for one's spiritual development, however difficult that development may be.

⁹⁵ Cf. Evagrius, in *Iob* 40.8 (PTS 53: 335 [= sch 28.14]); Driscoll (1997); Origen *CCt* 3.11.17 (SC 376: 606).

⁹⁶ Cassian, *conl* 4.6.1.

⁹⁷ Cassian, *conl* 4.4.2.

⁹⁸ Cf. Dattrino (1986).

ascetic rule of the Constantinopolitan ‘sleepless monks’.⁹⁹ In the *Life of St Alexander the Sleepless*, the founder, we read that it ‘was called the monastery of the *Akoimetoι* [the “Sleepless Ones”], on account of their ceaseless and ever sleepless songs of praise’.¹⁰⁰ Alexander had divided his monks into three choirs, so that they could sing in cycles and thus continually pray to God.¹⁰¹ St Marcellus, who became the monastery’s third abbot, found when he arrived that, by teaching his monks this method, Alexander had ‘given to men on earth an angelic way of life’.¹⁰² Apart from the corporate character of their practice, which is in direct contrast to the private character of the Scetiot practice, this is happily compatible with what Cassian teaches about vigils. However, Cassian does not impose this strenuous observation on the monks of Gaul. And he does not reveal anything directly about unceasing prayer until a later Conference. Even then, it is only on the presumption that considerable progress has been made in virtue that Cassian says more about ceaseless prayer. So it is best to defer a complete treatment of unceasing prayer, as Cassian does.

2 THE PRACTICAL AND COMMUNAL EFFECTS OF PRAYER

Why does Cassian devote such ingenuity to describing how one might pray unceasingly? It cannot be respect for Scripture alone that motivated him, because there are other ways of understanding that injunction that obviate the need for such complicated measures. It would seem, instead, that Cassian wanted to encourage unceasing prayer because of the benefits that it confers. What, then, does prayer accomplish?

⁹⁹ Pargoire (1898–9) and (1899): 133–43; Talbot (1991).

¹⁰⁰ *u Alex* 53 (PO 6: 700–1): [μοναστήριον] τὸ ἐπιλεγόμενον τῶν ἀκοιμητῶν διὰ τὴν ἀκατάπαυστον αὐτῶν καὶ πάντη ἄπνουν δοξολογίαν...

¹⁰¹ *u Alex* 43 (PO 6: 692).

¹⁰² *u Marc* 4 (ed. Dagron [1968]: 290): Ἐπίγεται οὖν πρὸς τὸν καλὸν Ἀλεξάνδρον τότε... ὃς μετὰ ταῦτα ἐν τῷ στόματι τοῦ Πόντου μοναστήριον ἰδρύσας πρῶτος ἔθηκεν τύπον ἀπαύστως ὑμνεῖν τὸν Θεὸν διαδοχῇ τῶν λειτουργούντων, ἀγγελικὴν πολιτείαν ἐπὶ γῆς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παραδούς.

Cassian describes the function of prayer in two largely distinct, though not separate, ways. For convenience, we can call the first the 'private' function of prayer and the second, the 'communal' function. At the onset, though, it must be stressed that both are related inasmuch as both are types of prayer for salvation. Since his account of the private function of prayer is rather more contained, we will turn to it first.

The 'private' function of prayer

Cassian discusses the private function of prayer in 'On the protection of God' (*conl* 13), where he underscores the utter dependence of the Christian upon God. And he often does this by talking about Christian prayer. For instance, Chaeremon mentions the farmer, here an analogue of the monk, who must pray to God for his work to bear fruit. The farmer beseeches God to spare him from 'unanticipated accidents, by which not only will his hope be frustrated by waiting in vain (even though the field is laden with the desired abundance of fruit), but even be cheated of the richness of the crop that has already been harvested and stored in the threshing-floor or granary'.¹⁰³ This image draws our attention to the central relevance of supplication in Cassian's teaching on prayer. The point is reinforced when Abba Isaac enumerates the types of prayer,¹⁰⁴ for he gives pride of place to supplication.

Supplication gets priority because we constantly sin, albeit often unwillingly or in ignorance. Cassian is explicit: even the holy man is unable not to sin,¹⁰⁵ and so must pray, 'Forgive us our debts' (Matt. 6:12).¹⁰⁶ It is therefore necessary for us to pray with David, 'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back

¹⁰³ Cassian, *conl* 13.3.4: 'insperatos . . . casus, quibus, etiamsi desiderata fructuum fecunditate ager fuerit opimatus, non solum spei suae uana expectatione frustrabitur, uerum etiam perceptarum et reconditarum iam uel in area uel in horreo frugum ubertate fraudabitur'.

¹⁰⁴ Cassian, *conl* 9.9.1–9.14.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Augustine's distinction 'posse non peccare', 'non posse peccare', e.g. *ciu* 22.30 (CSEL 40²: 666–7). It will be recalled from ch. 2 that Cassian's teaching can be seen (at least in part) as a direct challenge to Pelagian teaching on this subject.

¹⁰⁶ Cassian, *conl* 22.13.2.

thy servant also from presumptuous sins' (Ps. 19:12–13).¹⁰⁷ Chaeremon tirelessly resorts to the Psalms for supplicatory prayers. He teaches Germanus and Cassian to make the prayers of David their own. He weaves his explanation of grace and freedom from the psalter, all the while giving full weight to attributing salvation to God.¹⁰⁸ He pointedly asks, 'But if we impute to our free will the attainment of virtues and accomplishment of God's commands, how do we pray: "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought in us" (Ps. 68:28) and "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us" (Ps. 90:17)?'¹⁰⁹ Persistence in humble, supplicatory prayers does not go unnoticed. The case of Cornelius, called as a reward for his prayers and almsgiving,¹¹⁰ demonstrates the important role of prayer in 'repentance unto life' (Acts 11:18). Those who are suppliant find salvation. By supplicating God, we gain His unfailing support. 'Hence it is that at prayer we proclaim the Lord not only as protector and saviour, but also as helper and supporter.'¹¹¹

The 'communal' function of prayer

An additional dimension of prayer emerges when Cassian discusses its communal function, the first evidence for which is found in the formal structure of Cassian's writings. Throughout the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*, Cassian regularly beseeches prayers for his

¹⁰⁷ Cassian, *conl* 20.12.2: 'Delicta quis intelligit? ab occultis meis munda me: et ab alienis parce seruo tuo.' Cf. *conl* 13.10.1, quoting Ps. 141:3.

¹⁰⁸ Cassian, *conl* 13.9.3–4: Chaeremon asks, 'quid sit quod orantes dicimus: dirige in conspectu tuo uiam meam [Ps. 5 :8], et: perforce gressus meos in semitis tuis: ut non moueantur uestigia mea? [Ps. 17 :5] . . . uel certe quod orantes dicimus cum propheta: inlumina oculos meos ne umquam obdormiam in mortem [Ps. 13:3], nisi quod in his omnibus et gratia dei et libertas nostri declaratur arbitrii, quia etiam suis interdum motibus homo ad uirtutum appetitus possit extendi, semper uero a domino indigeat adiuuari?' See also *conl* 13.12.9–10, where reference is made to Acts 8:22–3; Chaeremon does not limit himself to the psalter.

¹⁰⁹ Cassian, *conl* 13.11.2.

¹¹⁰ Cassian, *conl* 13.15.2: 'Cornelio precibus et elemosynis iugiter insistenti uelut remunerationis uice uia salutis ostenditur eique angeli uisitacione praecipitur, ut accersiens Petrum uerba salutis ab eo quibus una cum omnibus suis saluaretur agnoscat.'

¹¹¹ Cassian, *conl* 13.17.2: 'Inde est quod orantes non solum protectorem ac saluatorem, sed etiam adiutorem ac susceptorem dominum proclamamus.'

writings.¹¹² More than this, he entrusts himself to their prayers as well.¹¹³ These requests are not mere pious rhetoric.¹¹⁴ Instead, they are a natural extension of Cassian's understanding of prayer's role in building the Christian community, as further evidence will show.

Cassian links prayer *for* one another and prayer *with* one another. We can best appreciate how he does this by turning to cases in which he talks about monks being suspended from the synaxis. These cases of 'excommunication' lead him to mention the importance of prayer on behalf of those suspended from the communal services. It is here that we see clearly how critical for Cassian's theology is supplication on behalf of one's fellows.

God grants mercy for the sake of the prayers of the community, and this is particularly the case with respect to someone who has transgressed the community's standards (and thereby becomes separated from the community). The mercy of God and the prayers of the community can bring about such a person's return to the community. Further anecdotes reveal that the prayers of the community for members within the community are no less potent. These prayers correct the wayward who have not yet strayed beyond the community's limits. They also bolster the faltering—and, as we have had occasion to notice, everyone falters. This includes Cassian himself. Consequently, on the basis of his theological principles, we have good reason to believe that Cassian made his requests for prayers with all earnestness. The testimony given by Cassian provides ample (and often colourful) evidence of this complex process at work.

Exclusion from communal prayer

There are, according to Cassian's recollections, numerous grounds for being excluded from the community's prayers—and he mentions

¹¹² Cassian, *inst* 4.10, 5.1; *conl* pref., 24.1.

¹¹³ Cassian, *conl* 24.26.19.

¹¹⁴ Codina (1966): 125–6: 'Aun admitiendo en estas frases cierto aspecto de retórica propia del tiempo, no hay duda que para Casiano este recurso a la oración es algo fundamental y necesario para su obra, y parece que van en aumento a medida que la obra avanza [I,1,1; Cfr. I,4,2; I,6,3; I,2–4; VI.2.2–4; VII, 1; VII.31.6–7. Cfr. Pref. I p. *Conl.* 4].'

them so casually that we have no reason for supposing that the list even approximates completeness. The Egyptian fathers considered some matters actionable, though such instances seem frankly trifling to us: when a conscientious bursar reports to the abbot that the cook for that week (the *ebdomadarius*) has carelessly spilt and left three lentils, the cook is barred from the synaxis on grounds of his negligence.¹¹⁵ If someone breaks one of the monastery's earthenware dishes, he is liable to do penitence during the synaxis.¹¹⁶ If any of the monks, 'especially the younger ones', lingers with another, goes somewhere with another, or holds another by the hand, he may well be banned from the community's prayers for a time.¹¹⁷ If anyone who arrives at the daytime services after the conclusion of the first Psalm, or at the nighttime services after the conclusion of the second Psalm, and fails to repent acceptably (it comes as no surprise:) he is barred from the next service.¹¹⁸ Heresy also separates its perpetrators from the community and is therefore grounds for being excluded from the services.¹¹⁹ If anyone prays with someone who has been suspended from prayer, he is liable to do penitence during the prayers.¹²⁰ But praying *with* a suspended monk is quite different from praying *for* the suspended monk, which is something that the fathers of Scetis actively encourage.

When describing the procedure of and rationale for banning a monk from the community's prayer, Cassian is particularly keen to forestall the misguided compassion of anyone who would take pity on a banned brother by praying with him and thus in effect worsen both that brother and himself. By preventing the brother from being humbled by the punishment his sin has incurred, he worsens the brother and reinforces whatever sin he had committed. And he worsens himself by participating in that brother's condemnation—

¹¹⁵ Cassian, *inst* 4.20. ¹¹⁶ Cassian, *inst* 4.16.1–2.

¹¹⁷ Cassian, *inst* 2.15.2: 'praecipue iuniores'.

¹¹⁸ Cassian, *inst* 3.7.1–2.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *apoph* Theodore of Pherme 4 (PG 65: 188); Poemen and Sisoës similarly (*apoph* Poemen 78, Sisoës 25 [PG 65: 341, 400]) treat their heretical visitors with courtesy but do not pray with them.

¹²⁰ Cassian, *inst* 4.16.1–2; Ramsey (2000): 107 notes parallels in Pachomian practice.

in effect, handing himself over to Satan, to whom (following St Paul) the brethren had handed over the sinful brother for a time.¹²¹

These strict measures are not undertaken out of animosity, as is indicated by Cassian's insistence that prayers be offered for those banned from the services. Thus, Abba Serenus insists that we must pray for those who have been excommunicated, emphasizing the ability of prayer to build up the community.¹²² (This function of prayer is important even when everything in the monastery is going well, as is indicated by Cassian's regulations for the rotating cycle of weekly tasks. Those ending their cycle of duties wash the feet of their brethren to receive the blessing of their prayers.)¹²³ Furthermore, as Cassian learns from Abba Pinufius' invocation of Jas. 5:14–15, the prayers of the holy win pardon for the sins of others.¹²⁴ This is particularly effective when coupled with the prayers of the others themselves.¹²⁵ But despite this optimistic note, Abba Chaeremon's instruction should be kept in mind. Referring to the 'sins unto death' mentioned at 1 John 5:18, Chaeremon insists that some people ought *not* to be prayed for—though he does not specify who these people are, or what these sins are.¹²⁶

Turning from Cassian's monastic treatises, we find in his Christological treatise additional evidence of this process at work in the case of Leporius.¹²⁷ Portrayed by Cassian as a Nestorianizing Pelagian, Leporius was admonished by Cassian and then left Gaul.¹²⁸ Eventually, Leporius found his way to North Africa, where his eventual reconciliation to the Church was overseen by a group of senior clergy that included Augustine.¹²⁹ Leporius' theological deviance had alienated him from the Church, as is evident from the fact that he had to issue a profession of faith before being reconciled to the Church. Leporius' case shows that heresy separates people from the worship of the community. (This is made spectacularly clear in the case of Serapion, which we will discuss in due course.) Most of the cases we

¹²¹ Cassian, *inst* 2.16; cf. 1 Cor. 5:5, 1 Tim. 1:20.

¹²² Cassian, *conl* 7.30.

¹²³ Cassian, *inst* 4.19.2.

¹²⁴ Cassian, *conl* 20.8.4.

¹²⁵ Cassian, *conl* 20.8.7; cf. 3.15.2, 17.

¹²⁶ Cassian, *conl* 11.9.5.

¹²⁷ See de Beer (1964).

¹²⁸ Cassian, *inc* 1.4.2: 'a nobis admonitus'.

¹²⁹ Cassian, *inc* 1.4.3; Augustine, *ep.* 219 (CSEL 57: 428–31).

have seen so far involve doing or failing to do something; in Leporius' case, what is involved is the propagation of theological error. Because Cassian discusses Leporius' situation within the context of his diatribe against Nestorius, and identifies Leporius as a Nestorian, it is worth noting that, at the same time Cassian reproved Leporius¹³⁰ (and Nestorius!),¹³¹ he prayed against the baneful influence of their Christological heresy.¹³² Although Nestorius was recalcitrant,¹³³ Leporius' penitence provides Cassian a sterling example of the grace of God acting at the petitions of the faithful to effect conversion.¹³⁴ It should also be pointed out that, when God acts to restore the formerly wayward to the community, prayers of thanksgiving are always appropriate.¹³⁵

Prayer as a mode of relating to God

But Cassian never suggests that the primary purpose of prayer is that it is an effective means of coping with sin. Prayer is desirable in itself. Since prayer implies a special relationship to God, it has numerous collateral benefits. These benefits can be appreciated collectively if we consider the prophetic function of prayer in Cassian's writings. Now prophecy is interpretation of God's will. The prophet's is therefore a teaching vocation. This means it has a communal function. Very often in his writings Cassian quotes some scriptural record of prayer as an authoritative witness in theological discussion. The nature of this authority is sufficiently clear from instances where he explicitly ascribes divine authority to these utterances.¹³⁶ The one who prays

¹³⁰ Cassian, *inc* 1.4.2.

¹³¹ e.g. Cassian, *inc* 6.18.1.

¹³² Cassian, *inc* 7.1.

¹³³ This is quite evident from *l Her*, Nestorius' *apologia*: see Bedjan (1910), ET: Driver (1925).

¹³⁴ Codina refers to the conversion of Leporius: Codina (1966): 124, 153–4, 158–60, 165–71, and at 178: 'Y si el recurso a la oración ha sido frecuente en el transcurso del *De Incarnatione*, si de Dios esperaba Casiano la conversión de Nestorio [I.4.1], como fue Dios al que convirtió a Leporio [I.4.2], al final del tratado no podía faltar de nuevo la invocación de la ayuda divina.'

¹³⁵ Cf. Cassian, *conl* 10.3.4.

¹³⁶ Cassian, *conl* 12.12.5: Solomon's prayer at the completion of the temple (1 Kgs 8:17–19), quoting God Himself, reveals that David—and by extension any holy

can thus become a prophet by disclosing some aspect of God's relationship with mankind.¹³⁷ In at least one instance, prayer reveals a proposition about God Himself. The prayer of David, 'that holy prophet', at Ps. 102:27 demonstrates the theological point that God is changeless (*inmutabilem*).¹³⁸ We have had occasion to note Cassian's emphatic balance of orthopraxy and orthodoxy. Once more, Cassian can be seen to coordinate prayerful experience and propositional knowledge.

Cassian can treat prayer as a vehicle for revelation because he recognizes prayer as conversation with God.¹³⁹ The cases we have just seen in which prayer provides theological data suffice to demonstrate that in prayer not only does the Christian address God, but God also addresses the Christian. Cassian uses three other metaphors to explain what prayer is. In the first, he portrays prayer as an offering to God.¹⁴⁰ For this he looks back to Scripture, reworking the Lord's admonition of Matt. 5:23–4 by identifying the offering in question as prayer. In the second, Cassian insists that prayer and the fruits of prayer are gracious gifts from God.¹⁴¹ This means that his teaching on prayer, along with his teaching on conversion and especially his Christology, are critical elements in his teaching about grace. Finally, there is the famous comparison of the mind to a feather.¹⁴² Given the Evagrian resonance of this passage, the feather floating upward is best understood to refer to the ascent of prayer.¹⁴³

person—can properly be credited with good initiative *proprio motu*, so to speak; 23.18.1–2: 'Forgive us our trespasses' (Matt. 6:12) is a divinely mandated prayer.

¹³⁷ Cassian, *conl* 3.10.1 (citing Pss. 17:5, 40:2), 13.1 (Pss. 25:5, 5:8), 15.2 (Ps. 68:28), 17 (2 Thess. 2:16–17); 11.10.1 (Luke 23:34); 13, 10:1–2 (Pss. 119:112, 36); 23.17.4 (Isa. 6:5–7).

¹³⁸ Cassian, *conl* 6.14.3.

¹³⁹ Cassian, *inst* 5.35: 'quanti, inquit, o Iohannes, hora hac *Deo conloquuntur eumque in semet ipsis amplectuntur ac retinent: et tu fraudaris tanto lumine, inertis soprore resolutus?*' (author's emphasis).

¹⁴⁰ Cassian, *inst* 2.10.3: 'offerre nos preces Domino uelle'; see also *inst* 8.13–14; *conl* 16.6.6, 16.

¹⁴¹ Cassian, *conl* 3.12.2–13.1

¹⁴² Cassian, *conl* 9.4.1–3.

¹⁴³ Following Marsili (1936): 98, several scholars have noted the Evagrian resonance of this passage—specifically *KG* 2.6 (ed. Hausherr [1939]: 230); e.g. Weber (1961): 29, Ramsey (1997): 358, Stewart (1998): 65 and Degli Innocenti (2000): 32.

3 THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF PRAYER

All of what we have seen so far is in a sense preliminary to *Conferences* 9 and 10, in which Cassian reveals the ‘inner significance’ of prayer. These chapters are the culmination of the first instalment of the *Conferences* and, in the view of some scholars, may even represent the conclusion of what Cassian intended to write.¹⁴⁴ In either case, these two *Conferences* are the only two sequential conferences dedicated to a single topic in all Cassian’s works and by any standard they conclude a significant portion of his writings. These facts alert us to the significant place of prayer in his account of the monastic life. This is not surprising, since throughout the *Institutes* Cassian’s teaching on prayer is the matrix for his presentation of the ‘Eight Deadly Sins’¹⁴⁵ and consequently the monastic life itself.¹⁴⁶ Cassian explicitly says that these two *Conferences* are meant to be the fulfilment of his earlier promise, made in the *Institutes*, to discuss the character of prayer.¹⁴⁷ And when Cassian fulfils his promise, the resulting account of prayer is strikingly Origenian.

For instance, Abba Isaac, who leads the discussion in *Conference* 9, is probably to be identified with the priest Isaac of the Cells—an Origenian monk.¹⁴⁸ The case of Serapion, related at the beginning of *Conference* 10, is a hugely important source for the Origenian perspective of the controversy touched off by Theophilus’ paschal encyclical of 399.¹⁴⁹ The feature of these conferences of particular

¹⁴⁴ See Ramsey (1997): 8, 397–8, basing his arguments on Cassian, *conl* 9.1 and *conl* 2 *pref* 2. This claim is controversial, chiefly because Cassian promises to discuss certain themes that are not addressed in the first ten *Conferences*. Granted that, it is still significant that *Conferences* 9 and 10 are the only two sequential conferences dedicated to the same subject; and that they treat a subject that is the pinnacle of Cassian’s spiritual teaching: unceasing prayer (*conl* 10.9.1–10.14.3).

¹⁴⁵ Cassian, *inst* 7.10 (avarice); 8.2, 14, 22 (anger); 9.1, 11 (sadness; see Weber [1961]: 58 for parallels in Evagrius); 11.3–4, 10.1–2 (vainglory); 12.6.2, 14.3 (pride).

¹⁴⁶ Cassian, *inst* 12.16: we accomplish perfection ‘*ieiuniis, uigiliis, orationibus, contritioni cordis et corporis operam dantes*’.

¹⁴⁷ Cassian, *conl* 9.1.

¹⁴⁸ Stewart (1998): 136–7; Guy (1937–95).

¹⁴⁹ The major primary sources are Jerome, *epp* 82–100 (ed. Labourt [1954–5]); *u Aphou* (ed. Drioton [1915–17])—though interpretations of this text vary dramatically: some treat it as evidence for anthropomorphism, e.g. Clark (1992): 51–64; but

interest to us will be Cassian's attempt to balance emotion and intellection in his account of prayer.

Conference 9: Isaac's theological foundations

In *Conference 9*, Abba Isaac forcefully asserts the pre-eminent importance of that 'more pure and sincere prayer' which, once it has been achieved, effects the transformation of the monk's life. Adhering to Origenian tradition,¹⁵⁰ Isaac teaches that for the monk who has attained this level of prayer, everything he does is prayer: 'For when the sense of the mind has been absorbed, so to speak, by this purity and remade from its earthly corrosion to a spiritual and even angelic likeness, whatever is received in it, whatever it touches, whatever it does will be the most pure and sincere prayer.'¹⁵¹ Perhaps out of concern that prayer not be reduced to an epiphenomenon, Germanus asks Isaac to explain the quality of this prayer, claiming he does not know what sort of prayer can be overlaid on every activity.¹⁵² To this, Isaac responds that there are many types of prayer, which he distinguishes in terms of the purity and the condition of mind of the one praying.¹⁵³ He bases his claim about the multiplicity of prayer on scriptural testimony: 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.'¹⁵⁴ Isaac explains each of those four terms in turn, as follows:

others have serious reservations, e.g. Florovsky (1975), Gould (1992), and Rubenson (1999): 334–6; Socrates, *HE* 6.7–13 (PG 67: 684–704); Sozomen, *HE* 8.11–13 (PG 67: 1544–9); Palladius, *u Chrys* 6.16–7.118 (SC 341: 126–54); Orosius, *err Prisc et Orig* and Augustine, *c Prisc et Orig* (CCL 49); Sulpicius Severus, *dial* 1.6–7 (CSEL 1: 157–9); ps.-Agathonicus of Tarsus, *De fide* (ed. Crum [1915]: 21–5); Cyril, *adu anthr* (PG 76: 1065–1132); Rufinus, *adult lib Orig, apol ad Anastasium, c Hier* (CCL 20).

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Origen, *orat* 12.2 (GCS 3: 324–25): «ἀδιαλείπτως» δὲ προσεύχεται, καὶ τῶν ἔργων τῆς ἀρετῆς ἢ τῶν ἐντολῶν τῶν ἐπιτελουμένων εἰς εὐχῆς ἀναλαμβάνομένων μέρος, ὁ συνάπτων τοῖς δέουσιν ἔργοις τὴν εὐχὴν καὶ τῇ εὐχῇ τὰς πρεπούσας πράξεις. οὕτω γὰρ μόνως τὸ «ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε» ἐκδέξασθαι δυνάμεθα ὡς δυνατόν ὄν εἰρημένον, εἰ πάντα τὸν βίον τοῦ ἁγίου μίαν συναπτομένην μεγάλην εἴπομεν εὐχὴν . . .

¹⁵¹ Cassian, *conl* 9.6.5.

¹⁵² Cassian, *conl* 9.7.4.

¹⁵³ Cassian, *conl* 9.8.1–3.

¹⁵⁴ 1 Tim. 2:1; Cassian, *conl* 9.9.1–14. He will also find evidence for this fourfold distinction from the Gospels (9.17.1–3) and Phil. 4:6 (9.17.4). This is a classic Origenian treatment: see Origen, *orat* 14.2–6 (GCS 3: 330–3); cf. Weber (1961): 63–4.

‘Supplication is an imploring or petition for sins, by which anyone who is moved to compunction beseeches forgiveness for his wrongdoings, whether past or present.’¹⁵⁵ Awareness of our past sins, committed in knowledge or in ignorance, and sorrow on account of them is an important theme for Cassian.¹⁵⁶ ‘Prayers are that by which we offer or vow anything to God, which in Greek is called *εὐχή*, that is, vow.’¹⁵⁷ The examples provided of this sort of vow are monastic renunciations, all flowing from repentance.

Intercessions are put in third place, which we are accustomed to send up even for others, while we are established in fervour of spirit, earnestly entreating for our dear ones or the peace of the whole world and, that I might speak with the words of the Apostle himself, when ‘we make supplications for all people, for kings and for all in authority.’¹⁵⁸

Peter Brown’s landmark work on the social role of the holy man has drawn attention to the great desirability of saintly intercession.¹⁵⁹ This intercession was not limited to the socially marginal, as Cassian

¹⁵⁵ Cassian, *conl* 9.11; cf. *conl* 20.6.1–2, 12.2.

¹⁵⁶ Cassian, *conl* 22.11.5: Christ’s prayer that the cup might pass (Matt. 26:38–9) was indeed sorrowful, but this sorrow had nothing of sin in it. *conl* 23.5.8–9: Again, no one is sinless. (Theonas appends three descriptions of sin during prayer: ‘Quid tantum spiritus umquam potuit retinere feruorem, ut non interdum lubricis cogitationibus ab ipsa quoque orationis intentione translatus repente de caelestibus ad terrena conrueret? Quid nostrum, ut cetera peruagationum tempora praetermittam, non illo etiam momento, quo deo supplicans ad sublimia erigit mentem, quodam stupore Conlapsus etiam per id uel inuitus offendat, per quod sperabat ueniam delictorum? ... Quis tam familiaris deo tamque coniunctus, qui apostolicum illud imperium, quo sine intermissione orare nos praecipit, uel uno die se gaudeat exsecutum?’); *conl* 23.6.2–4: *ibid.* *conl* 23.7.2: *ibid.*: ‘nec de emissa tardius uel tepidius oratione deflemus, nec reputamus ad culpam cur psallentibus uel orantibus nobis aliquid aliud quam ipsa oratio uel psalmus occurrerit’. *conl* 23.16.1: Theonas attributes these problems to the body of death: ‘Hoc est corpus mortis, quod a caelesti eos intuitu retrahens ad terrena deducit, quod psallentes eos atque in oratione prostratos uel humanas efficies uel sermones uel negotia uel actus facit superfluos retractare.’ *conl* 23.18.1–2: ‘Forgive us our trespasses’ (Matt. 6:12) is a divinely mandated prayer.

¹⁵⁷ Cassian, *conl* 9.12.1; See Marsili (1936): 98–100, n. 2.

¹⁵⁸ Cassian, *conl* 9.13. Prayer is also a way of beseeching blessings from God for oneself. Some examples include the following. *Diuturnis precibus*, Abba Machetes obtained from God the grace of not nodding off during conferences (*inst* 5.29). The illiterate Abba Theodore prays for illumination regarding Scripture (*inst* 5.33); cf. Cassian’s description of Theodore to his Evagrian ideal stated at *conl* 14.8.1–11.5. *conl* 13.7.4: Abba Chaeremon addresses the problem of asking God for bad things.

¹⁵⁹ Brown (1971): 96–103, (1982a), (1982b), (1995): 55–78 and (1998): 54–80.

attests when he relates Abba Abraham's tale of the great trust placed, even by potentates and emperors, in the prayers of Abba John of Lycopolis.¹⁶⁰ 'Thanksgiving is put in fourth place, which the mind returns to the Lord in ineffable transports, either when it recalls the past blessings of God or when it contemplates the present ones, or when it looks to the future for the great things God has prepared for them that love Him.'¹⁶¹ We can see in this description a glimmer of the emotional richness Cassian habitually attributes to prayer.

So that there is no confusion, Isaac insists that all the types of prayer are appropriate for all people at any given time. All of them can give rise to what Isaac designates 'pure and most fervent supplications' and 'that fiery prayer which can be neither related nor expressed by the human mouth.'¹⁶² Isaac gives a striking account of wordless prayers by way of the Spirit groaning within us, worth quoting at length.

Nevertheless sometimes the mind, which progresses to that true condition of purity and has already begun to be rooted in it, conceiving all these things at one and the same time and, flying around all of them like a kind of incomprehensible and most greedy flame, it is accustomed to pour out prayers of purest vigour to God—which the Spirit Himself, intervening with unutterable groans that we do not know, sends to God, conceiving at that moment in time and ineffably pouring forth in supplications things such that I would not say proceed from the mouth, but the very things cannot even be recollected by the mind at another time.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Cassian, *conl* 24.26.17. St John of Lycopolis, the celebrated seer of Thebaïd, was well connected with the Origenists of the desert. Evagrius and Ammonios, one of the Tall Brothers, sought him out for clarification on an abstruse theological point; see Evagrius, *ant* 6.16 (ed. Frankenberg [1912]: 524). See also Sauget (1961–9).

¹⁶¹ Cassian, *conl* 9.14.

¹⁶² Cassian, *conl* 9.15.1: 'puras ac feruentissimas supplicationes; illam ignitam et quae ore hominum nec comprehendi nec exprimi potest orationem'. See also Marsili (1936): 34–5.

¹⁶³ Cassian, *conl* 9.15.2: 'Nonnumquam tamen mens, quae in illum uerum puritatis proficit adfectum atque in eo iam coeperit radicari, solet haec omnia simul pariterque concipiens atque in modum cuiusdam incomprehensibilis ac rapacissimae flammae cuncta peruolitans ineffabiles ad deum preces purissimi uigoris effundere, quas ipse spiritus interpellans gemitibus inenarrabilibus ignorantibus nobis emittit ad deum, tanta scilicet in illius horae momento concipiens et ineffabiliter in supplicatione profundens, quanta non dicam ore percurrere, sed ne ipsa quidem mente ualeat alio tempore recordari.'

In keeping with his egalitarian disposition (rather like God, after all, who is no respecter of persons), Isaac does not restrict this intense prayer to the experienced only. Even preoccupation with the forgiveness of sins—the lowest form of prayer—can lead to these exalted heights. This is, however, no justification for complacency: efforts must be made to advance.¹⁶⁴

Turning from this, Isaac offers an exegesis of the Our Father.¹⁶⁵ He starts it by drawing out the intimacy implied by addressing God as ‘Father’: ‘And so a more sublime and lofty kind succeeds this level of supplications, which is shaped by the contemplation of God alone and the ardour of love, through which the mind, loosened and thrown back in love of Him, most intimately and with special piety speaks to God as to its own father.’¹⁶⁶ Throughout Isaac’s explication of that text, the superlatives and emotional descriptions occur quite densely. It is therefore all the more interesting that Isaac links this sublime description of ineffable prayer to the vision of the divine light.¹⁶⁷ With its central emphasis on the illuminated mind, his teaching therefore draws the mind as well as the heart into the description of prayer as a kind of transport. We will return to this juxtaposition of mental and emotional imagery further in the assessment of Cassian’s mysticism. For now, let us consider Isaac’s account of this level of prayer.

So then this prayer . . . leads His familiars through a loftier grade to that fiery prayer which is known or experienced by very few, but (that I may speak more precisely) is ineffable. I do not say that this prayer, which transcends all human understanding, is not distinguished by any sound of the voice or movement of the tongue or pronunciation of words. Rather it is this prayer that the mind, enlightened by the infusion of that heavenly light, does not describe by restricted, human eloquence; but, with its senses gathered together, it abundantly gives forth as it were from some most plentiful fountain and ineffably talks to God. In that most fleeting moment of time,

¹⁶⁴ Cassian, *conl* 9.15.3–9.16.

¹⁶⁵ Cassian, *conl* 9.18–24.

¹⁶⁶ Cassian, *conl* 9.18.1: ‘Haec itaque supplicationum genera sublimior adhuc status ac praeelsior subsequetur, qui contemplatione dei solius et caritatis ardore formatur, per quem mens in illius dilectionem resoluta atque reiecta familiarissime deo uelut patri proprio peculiari pietate conloquitur.’

¹⁶⁷ Cassian therefore did advocate ‘Evagrian light-mysticism’, *pace* O. Chadwick (1950): 148.

it produces so many things that the mind, once it turns back upon itself, is incapable of speaking readily about them, either eloquently or summarily.¹⁶⁸

This account brings Isaac to the end of his first discourse. He concludes it by listing some of the experiences that can intensify prayers and provoke compunction. These include verses sung from the psalter; the modulation of the cantor's voice; exhortations and conferences; someone else's lapse; and the recollection of 'the coolness and sloth of our minds'.¹⁶⁹ Isaac further says that there are three reactions to this sort of prayer: shouts of unspeakable joy (*clamores quosdam intolerabilis gaudii*); unutterable groans (*gemitibus inenarrabilibus*); and pouring forth tears (*lacrimarum euaporatione*).¹⁷⁰ It would seem that Isaac is content to leave things there. But the intrepid pilgrims are not satisfied. Germanus attests that he has experienced such things.¹⁷¹ Knowing that the experience is fleeting, though, he expresses great regret that he cannot spontaneously regain it.¹⁷² Isaac therefore turns to the aetiology of tears,¹⁷³ and makes the significant observation that it is unwise to attempt to force tears, not least because such preoccupation tends to distraction.¹⁷⁴ This response subtly but decisively devalues the emotional response by showing that tears and compunction have no intrinsic value.

In this context, Isaac's introduction of two otherwise unattested apophthegmata by Anthony the Great takes on a new significance. The first relates how, in transport of mind, Anthony prayed throughout the night and chided the sun when it arose: 'Why, O sun, do you impede me, who have been praying until now, so as to draw me from

¹⁶⁸ Cassian, *conl* 9.25: 'Haec igitur oratio . . . domesticos suos . . . ad illam igneam ac perpaucis cognitam uel expertam, immo ut proprius dixerim ineffabilem orationem gradu eminentiore perducit, quae omnem transcendens humanum sensum nullo non dicam sono uocis nec linguae motu nec ulla uerborum pronuntiatione distinguitur, sed quam mens infusione caelestis illius luminis illustrata non humanis atque angustis designat eloquiis, sed conglobatis sensibus uelut de fonte quodam copiosissimo effundit ubertim atque ineffabiliter eructat ad deum, tanta promens in illo breuissimo temporis puncto, quanta nec eloqui facile nec percurrere mens in semet ipsam reuersa praeualeat.' (Cf. 5.35.) This passage will be discussed below.

¹⁶⁹ Cassian, *conl* 9.26.1–2: 'tepor ac somnolentia nostrarum mentium'.

¹⁷⁰ Cassian, *conl* 9.27.

¹⁷¹ Cassian, *conl* 9.28.1.

¹⁷² Cassian, *conl* 9.28.2.

¹⁷³ Cassian, *conl* 9.29.1–3

¹⁷⁴ Cassian, *conl* 9.30.1–2. See Adnès (1937–95); Gómez (1961); Lot-Borodine (1981); Špidlík (1988): 273–4.

the glory of that true light?¹⁷⁵ Yet again, Isaac caps his description of mental transport with the metaphor of divine light¹⁷⁶ and thereby checks the affective aspect of prayer with an intellectual corrective. The second apophthegm is a 'heavenly and superhuman statement' that is 'about the end of prayer': 'It is not a true prayer in which the monk knows himself or the very thing that he prays.'¹⁷⁷ By introducing these claims, Isaac attempts to maintain a precarious balance between a twofold human response, intellectual and emotional, to the encounter with Almighty God who transcends both human intellect and human emotion.

Isaac thus indicates the relative value of both emotional and intellectual responses in prayer. Recalling the Lord's teaching, 'Therefore I say unto you, whatever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them,' Isaac then urges Germanus and Cassian to pray without hesitation or doubting but with confidence.¹⁷⁸ Germanus then stipulates that this can only occur from purity of conscience—which means trouble for those lacking such a conscience.¹⁷⁹ Because this remark stems from personal concern, Isaac reassured Germanus by reminding him that 'evangelic or prophetic witnesses attest that there are diverse reasons for being favourably heard, in accordance with the diverse and varied states of souls.'¹⁸⁰ He draws his list of these states from Scripture, so as to include agreement,¹⁸¹ faith as a mustard seed,¹⁸² repetition,¹⁸³ almsgiving,¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁵ Cassian, *conl* 9.31: 'Quid me impedis, sol, qui ad hoc iam oreris, ut me ab huius ueri luminis abstrahas claritate?'

¹⁷⁶ For *claritas* as light, see Souter (1949): 54. Cf. Athanasius, *u Ant* 10.1–4 (SC 400: 162–4), where the light of Christ plays an important role in Anthony's ascetic progress.

¹⁷⁷ Cassian, *conl* 9.31: 'cuius etiam haec quoque est super orationis fine caelestis et plus quam humana sententia: non est, inquit, perfecta oratio, in qua se monachus uel hoc ipsum quod orat intellegit.' Cf. *conl* 3.7.3, 10.6.1–3; and Evagrius, *In ps* 126.2γ; cf. *In ps* 38.5γ; 138.7γ; 144.3β; KG 1.71, 3.63, 3.88 (PO 28: 53, 123, 135); *prak* 87 (SC 171: 678); *orat* 117.

¹⁷⁸ Cassian, *conl* 9.32.

¹⁷⁹ Cassian, *conl* 9.33.

¹⁸⁰ Cassian, *conl* 9.34.1: 'Diuersas exauditionum causas esse secundum animarum diuersum ac uarium statum euangelica siue prophetica testantur eloquia.'

¹⁸¹ Cassian, *conl* 9.34.1; cf. Matt. 18:19.

¹⁸² Cassian, *conl* 9.34.1; cf. Matt. 17:20.

¹⁸³ Cassian, *conl* 9.34.2; cf. Luke 11:8.

¹⁸⁴ Cassian, *conl* 9.34.2; cf. Sir. 29:12.

repentance,¹⁸⁵ fasting,¹⁸⁶ and distress.¹⁸⁷ Since the Lord taught us to pray, ‘Thy will be done’, Isaac implies that obedience also belongs on this list.¹⁸⁸ We might finally add integrity.¹⁸⁹

Having intimated the proper balance of thought and feeling in prayer, explicated the quintessential Christian prayer, and completed the teaching on ceaseless prayer, Isaac concludes his discourse with a few practical points. He tells Germanus and Cassian that prayers ought to be frequent and brief.¹⁹⁰ He also resumes talking of prayer as a sacrifice. Whereas previously Cassian did this in terms of the New Testament, here Isaac brings out the same teaching about prayer in terms of the psalter.¹⁹¹ Evening synaxis and rest follow the conference.¹⁹² Although we have just been told that spiritual conferences can elicit profound prayers,¹⁹³ Cassian curiously gives no indication that Isaac’s conference prompted such a reaction in him or Germanus.

Conference 10: Isaac’s teaching in full

Cassian begins *Conference 10* with the famous story about Serapion, a pious but extremely simple old monk. After sketching the situation at Scetis when Theophilus’ Paschal encyclical of 399 arrived,¹⁹⁴ Cassian describes Serapion as a man ‘of most ancient austerity and altogether perfected in asceticism’—but, alas, no more than that.¹⁹⁵ Cassian

¹⁸⁵ Cassian, *conl* 9.34.2; cf. Isa. 58:6.

¹⁸⁶ Cassian, *conl* 9.34.3.

¹⁸⁷ Cassian, *conl* 9.34.3; cf. Ps. 120:1 and Exod. 22:22, 27.

¹⁸⁸ Cassian, *conl* 9.34.9–10.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Cassian, *conl* 9.35.1–3.

¹⁹⁰ Cassian, *conl* 9.36.1.

¹⁹¹ Isaac begins with Pss. 51: 17, 19; 50: 23 and 66: 15, and concludes with Ps. 141:2 (‘Let my prayer arise’).

¹⁹² Cassian, *conl* 9.36.3.

¹⁹³ Cassian, *conl* 9.26.2.

¹⁹⁴ Cassian, *conl* 10.1–2.3. There is a proliferation of secondary literature on the anecdote about Abba Serapion, primarily because it bears witness to Cassian’s perspective on the ‘Anthropomorphite–Origenist’ quarrel and consequently provides historical information to complement other early sources. Some important secondary works are Carruthers (1998): 69–81 (a brilliant discussion that distinguishes the doctrinal and cognitive meanings of *similitudino* and *imago*); Desprez (1998): 281–3; Festugière (1961): 83–91; Guillaumont (1962): 59–80 (esp. 59–61); Lehart (1912–); Stewart (1998): 86–90, 95–9; Studer (1983). Now established as a classic of sorts, Clark (1992) offers a thorough overview of the events—though discretion is needed in the case of her theological conjectures; see Sheridan (1996). She treats the relevant material on p. 66.

¹⁹⁵ Cassian, *conl* 10.3.1: ‘antiquissimae districtiois atque in actuali disciplina per omnia consummatus’.

alludes to the problem in a later description of Serapion, when he calls him ‘a man of such age and perfected in so many virtues, erring only by ignorance and rustic simplicity’.¹⁹⁶ That last clause is especially important, for it shows precisely where the problems enter in: despite his exemplary behaviour, Serapion is altogether unaccomplished in spiritual contemplation.¹⁹⁷ Serapion’s piety depends upon crassly imagining God in physical form.

Naturally, the revelation that an old pillar of the community is in error deeply unsettled the brethren, so the presence of a clever deacon named Photinus, who was ready to correct Serapion’s misapprehensions, was nothing less than a godsend. Photinus undertakes Serapion’s re-education by offering the Catholic interpretation of Gen. 1.26. His exposition is foundational for what Cassian will say about prayer, so it is best quoted at length.

He explained that the image and likeness of God is treated by all the princes of the churches, not according to the base sound of the letter, but spiritually. And he proved with a fulsome speech and many examples from the Scriptures that it could not be that anything human of this sort could befall that immense and incomprehensible and invisible majesty on which account it could be circumscribed by arrangement and likeness, which to be sure is by nature incorporeal and homogenous and simple and which cannot be apprehended by the eyes or judged by the mind. When this had happened, the old man was drawn to the faith of the Catholic tradition, moved by the many and most compelling arguments of the most learned man.¹⁹⁸

Serapion was thus persuaded by this account and renounced the pernicious anthropomorphic habit of ‘circumscribing the majesty of God’. But when everyone arose to pray to the Lord for His graciousness, Serapion collapses in grief, unable to pray.

But at prayer the old man was confused in mind, when he perceived that the anthropomorphic image of the Godhead that he was accustomed to set forth for himself at prayer had been abolished from his heart—so that pouring forth bitterest tears and frequent sobs, prostrate on the ground he

¹⁹⁶ Cassian, *conl* 10.3.4: ‘uirum tantae antiquitatis tantisque uirtutibus consummatum, inperitia sola et simplicitate rusticitatis errantem’.

¹⁹⁷ On the Evagrian distinction between *theoria* and *praktikê* in Cassian, see Marsili (1936): 106–7.

¹⁹⁸ Cassian, *conl* 10.3.3; on the Evagrian resonance, see Weber (1961): 59.

proclaimed with a most mighty wail, 'Woe is me! They have taken from me my God, Whom I would now grasp—but have not; and Whom I would address or supplicate—but know no longer.'¹⁹⁹

A lesson to be learnt from Serapion

Cassian expresses no sympathy for Serapion in his pathetic state. Instead, Cassian and Germanus underscore the seriousness of Serapion's ignorance: 'by the fault of this ignorance not only has he wholly lost the labours which he so commendably accomplished for fifty years in this desert, but even incurred the judgement of perpetual death.'²⁰⁰ They echo, perhaps knowingly, a sentiment Anthony the Great expressed just as trenchantly in his letter to the brethren at Arsinoë:

Truly, little children, I also want you to recognize this: many there are who have endured great struggle in this most holy way of life, but lack of discernment killed them. Truly, little children, it is no wonder that, to the extent you neglect yourselves and do not discern your own works, to that extent you fall into the grasp of the devil; and thinking you are close to God, and expecting a strong light, we are overtaken by shadows.²⁰¹

Isaac's judgement is likewise unsparing—he equates anthropomorphism with idolatry: 'Which will be detested as pagan blasphemy if one has been established with Catholic dogmas and so he will attain to that purest condition of prayer, which not only does not mix any effigy of divinity or bodily figures (which is scandalous even to say!) in its supplications, but will not admit into itself any memory at all of a saying or appearance of a deed or shape of any kind whatsoever.'²⁰² A good deal more than ascetic purification is needed. We have already noted that right practice is foundational for right belief.

¹⁹⁹ Cassian, *conl* 10.3.4–5.

²⁰⁰ Cassian, *conl* 10.4.1: 'eum labores tantos, quos per quinquaginta annos in hac heremo tam laudabiliter exegit, ignorantiae huius uitio non solum penitus perdidisse, sed etiam perpetuae mortis incurrisse discrimen'.

²⁰¹ Anthony, *ep* 6.106–7, translated from Valerius de Sarasio's Latin (PG 40: 987). On the letters generally, see Rubenson (1995*b*); I follow his internal numbering of the letters. I have explored some further parallels between Anthony and Evagrius, but also Cassian, in Casiday (2002).

²⁰² Cassian, *conl* 10.5.3; see also Codina (1966): 89–90, 103.

With the tale of Serapion, the paradox becomes clear—right practice is unsustainable, therefore ultimately impossible, without right belief. The two are mutually reinforcing and constitute, so to speak, a virtuous circle.

It is with this in mind that we should consider Abba Isaac's renewed account of purification. The critical addition he makes to his former discussion is a new focus that is decidedly Christocentric.

Those alone behold His divinity with purest eyes, who, ascending from base and earthly works and thoughts, have sat with Him in the highest mountain of solitude, which, free from all earthly thoughts and hidden from the tumult of passions and the contamination of all faults, exalted by the purest faith and eminence of virtues, reveals the glory of His face and the image of His glory to those who deserve to gaze upon Him with the pure gaze of the soul.²⁰³

In this passage, Isaac briefly makes a number of significant points. We shall take them in turn.

Christocentric prayer

First, pure eyes see Christ's divinity. To belabour an obvious point, if pure eyes see Christ's divinity, then there is something that they see. Without egregious interpretive acrobatics, there is no way to extrapolate imagelessness, pure and simple, from talk of seeing something. Consequently, there is no basis for attributing to Isaac or to Cassian the doctrine of 'mental iconoclasm' that Elizabeth Clark has attributed to Evagrius.²⁰⁴ Second, Isaac specifically mentions the face of Christ. In the Evagrian tradition, Christ is Himself the face of God.²⁰⁵ By including this reference, Cassian has secured the mediating role of

²⁰³ Cassian, *conl* 10.6.1–3: 'illi soli purissimis oculis diuinitatem ipsius speculantur, qui de humilibus ac terrenis operibus et cogitationibus ascendentes cum illo secedunt in excelso solitudinis monte, qui liber ab omnium terrenarum cogitationum ac perturbationum tumultu et a cunctorum uitiorum permixtione secretus, fide purissima ac uirtutum eminentia sublimatus, gloriam uultus eius et claritatis reuelat imaginem his qui merentur eum mundis animae obtutibus intueri?'

²⁰⁴ Clark (1992): 4, 75–6, 84. Elsewhere I have criticized Clark's claim with respect to Evagrius: see Casiday (2004a).

²⁰⁵ e.g. Evagrius, *in Ps* 79.88'.

Christ within Christian prayer to a greater extent than Evagrius had, using Evagrius terminology all the while.

Third, Isaac refers to Christ's 'glory' or 'brightness'. Here we should detect an allusion to Evagrius light-mysticism.²⁰⁶ In linking this light to Christ, Cassian has subtly modified the position of Evagrius once again, for Evagrius associated this light with the Holy Trinity. Fourth, in the next section Isaac clarifies what he means by the phrase 'ascending from base and earthly works and thoughts, [they] have sat with Him in the highest mountain of solitude': he is referring to the Transfiguration.²⁰⁷ The Transfiguration is the central scriptural image for Isaac's account and it is therefore the focal point of Cassian's teaching about prayer.²⁰⁸ His emphasis on this is more in keeping with Origenian tradition than is Evagrius' fleeting reference to it.²⁰⁹ Fifth, the teaching is profoundly indebted to Evagrius' ascetic teaching for its metaphor of an ascent that results in *apatheia*: the ascent of Mt Tabor according to Isaac is nothing other than the life of ascetic struggle described at length by Evagrius.

From these five points, we can appreciate how complex the relationship between Isaac and Cassian's account and Evagrius' account is. All the terms of reference are common to both; even the differences are expressed in decidedly Evagrius language. For these reasons, the difference between the two descriptions of prayer is best considered evidence for a natural development within the tradition.

²⁰⁶ See n. 167, above.

²⁰⁷ At *u Mos* 2.240–51 (SC 1^{bis}: 109–13), Gregory of Nyssa indicates that Moses met Christ on Mt Sinai. The passage can be profitably taken as a meditation on the wonder of God taking on limitations. Gregory sets the stage for Isaac to state baldly that it was Christ who appeared to Moses, but Isaac develops the meditation by explicitly comparing Sinai to Tabor.

²⁰⁸ Cassian, *conl* 10.6.3.

²⁰⁹ See Origen, *Cels* 2.64, 4.16, 6.77 (SC 132: 434–6, 136: 220–2, 370–4); *FrMt* 357, 361–5 (GCS 41: 152–3, 154–7); *HGn* 1.7 (GCS 29: 8–10); Basil, *in Ps.* 44:5 (PG 29: 400); Gregory of Nyssa, *hom 1 in Cant, passim* (GNO 6); Denys, *diu nom* 1.4 (PTS 33: 112–15); Maximus, *amb* 10.17, 31 (PG 91: 1126–8, 1160–9; I follow Louth's internal numbering; see also his discussion of this material: Louth [1996]: 44–7, 70–2), *cap theol* 1.97 (PG 90: 1121–4). This teaching is also found in ps-Macarius, *hom* 8.3, 15.38, cf. 4.12, 12.12 (PTS 4: 78–9, 149–50, 36–7, 113). See further Crouzel (1961): 470–4, McGuckin (1987), and Ménard (1972).

In what follows, Isaac continues and develops the Christocentrism that is already evident in his account of the Transfiguration.²¹⁰ Isaac teaches that the Lord is ‘the very font of inviolable sanctity.’²¹¹ By withdrawing into the desert or the mountain, He sets an example for Christian prayer—which should be made ‘from the pure and whole feeling of the heart.’²¹² Thus, ‘from all the disturbance and confusion of the crowds we should likewise withdraw, so that tarrying in this body we might be able at least in some measure to prepare ourselves for the likeness of His blessedness which is promised to the Saints in the future, and that for us God may be all in all.’²¹³ Isaac states that, when this has transpired, Christ’s own prayer will be fulfilled and the love of God—note, God the Holy Trinity²¹⁴—will transform everything so that ‘God will be all in all.’²¹⁵

In practical terms, this means that God will permeate every aspect of our lives. To quote Isaac once more:

So it shall be, when our every love, desire, eagerness, effort and thought, all that we live, speak, breathe will be God. And that unity which is now the Father’s with the Son and the Son’s with the Father will have transfused our perception and mind, that is, so that just as with a sincere and pure and indissoluble love He loves us, we too will be joined to Him by perpetual and inseparable delight, so linked to Him, to be sure, that whatever we breathe, understand, say would be God. In Him, I say, we shall accomplish the end about which we spoke earlier, the which the Lord besought that it would be fulfilled in us when He prayed, ‘That they all may be one just as We are one, I in them and You in Me, that they too may be perfected in one’ [John 17:22–3], and again, ‘Father, I wish that those whom You have give Me may themselves be with Me where I am’ [John 17:24].²¹⁶

²¹⁰ Codina (1966): 105–15 compares the Transfiguration on Tabor with Origenian hermeneutics. He notes Cassian’s fidelity both to the literal sense of Scripture and to the Incarnation (p. 107) and that Cassian’s interest in the spiritual significance of the Bible does not abolish its literal significance; instead, it gives form to it (p. 111; cf. p. 113). In the end, Codina persuasively concludes: 112, ‘La oración evangélica y la teoría evagriana quendan integradas en la tropología.’

²¹¹ Cassian, *conl* 10.6.4: ‘ipse fons inuiolabilis sanctitatis’.

²¹² Cassian, *conl* 10.6.4: ‘puro et integro cordis affectu’.

²¹³ Cassian, *conl* 10.6.4.

²¹⁴ Pace Stewart (1998): 97; the curious phrase, repeated twice, that ‘omne quod/ quidquid *spiramus* erit deus’ involves the Holy Spirit in this process without radically departing from the Scriptural basis for a passage that does not mention the Spirit.

²¹⁵ Cassian, *conl* 10.7.1–2.

²¹⁶ Cassian, *conl* 10.7.2.

Consequently, all things will become prayer: ‘Here, I say, is the end of every perfection: that the mind, refined from every carnal weakness, may be elevated daily to the spiritual realm until its entire way of life and the entire will of the heart are made a single and continuous prayer.’²¹⁷ Finally, Isaac again refers to the ‘image of future blessedness’ (*imaginem futurae beatitudinis*) available ‘in this body’ (*in hoc corpore*) as a ‘foretaste of the pledge of that heavenly life and glory in this vessel’ (*quodammodo arram caelestis illius conuersationis et gloriae incipiat in hoc uasculo praegustare*)—which is an unmistakable reversal of the anthropomorphic tendency to refer our bodily condition back upon God. By Christ Jesus and through prayer, God’s holiness transforms our worldliness.²¹⁸

Laying hold of God

Next, Germanus explains to Isaac their situation and asks for advice, doing so in a way that is particularly striking. He states matter-of-factly: ‘We plainly suspect these are the principles at stake: first, that we should know by what meditation God is held or contemplated; then that we should prevail in unchangeably maintaining this very substance, whatever it is, since we also do not doubt that it stands out as the summit of all perfection.’²¹⁹ It is nothing short of stunning that Germanus, who with Cassian has just been told the cautionary tale of Serapion’s fall, makes bold to talk of God being grasped and contemplated. His daring language does not end here, for he goes on to articulate their need for a technique by which this ‘memory of God’ may be maintained:

²¹⁷ Cassian, *conl* 10.7.3.

²¹⁸ Cf. Codina (1966): 86: ‘Pues si el Padre nos ha creado a su imagen y semejanza en Cristo, si el Padre debe ser imitado imitando a Cristo su imagen perfecta, y si nuestra imagen se consume en la filiación divina y en por Cristo, es lógico que el Padre también sea contemplado en Cristo y por Cristo, y por tanto la contemplación de Cristo es ya el “summum bonum” que no cesará, ni debe ser evacuado ante un bien superior, pues Cristo lejos de ocultarnos al Padre, nos lo revela.’

²¹⁹ Cassian, *conl* 10.8.4: ‘Cuius haec esse principia tenuiter suspicamus, ut primum nouerimus qua meditatione teneatur uel cogitetur deus, deinde hanc eandem quaecumque est materiam quemadmodum ualeamus immobiliter custodire, quod etiam non ambigimus culmen totius perfectionis existere.’

And consequently we wish to be shown what is the substance of this memory by which God is conceived by the mind or held in perpetuity, so that keeping it before our eyes, when we perceive that we have fallen away from it, we might have ready means by which we can return to it when we regain our sense and be able to resume it without any difficulty in seeking it or further ado.²²⁰

The sheer effrontery of what Germanus has told Isaac is staggering. At the same time, it is a wonderful instance of monastic candour. 'For that reason it is clear enough that this confusion befalls us since we do not have anything special placed before our eyes like some formula to which the wandering mind can be recalled after many windings and various circuits and enter like a port of silence after tedious shipwrecks.'²²¹

Germanus' boldness is impressive. Not only does he use exactly the same sort of language Serapion had used about God (*proponere, tenere*), he goes even further (*concupire, retinere, sentire, oculi, materia, concepta*). Perhaps it is the case that it 'is really Germanus' own mind, rather than the illimitable God, that needs to be held'²²²—but Cassian does not spare a single word to say so. Instead, Isaac silently passes by a golden opportunity to correct Germanus' language; on the contrary, Isaac congratulates him for his meticulous and painstaking search!²²³ So in this instance, full weight must be given to the etymological sense of 'theoria' as *seeing*, because Germanus has proposed this language and Isaac has endorsed it. What was at stake in the case of Serapion was not that he relied on representations—so do Isaac, Germanus, and Cassian, as Germanus in his acknowledgement and Isaac in his endorsement both candidly admit; rather, it was that Serapion had not progressed far enough in the spiritual life (that is, from *praktikê* to *theoria*) to be able to use

²²⁰ Ibid.: 'Et idcirco quendam memoriae huius materiam, qua deus mente concipiatur uel perpetuo teneatur, nobis cupimus demonstrari, ut eam prae oculis retentantes, cum elapsos nos ab eadem senserimus, habeamus in promptu quo resipiscentes ilico reuertamur ac resumere illam sine ulla circuitus mora et inquisitionis difficultate possimus.'

²²¹ Cassian, *conl* 10.8.5: 'Quam confusionem idcirco nobis accidere satis certum est, quia speciale aliquid prae oculis propositum uelut formulam quendam stabiliter non tenemus, ad quam possit uagus animus post multos anfractus ac discursus uarios reuocari et post longa naufragia uelut portum quietis intrare.'

²²² Stewart (1998): 110.

²²³ Cassian, *conl* 10.9.1–3.

representations properly. Which representations are valid and how they are to be used is the theme that Isaac takes up next.

‘The pious formula’

Isaac corroborates what we have seen before with his applause for Germanus’ and Cassian’s eagerness to seek out aids to prayer and use them with discernment. It is not the case that an Origenian mind functions differently from an Anthropomorphite mind. Both need bearings and fixed points in their prayers. So, after an impressive introduction, Isaac gives Germanus and Cassian ‘the pious formula . . . absolutely necessary for possessing the perpetual recollection of God’—a ‘pious formula’ that Isaac claims to have received ‘from a few of the most ancient fathers who were still around’ (*a paucis qui antiquissimorum patrum residui erant*).²²⁴ It is Psalm 70:1, ‘O God, come unto my aid; O Lord, hasten to help me’ (*Deus in adiutorium meum intende: domine ad adiuuandum mihi festina*).²²⁵ Codina has speculated that this prayer is addressed to Christ.²²⁶ Although he offers no arguments in support of this claim, the Christocentric nature of Isaac’s teaching certainly justifies Codina’s speculation. So the life of prayer is equated with the perpetual recollection of God, which earlier in this section Isaac had called the ‘iugem dei memoriam’—the ‘continuous recollection of God’. And the focal point of this recollection is Christ Jesus.

By running through an exhaustive list of situations in which Ps. 70: 1 is appropriate, Isaac establishes that it is relevant for the whole of the monastic life. As he says, ‘It takes up every emotion that can be born by human nature and adapts itself fittingly, even expertly, to every situation and assault.’²²⁷ It militates against excess,

²²⁴ Cassian, *conl* 10.10.2: ‘ad perpetuam dei memoriam possidendam haec inseparabiliter . . . formula pietatis.’

²²⁵ Cf. John of Gaza, *ep* 143 (SC 426: 520–4).

²²⁶ Codina (1966): 184: ‘La fórmula que Casiano recomienda, “Deus in adiutorium meum intende . . .”, es con toda probabilidad una fórmula cristológica, una oración a Jesús.’

²²⁷ Cassian, *conl* 10.10.3–15: ‘Recipit enim omnes adfectus quicumque inferri humanae possunt naturae et ad omnem statum atque uniuersos incursum proprie satis et competenter aptatur.’

rebutts each deadly temptation, and is suitable for constant use, even while sleeping.²²⁸ Isaac adds that this prayer increases virtue.²²⁹ If the previous chapter was a recapitulation of the life of ascetic struggle described in the *Institutes*, this chapter is an encomium of the attainment of spiritual contemplation described in the *Conferences*.

The universal applicability of Isaac's teaching

In the final section, Isaac makes a surprising move. He gives priority to experience above seeing some image—which is exactly what the Anthropomorphites value most highly—but also above repeating a formula, which would appear to be what he has just endorsed!²³⁰ In fact, Isaac was primarily interested in the results of praying that formula, not the formula itself. The one who uses this formula (which, as we have seen, is informed by Origenian exegesis of Scripture) whilst pursuing the ascetic life is led by the prayer to the experience of God—which is precisely the point of prayer. It is here that the superiority of the Origenian approach over anthropomorphic prayer is clearest. If prayer is meant to put people in contact with God, then the rightness of the Origenian approach to prayer is shown up in contrast to the practice of the anthropomorphic monks. From the perspective of Origenian theology as revealed by Cassian, anthropomorphic models of prayer dangerously limit the influence of God to forms familiar and therefore recognizable to the human mind.

Yet even now, even after Isaac has called into question anthropomorphic spirituality, Germanus is eager to hold tight and indeed unshakably to a formula and spiritual thoughts.²³¹ Here again, Isaac's response may come as a surprise. So far from chastising Germanus for an evident lapse, with great skill he reinforces Germanus' intentions by satisfying Germanus' question. This shows us yet again that Origenians are not insensitive to the mental exigencies that make anthropomorphic prayer attractive in the first place.²³² The chief

²²⁸ Cassian, *conl* 10.10.15.

²²⁹ Cassian, *conl* 10.11.1–6.

²³⁰ Cassian, *conl* 10.11.6.

²³¹ Cassian, *conl* 10.12–13.3: 'stabiliter retinere . . . immobiliter retentemus'.

²³² Cassian, *conl* 10.12.

problem for Germanus is the mind's natural tendency to wander.²³³ So Isaac recapitulates the classic Evagrian doctrine by telling Germanus and Cassian that 'there are three things that stabilize a wandering mind: vigils, meditation, and prayer, continuous and assiduous attention to which confers on the soul firm stability'.²³⁴

This means that, although ascetic struggle is preliminary to pure contemplation, nevertheless contemplation does not eliminate the need for ascetic struggle. Indeed, the struggle is needed in order to maintain contemplation. In fact, in the next brief section, Isaac avers that *praktikê* is never left behind. The monk must always strive to pray without ceasing.²³⁵ Cassian concludes by noting that the notional simplicity of this practice (notwithstanding the actual difficulty of implementing it) means that no one is excluded from accomplishing unceasing prayer on the basis of illiteracy or simplicity.²³⁶ Basically, he is insisting that the difference between the Origenians and the Anthropomorphites is not one of intellectual calibre. Even a simple monk could be Origenian.²³⁷ Allegations of 'intellectualism' are fundamentally misplaced in a discussion of the Origenist controversy, serving only to validate the caricature of Origenian theology offered by its opponents. As we have seen above, there is no compelling reason to endorse the dichotomy of 'pious Egyptian natives v. intellectual Greek newcomers,' while there are some

²³³ Cassian, *conl* 10.13.1–3.

²³⁴ Cassian, *conl* 10.14.1: 'Tria sunt quae uagam mentem stabilem faciunt, uigiliae, meditatio et oratio, quarum adsiduitas et iugis intentio conferunt animae stabilem firmitatem.' The first half quotes Evagrius, *prak* 15 (SC 171: 536); cf. Marsili (1936): 101 (Marsili also notes *conl* 4.12.4 in this connection). About the natural movement of the mind, Codina refers to *conl* 1.16–17, and quotes *ibid.*, 7.4.2. With reference to *conl* 23.13, he claims (1966): 91, 'Es una consecuencia del peccado original.'

²³⁵ Cassian, *conl* 10.14.2.

²³⁶ Cassian, *conl* 10.14.3.

²³⁷ This claim is similar to, but distinct from, one that Samuel Rubenson has urged for several years (see Rubenson [1995a] and [1995b]): whereas I suggest that simple monks could be Origenian, Rubenson argues that a supposedly simple monk like Anthony was actually quite sophisticated. I am not contesting his point, but I would want to hold open the possibility that embracing Origenian spirituality was an option that was available even to people who were not otherwise well educated. For my part, I do not find the criticisms against Rubenson's claims that have been advanced by Graham Gould (1993b) and (1995) to be persuasive; for Rubenson's response, see Rubenson (1999).

extremely good reasons for not doing so.²³⁸ Furthermore, as we have just seen, what was at stake for the Origenians was not at all being cleverer than the local bumpkins; it was being better integrated, less subject to demonic temptation, and more receptive to God.

4 *IN EXCESSU MENTIS*: THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHRIST IN CASSIAN'S TEACHING ON PRAYER

In his teaching about prayer, Cassian integrates emotion into his overall account with impressive ease. Although he gives us no reason to suppose that emotional experience is a necessary component of prayer, in numerous passages he lovingly dwells on the profound emotions that enrich the Christian's life of prayer. Cassian and Germanus' description to Abba Daniel of the vicissitudes of prayer provides a convenient example:

So this blessed Daniel [responded] to us when we asked why sometimes, while sitting in the cell, we are filled with such keenness of heart along with a certain ineffable joy and overflow of most holy feelings, so that not merely no speech, but even no feeling would occur to follow it; and also pure and ready prayer would be sent forth and the mind, full of spiritual fruits and making supplications even while asleep, perceived its efficacious and light prayers to come through to God...²³⁹

Likewise, in the arena of ascetic struggle, Cassian endorses the use of prayer against one's peculiar vices in the form of 'pouring forth unceasing wails of prayer to God'.²⁴⁰ In the same conference, Serapion also counsels attention, sighing, groaning, vigils, meditations,

²³⁸ See the discussion in the two subsections entitled 'Intellectual culture in late ancient Egypt' and 'Egyptian monks and their theological literacy', in ch. 3, above.

²³⁹ Cassian, *conl* 4.2.1: 'Hic igitur beatus Danihel [respondit] inquiringibus nobis, cur interdum residentes in cellula tanta alacritate cordis cum ineffabili quodam gaudio et exuberantia sacratissimorum sensuum repleremur, ut eam non dicam sermo subsequi, sed ne ipse quidem sensus occurreret, oratio quoque pura emitteretur ac prompta et mens plena spiritalibus fructibus preces suas efficaces ac leues etiam per soporem supplicans ad deum peruenire sentiret'.

²⁴⁰ Cassian, *conl* 5.14.1: 'indesinentes quoque orationum fletus ad deum fundens'.

and petitions.²⁴¹ Chaeremon similarly offers a markedly affective description of prayer.²⁴² Clearly, Cassian regarded the emotions as a potential ally in the spiritual life.

Intellectual elements in emotional descriptions

It is well worth noting that some of the most expansive treatments of emotional prayer that Cassian offers are also the most explicit descriptions of the intellect's role in prayer. Thus, Abba Isaac significantly connects 'puras ac feruentissimas supplicationes' with both a most pure mind and a most fervent heart.²⁴³ This is a theme dear to Isaac, to judge from how he emphasizes it. Let us return to that singularly important passage in which Isaac links his sublime description of ineffable prayer to the vision of the divine light.²⁴⁴

So then this prayer... leads His familiars through a loftier grade to that fiery prayer which is known or experienced by very few, but (that I may speak more precisely) is ineffable. This prayer, which transcends all human understanding, is not distinguished by any sound of the voice or movement of the tongue or pronunciation of words, I would say. Rather it is this prayer that the mind, enlightened by the infusion of that heavenly light, does not describe by restricted, human eloquence; but, with its senses gathered together, it abundantly gives forth as it were from some most plentiful fountain and ineffably talks to God. In that most fleeting moment of time, it produces so many things that the mind, once it turns back upon itself, is incapable of speaking readily about them, either eloquently or summarily.²⁴⁵

A number of features in his speech are worth noting. First, Isaac places great emphasis on the enlightenment of the mind (*mens infusione caelestis illius luminis inlustrata*) and by doing that he ensures that the intellectual aspect of prayer gets its due.²⁴⁶ Even though he subordinates the mind to God, Isaac never loses sight of the indispensable role that is played by the mind in prayer. Second, the senses are not 'suspended' in this process.²⁴⁷ Instead, they are

²⁴¹ Cassian, *conl* 5.14.1.

²⁴² Cassian, *conl* 12.12.6–7.

²⁴³ Cassian, *conl* 9.15.1.

²⁴⁴ Cassian, *conl* 9.25; cf. 5.35.

²⁴⁵ See n. 168 above.

²⁴⁶ Stewart assimilates it to Cassian's metaphor of fire, which he takes to refer to emotions: Stewart (1998): 118.

²⁴⁷ Pace Ramsey (1997): 346.

accumulated or massed together (*conglobatis sensibus*). The expression is unusual, but *conглоbo* clearly indicates a gathering together.²⁴⁸ (The relevant image is that of an unborn child curled up in the womb.)²⁴⁹ So Isaac does not mean that the senses are inert during prayer; rather, he means that the senses are intensely focused.

Third, Isaac's emphasis on the ineffability of this experience recalls Paul's words in Romans 8:26: 'Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'²⁵⁰ Other descriptions of prayer confirm Isaac's intimation that the Holy Spirit articulates the prayers of Christians,²⁵¹ though in ways that the Christians themselves cannot (or at least cannot fully) comprehend. Fourth, Isaac is describing a process whereby the person praying addresses God by God's assistance. When he speaks of the mind turning back upon itself (*mens in semet ipsam reuersa*) and being unable to describe the experience satisfactorily, we should not be surprised. After all, he has just taught that God, whose ways are inscrutable, is at work in our prayers.

A grammatical observation

Isaac's discourse with its central emphasis on the illuminated mind provides the foundation for understanding Cassian's descriptions of prayer as *excessus mentis*. A word about that expression is in order. The phrase can be construed as either 'the mind's going out' (if *mentis* is taken as a subjective genitive) or as 'going out of the mind' (if *mentis* is taken as an objective genitive).²⁵² The first possibility

²⁴⁸ It glosses *συναθροίζω* (see Gertz [1888–1923]: 2: 109), which in turn is often used to describe Christians assembling for worship (Lampe [1961]: s.v.)

²⁴⁹ Cf. Pliny, *hist nat* 10.84.183 (ed. Rackham [1938–62]: 3: 408): 'homo [gestatur] in semet conglobatus inter duo genua naribus sitis.'

²⁵⁰ So, too, Degli Innocenti (2000): 45 n. 43; 46 n. 44; 59 n. 97; 95 n. 37. By contrast, Stewart (1998): 119 regards 2 Cor. 12:2–4 as the programmatic passage for Cassian's teaching about prayer. However, the parallels he adduces are not convincing: although Cassian does indeed talk of being 'seized', he does not in fact talk of 'feeling oneself somehow "outside the body"', nor of 'hearing words that are "unutterable" and beyond the capacity of human speech'. To be precise, Cassian refers to *praying* (not *hearing*) unutterable words.

²⁵¹ Cf. Cassian, *conl* 9.15.2, 10.10.12.

²⁵² On this grammatical ambivalence, see Gildersleeve (1997): 232, § 363.

is not problematic: as we will see, it straightforwardly corresponds to the mind's disengagement from worldly considerations. But the second possibility is trickier. Columba Stewart, an expert on the Messalian controversy no less than on Cassian's writings, has argued that it designates ecstatic prayer.²⁵³ He has claimed that this 'ecstatic' dimension sets Cassian apart from Evagrius.²⁵⁴ Stewart based his argument on two observations: Cassian's characteristic use of emotional language when describing prayer differs strikingly from Evagrius' use of intellectual language;²⁵⁵ and 'the departure of the mind' (as he thinks the phrase should be understood in a number of passages) is a proposition that is at odds with Evagrius' theological anthropology.²⁵⁶ These claims, put forward by a keen scholar, command our attention.

Let us begin with the second claim. Stewart notes that taking *mentis* as an objective genitive means that Cassian recognized 'a "departure from the mind or heart" when the "mind on fire" cannot contain the prayers inspired in it by grace. This seems to be a kind of spiritual ravishment, in which the resulting prayers burst the limits of human understanding and expression.'²⁵⁷ There is no question

²⁵³ I abstain from using the term 'ecstasy' in what follows. That term is problematic chiefly because the criteria for judging whether an experience is ecstatic or not are notoriously uncertain. Rather than agonizing over the delicious little uncertainties of language, I think it is better to proceed cautiously using terms that are happily dull. For a direct engagement with the problem of language and mystical experience, see the essays collected in Katz (1992).

²⁵⁴ Stewart (1998): 31, 84–6, 105, 108, 113–30. In those pages, Stewart offers many references to Cassian's writings.

²⁵⁵ Stewart (1998): 108 tends to collapse Evagrian prayer into Evagrian gnosis, which has a direct bearing on his contrast between Cassian and Evagrius. In my view, this tendency leads him to misestimate how close Evagrius' teaching that 'prayer is the ascent of the mind' (*orat* 36) is to Cassian's teaching.

²⁵⁶ Stewart (1998): 120. At 215 n. 90, Stewart bolsters his claim with a reference to Bunge (1987): 76. However Bunge's perspective has considerable nuance, and (but for Bunge's rejection of the term 'ecstasy'), his perspective is perhaps not far from that of K. T. Ware (1985): 162: 'If, therefore, Evagrius is termed an "intellectualist", then it must at once be added that he is very far from being such in the normal modern sense of the word. When he envisages prayer as communion with God on a level above discursive thinking and as the absence of sensation or self-awareness (*ἀναιτησία*), his standpoint is what today would be designated, not "intellectual", but "mystical" or even "ecstatic." Cf. Bunge (1989b).

²⁵⁷ Stewart (1998): 117.

that Cassian believed in the possibility of rapture (Stewart's 'ravishment').²⁵⁸ But it is not self-evident that, by that term, Cassian meant to designate a state of transport beyond one's rational mind.

In most cases, Cassian uses the term 'rapture' to describe something far less exciting than a mystical experience: freedom from being distracted by quotidian concerns for oneself or one's neighbours, so that one can pursue the spiritual life. This is how he uses the term in the cases related by John, Paphnutius, and Daniel. In John's case,²⁵⁹ we should note that this rapture freed him specifically for the purpose of contemplation—and it is not at all clear what it would mean to say that a person had been carried beyond the limitations of human sense and expression but was simultaneously engaged in the complex cognitive activities of contemplation. The case related by Isaac lends more support to Stewart's analysis. Isaac talks not only of rapture, but also of fervency and fiery prayer.²⁶⁰ These themes, together with ineffability, are common to the passages Stewart notes to support his interpretation of 'departure from the mind or heart'.²⁶¹

What is it that 'surpasses' in ecstatic prayer?

But caution is required here. These passages uniformly indicate that what the mind cannot contain,²⁶² or adequately recall and describe later,²⁶³ are the ineffable prayers themselves.²⁶⁴ The only movement from the mind that *this* establishes is the movement of the prayer itself—and there is nothing so odd about prayers going from one's mind. It would only be when prayers remained in one's head, ricocheting off the walls of the skull, that there would be cause for concern.

²⁵⁸ Abba John provides some of the best descriptions: *conl* 19.4.1–5.2; but see also *conl* 3.7.3, 4.5, 9.15.1. The term is ambivalent, though, as is evident from passages in which it is clearly bad: see Stewart (1998): 211 n. 28.

²⁵⁹ Cassian, *conl* 19.5.2.

²⁶⁰ Cassian, *conl* 9.15.1.

²⁶¹ See also Cassian, *inst* 3.10.1, *conl* 9.15.2, 9.26–8, 9. 25, 9.31, 10.11.6, 12.12.6.

²⁶² Cassian, *inst* 2.10.1.

²⁶³ Cassian, *conl* 9.25.

²⁶⁴ Cassian, *conl* 9.15.2, 9.26–8, 10.11.6.

Meanwhile, talk of contemplation frequently occurs in conjunction with the *excessus*,²⁶⁵ and (even more interesting) talk of ‘stability of thoughts’ also occurs—not only before the *excessus*, but even simultaneous to it.²⁶⁶ It is consequently hard to believe that Cassian is describing someone at prayer who departs from his own mind by praying. It is difficult to think of a stranger corollary to ‘departure from the mind’ than stability of thoughts.

Cassian, Evagrius, the *Macarian Homilies*, and the *Liber graduum*

As for the claim that Cassian is unlike Evagrius on account of his heavy emphasis on emotions, this is true but it requires qualification. Even for Evagrius, the emotions promote spiritual growth in general and prayer in particular.²⁶⁷ Consequently, the simple presence in Cassian’s writings of emotional languages does not signal a departure from the Evagrian tradition. So the question arises: what sort of qualitative shift must we find before we are moved to posit that Cassian was inspired by additional sources? Stewart, noting that the ‘atmosphere’ of Cassian’s writings ‘is no longer purely Evagrian’,²⁶⁸ has argued that Cassian had recourse to other sources to complement the Evagrian tradition.

To this end, Stewart has revived Alphons Kemmer’s ill-starred hypothesis that Cassian was in contact with Syrian traditions, such as those represented in the *Liber graduum* and the ps.-Macarian homilies.²⁶⁹ The influence of Kemmer’s thesis, published in Germany in the late 1930s and generally unavailable in the English-speaking

²⁶⁵ Cassian, *conl* 1.15.2, 6.10.2, 9.15.1, 19.5.2. ²⁶⁶ Cassian, *conl* 10.10.12.

²⁶⁷ The admirable summary of Evagrian psychology in Dysinger (2005): 29–31 indicates the importance of properly trained emotions for Evagrius’ ascetic programme. For Evagrius’ use of strongly emotional language to describe prayer, see, e.g. Evagrius, *orat* 15 (ed. Tugwell [1981]: 5): *Προσευχὴ ἔστι χαρᾶς καὶ εὐχαριστίας πρόβλημα*. Evagrius also calls joy ‘vision of prayers’ at *uit opp uirt* 3 (PG 79: 1144): *Χαρὰ [...] εὐχῶν ὄπτασία*. See too in *Ps* 125.5γ’, where the fruits of prayerful tears are reaped with joy. At *orat* 114, 118 (ed. Tugwell [1981]: 21, 22), Evagrius describes the place for ‘desire’ in prayer; at *ibid.* 52, 61 (11, 12), and *KG* 1.86–7 (PO 28: 57), he talks of ‘love’ in prayer.

²⁶⁸ Stewart (1998): 114.

²⁶⁹ Kemmer (1938), (1948): 12–15, and (1955).

world,²⁷⁰ has been inhibited by the unremittingly harsh reviews of it that are far more readily available.²⁷¹ In the interests of fairness to Kemmer, it must be said that those reviews, though deliciously acerbic, were altogether one-sided. Irénée Hausherr, for instance, singularly overlooked Kemmer's thorough and excellent philological analysis of *charisma* in Cassian's writings. And yet Kemmer's most sympathetic reader must agree with Hausherr, however reluctantly, that Kemmer failed to make his case. The parallels that he adduced are paltry and unpersuasive. The rejections of Kemmer's analysis may have been uncharitable, but they were not unwarranted.

However, Stewart is not only sympathetic to Kemmer; he is also a meticulous and accomplished scholar whose major book established him as an authority on Messalianism.²⁷² In his book on Cassian, Stewart has made some tantalizing remarks on the parallel between Cassian's and ps.-Macarius' writings with respect to rapture and fiery prayer,²⁷³ as well as compunction and tears.²⁷⁴ He also drew up a list of possible junctures when Cassian might have come in contact with these trends.²⁷⁵ Since there are a number of gaps in our knowledge about Cassian's life that are unlikely ever to be closed, Stewart's conjectures cannot be precluded. Furthermore, Stewart's willingness to look beyond Evagrius for sources of Cassian's thought—and to allow for Cassian's independent development—is praiseworthy. These facts notwithstanding, some proof is needed if the claim that he was in contact with Syrian mystical trends is to be held. And yet, suggestive though they are, Stewart's parallels are ultimately no more conclusive than Kemmer's were.

²⁷⁰ In England, for instance, there is no copy to be found in the British Library, the Bodleian, or Cambridge University Library. I am only aware of one copy in a private collection, though there are perhaps others. In the United States, there are only half a dozen copies.

²⁷¹ Hausherr (1940); O. Chadwick (1950): 148–9, n. 7; Cappelletti (1943). I have not been able to locate any German reviews contemporaneous to publication for the purpose of comparison, but Klaus Fitschen's verdict is unsparing; Fitschen (1998): 122: 'Diese Parallelen sind aber auf seiten des LIBER GRADUUM so verstreut und unzusammenhängend und betreffen darüber hinaus letztlich nur einzelne Worte und Aussagen, daß sie nicht wirklich schlagend sind. . . . und so ist eher anzunehmen, daß Cassian auf gängige Anschauungen des östlichen Mönchtums zurückgegriffen hat' (author's emphasis; cf. 133).

²⁷² Stewart (1991).

²⁷³ Stewart (1998): 117–22.

²⁷⁴ Stewart (1998): 122–9.

²⁷⁵ Stewart (1998): 115.

Since there is no strong basis for Kemmer's claim and there is a widely held recognition that Cassian's description of the spiritual life is more emotionally coloured than is Evagrius', one way of addressing the question is to return to the ignored emotional aspects of Evagrian prayer. Evagrius had a lively interest in drafting emotions into the spiritual life.²⁷⁶ Furthermore, even the rapturous emotional descriptions in Cassian's *Conferences*, most notably those ascribed to Isaac, are coloured by intellectual elements that are recognizably Evagrian. Although Syrian influence on Cassian cannot be ruled out, the case for it has not been established; and indeed there is sufficient basis in Evagrius' own writings to see in Cassian's modifications an independent reworking of Evagrius' teaching about prayer. Granted that Cassian emphasized some elements of Evagrius' account that were marginal in Evagrius' own teaching, this need mean no more than that the two had different personalities.

The Holy Spirit and ecstatic prayer

Even if Stewart's argument about ecstasy is inconclusive, he nevertheless drew attention to a key term of Cassian's thought by analysing *excessus*. In close conjunction with his descriptions of *excessus*, Cassian describes the role played by the Holy Spirit in Christian prayer. Because Cassian has been faulted for demonstrating little theological competence, these descriptions take on additional interest. The premise of Cassian's teaching is nothing other than Evagrius' account of spiritual development. Abba Theodore in effect offers a conspectus of that doctrine, adorned with emotional terms, but holding fast to the importance of extirpating vices through ascetic practice, contemplating spiritual realities, eschewing worldly distractions, and fervently praying to God.²⁷⁷ The added emphasis on ardent desire and spiritual ardour distinguish this short passage from Evagrius' style, but the content is unexceptionally Evagrian.

Something rather similar occurs, with one important difference, in Abba Isaac's account of prayer. We have already had occasion to note Isaac's high fidelity to the Evagrian tradition on prayer. While

²⁷⁶ See n. 267, above.

²⁷⁷ Cassian, *conl* 6.10.2.

expatiating on the virtues of reciting Psalm 70.1, Isaac describes the ‘direction of soul, stability of thoughts, keenness of heart’ that accompany mental transport and refers to an ‘overflow of spiritual perceptions’ and ‘revelation of most holy understanding’ experienced by the intellect, properly ordered and thinking spiritual thoughts and illuminated by the Lord, in consequence of this.²⁷⁸ The signal element in this passage, however, is the ‘visitation of the Holy Spirit’. Isaac has already echoed St Paul: the Holy Spirit within us and on our behalf prompts ‘unutterable groanings’ by way of prayer to God.²⁷⁹ The intercession of the Holy Spirit and the concomitant ‘unutterable groanings’ are regular components of Isaac’s discourses on prayer. Indeed, they are constitutive elements of pure prayer, on Isaac’s account.²⁸⁰ Even when he explains how the mind pours forth prayers to God in terms of the *excessus cordis*, Isaac introduces ‘unutterable groans and sighs’ (*gemitibus inenarrabilibus atque suspiriis*).²⁸¹

This teaching is not Isaac’s alone. Cassian teaches it on his own authority as an abba and accomplished student of the Desert Fathers.²⁸² Abba Chaeremon, similarly talking of the *excessus cordis*, informs Cassian and Germanus that the Holy Spirit inspires the revelations that prompt the joys he has been describing.²⁸³ As we noted above, Chaeremon’s teaching about the need for God’s protection is founded on prayer. Now we see that he not only considered prayer a necessary measure for protecting the spiritual advances that one has made and for gaining others, but he also reckoned that prayer itself is a gift from God. Likewise, in his conference about ‘flesh and the spirit’, Abba Daniel relates how the mind is seized in a ‘spiritual transport’ by the grace of God and is thereby moved beyond

²⁷⁸ Cassian, *conl* 10.10.12.

²⁷⁹ Cassian, *conl* 9.15.2.

²⁸⁰ Cassian, *conl* 9.26.1–27.

²⁸¹ Cassian, *conl* 10.11.6.

²⁸² Cassian, *inst* 2.10.1; Cassian is given the honorific title ‘abba’ in the *Apophthegmata*.

²⁸³ Cassian, *conl* 12.12.6–7, quoting 1 Cor. 2:10. As with the emotions, Evagrius was well aware of the role played by the Holy Spirit in the Christian life, especially the Christian’s life of prayer: cf. *orat* 63. Fr. Bunge has persuasively argued that the Spirit had an all-pervasive role in Evagrius’ thought and for just that reason defends the use of the term ‘spirituality’ as exactly appropriate to describe what Evagrius was up to: Bunge (1994): 7–11. But, as with the emotions, Cassian developed the teaching he learnt from Evagrius and enriched it with his own observations.

the limitations of the flesh.²⁸⁴ Daniel's mention of divine grace puts the finishing touches to Cassian's writings on *excessus*, or at least *excessus* in a good sense.

At one point in his discussion, Isaac identified the requisite state needed for ceaseless prayer as 'a spiritual and angelic likeness'.²⁸⁵ For Evagrius, Christian likeness to angels is evident first and foremost when the Christian prays to God, particularly on behalf of other people.²⁸⁶ So heavily did Evagrius stress this likeness that he has been represented as teaching that humans actually become angels.²⁸⁷ Isaac's innocuous remark about the 'angelic likeness' belongs within the ambient of this strong teaching. And the commonplace adjective 'spiritual' is no less momentous.²⁸⁸ In much the same way that

²⁸⁴ Cassian, *conl* 4.5; this is the sole occurrence of *excessus spiritus* in Cassian's books.

²⁸⁵ Cassian, *conl* 9.6.5: 'spiritalem atque angelicam similitudinem'.

²⁸⁶ On three separate occasions, Evagrius asserts that the angels have a role in leading humans to the knowledge of God, which is to say, to salvation: see *KG* 3.65, 5.7, 6.90 (*PO* 28: 125, 179, 255); elsewhere, he emphasizes the angels' mediatorial role: *orat* 40, 74–7, 80–1, 96 (ed. Tugwell [1981]: 9, 14–15, 16, 18); *prak* 24, 76 (*SC* 172: 556–7, 664–5); cf. *KG* 3.46, 6.86, 6.88 (*PO* 28: 117, 253); *ant* pref., 4.9, 4.27 (ed. Frankenberg [1912]: 472, 504, 506).

²⁸⁷ e.g. Bamberger (1970): 74 translates *isangelos* (at *orat* 40) as 'another angel' rather than 'equal to the angels'; cf. Wagenaar (1969): 524. This interpretation ultimately looks back to Epiphanius: cf. Guillaumont (1962): 113–16. For my part, I have misgivings about the propriety of relying on the reconstruction of a hostile witness to make sense of elliptical passages in Evagrius' writings.

²⁸⁸ The full significance of the term 'spiritalis' is evident in Cassian's teaching on the Spirit's relationship to Holy Scripture and its interpretation. Cassian is quite serious that the Spirit *inspired* Scripture (*inst* 3.3.7) and he reports Theodore's teaching that the grace of the Spirit is needed for interpreting Scripture (*inst* 5.34). For this reason, full weight must be given to Cassian's unassuming expression 'spiritual meditation' (*inst* 2.5.2, 2.14–5.1, 3.5; cf. 1.8, 3.4.3). Theodore linked spiritual interpretation of Scripture to the ascetic life. We are therefore justified in associating this entire complex of activities associated with the Holy Spirit to Abba Pinufius' discussion about the 'spiritual rule' (*inst* 4.41) and indeed the whole host of terms Cassian uses to describe the ascetic life in relation to the Holy Spirit. Critical terms he modifies as 'spiritual' include *profectum* (*inst* 1.11.1, 2.14), *contemplatio* (*inst* 2.12.2, 2.14), *officium* (*inst* 3.3.1), *animadversio* (*inst* 4.16.2), *inrepatio* (*inst* 4.16.3), *exercitatio* (*inst* 4.17), *remedium* (*inst* 5.2.3), *functio* (*inst* 5.8), *agon* (*inst* 5.12.1–2, 6.1, 17.2), *studium* (*inst* 5.14.3), *congressio* (*inst* 5.16.2), *certamen* (*inst* 5.18.2), *pugna* (*inst* 5.19.2), *fructus* (*inst* 5.21.3), *intentio* (*inst* 5.32.3). Naturally, he also mentions 'spiritual conferences' (*inst* 5.29, 31) and 'necessary, spiritual objects' of discussion (*inst* 5.31). Perhaps most charming is his description of the virtues as 'spiritual honey' (*inst* 5.4.2), produced by the eager monastic bees who fly from flower to flower collecting nectar (cf. Athanasius, *u Ant* 3.4 (*SC* 400: 136); Palladius, *HL* 48.2 (ed. Bartelink [1974]: 238); *uerba sen* 5.187, 7.32.7 (*PL* 73: 800, 1051); see Weber (1961): 81–2).

monks can be called 'angelic' because they function as angels function, they can be called 'spiritual' because they enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit.²⁸⁹ Isaac stipulates that 'apart from enormous purity of heart and soul and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit' the types of prayer cannot be comprehended;²⁹⁰ how much more, then, must the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, together with enormous purity of heart and soul, be necessary for actually praying! It is highly significant that Cassian designates prayer as 'spiritual sacrifices'.²⁹¹ Prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit.²⁹²

Other examples of excess

We have not yet considered the bad sense of *excessus*, which in fact sets what we have just observed in sharper relief. *Excessus* can denote an excess of nearly anything at all. Thus, Germanus and Cassian ask Abba Daniel about the problem of a 'slippery excess of unstable agitation'.²⁹³ And when they learn from Abba Theonas about the causes and dangers of nocturnal emissions of semen, they find that the excess of semen is attributable to indulgence of some sort or another (in food, in carelessness, or in pride).²⁹⁴ Shortly after Theonas tells them this, he says that the 'excesses' of wandering thoughts can also contribute to that shameful occurrence.²⁹⁵

Because Cassian championed moderation and temperance, the vices that he relates are often excesses of virtuous behaviour. Immoderate fervour, for instance, led to the downfall of Abba Paul. Paul's overweening concern for purity of heart prompted him to flee women. Abba Serenus tells Germanus and Cassian that Paul would not even look upon the clothing of a woman. But his inappropriate

²⁸⁹ Cf. Kemmer (1938): 34–8.

²⁹⁰ Cassian, *conl* 9.8.1: 'Universas orationum species absque ingenti cordis atque animae puritate et inluminacione sancti spiritus arbitror comprehendi non posse.' Cf. Marsili (1936): 134.

²⁹¹ Cassian, *inst* 2.9.3, 17; 8.13.

²⁹² Cf. 1 Cor. 12:1–11. Kemmer (1938): 24–5 justifiably counts prayer among the charisma that are gifts of God.

²⁹³ Cassian, *conl* 4.2.

²⁹⁴ Cassian, *conl* 22.3.1.

²⁹⁵ Cassian, *conl* 22.3.5.

behaviour got him a just recompense when he had a debilitating stroke and had to be cared for by women.²⁹⁶ Similarly, an excess of fasting is just as detrimental to ascetic practice as gluttony. Excess is the opposite of discretion, a monastic virtue so important to Cassian that he allocated a conference to it.²⁹⁷

Warnings about spiritually unhealthy excesses culminate in a speech by Abba Daniel that is particularly interesting in comparison to Cassian's teaching on the place of the Holy Spirit in prayer.

And so it will come to pass that when, because of that tepidity of a most sluggish will (*uoluntas*) which we have discussed, the mind has fallen the more readily into fleshly desires (*desideria carnis*), it may be drawn back by spiritual yearning (*spiritus concupiscentia*), which itself never seeks comfort in earthly vices. And again if by a transport of the heart (*per excessum cordis*) our spirit has been carried off with an immoderate fervour to rash impossibilities, it may be dragged back to the righteous judgement by fleshly weakness and, with sweaty diligence and by most appropriate consistence, walk along the way of perfection by the level path, transcending the most tepid state of our will.²⁹⁸

The *excessus cordis* about which Daniel warns Germanus and Cassian entails all the bad consequences we have seen so far. It is characterized by lack of moderation in attempting through our free will (*uoluntas*) what is impossible. In the context of Daniel's discourse, 'what is impossible' clearly means 'accomplishing true perfection', which is itself a gloss for 'salvation'. Daniel himself contrasts this subservience to the will,²⁹⁹ and the tepidity that goes along with the desires of the flesh, to spiritual fervour.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ Cassian, *conl* 7.26.4.

²⁹⁷ Cassian, *conl* 2.2.4.

²⁹⁸ Cassian, *conl* 4.12.6: 'Atque ita fiet, ut cum pro tepore huius quam diximus ignauissimae uoluntatis propensius mens ad desideria carnis fuerit deuoluta, spiritus concupiscentia refrenetur, nequaquam eo uitiiis adquiescente terrenis, rursusque si inmoderato feruore per excessum cordis ad impossibilia fuerit spiritus noster et inconsiderata praereptus, infirmitate carnis ad iustum retrahatur examen et transcendens uoluntatis nostrae tepidissimum statum commodissima temperie planoque tramite cum sudoris industria uiam perfectionis incedat.'

²⁹⁹ Cassian, *conl* 4.12.2.

³⁰⁰ Cassian, *conl* 4.12.3.

Two types of 'excess'

Abba Daniel's contrast and his discourse allow us to distinguish two kinds of *excessus*, that caused by the Holy Spirit, which leads to salvation, and that caused by free will, which is futile. While this is an important clarification on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of prayer, it is also an important qualification on what the free will is capable of accomplishing. In Cassian's work, *excessus* is fundamentally ambivalent. But the ambivalence is not between 'mental transport' and 'transcending one's mind' (it is doubtful he would have understood what that latter means, anyway); rather, it is between *excessus* motivated by the Holy Spirit and *excessus* motivated by spiritual autonomy. Cassian has a robust understanding of the Holy Spirit's involvement in the Christian life. He has correspondingly little interest in Christian heroism and self-sufficiency, however unexpected this might strike us in a committed ascetic.

‘Into the Holy of Holies’: Cassian’s Christology

We have raised the possibility that Cassian’s theology has been consistently misunderstood, particularly when pride of place is given to grace and grace is interpreted along the lines of medieval Augustinianism. While it has been candidly admitted that his teaching diverges from Augustine’s, we have seen that there is no reason whatever to think that Cassian arrived at his teaching by way of a compromise between Pelagius and Augustine. Furthermore, we have shown that the implications readily drawn from Cassian’s divergence are not as obvious as scholarly consensus might suggest. Indeed, as I have suggested, that view attributes an anachronistic importance to Augustine’s teaching. Though it seems quite possible that Cassian was familiar with Augustine’s writings, we have no real foundation for assuming that Augustine’s writings were invested with so much authority that Cassian would have felt compelled to give himself over to righting their putative wrongs. So much, then, for the most obvious target for theologians who scorn Cassian. But some scholars have set their sights on a more adventurous game than the lame duck of Semipelagianism: they have gone after a far more important aspect of Cassian’s teaching—his Christology.

It is appropriate to end this study by treating Cassian’s Christology. Not only is this the most unmistakably theological topic he addresses, it also provides another instance of scholars appealing to dubious principles in their assessment of Cassian. So it is a ripe topic for revision. Even after the tangles of ill-advised scholarly derision have been cleared away, there will still be more to say. Cassian’s teaching about Christ deserves to be considered on its own merits. Four elements of that teaching will occupy us here. The first is the use

that Cassian makes of Leporius' confession of faith. (Because of the nature of this topic, we will actually treat it before looking at Cassian's teaching as such, since it provides an important set of themes that are relevant for evaluating Cassian's own position.) The second is Cassian's use of Scripture in expounding his doctrine. The third is how Cassian's Christology is related to his monastic works. And the fourth is what merit lies in the teaching itself.

1 SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES ON CASSIAN'S *INCARNATION*

Cassian's Christology has been tried, and found wanting, on two fronts. The first front is an aggressive defence of Nestorius by modern scholars as against Cassian's anti-Nestorian polemic; the second is an offensive against the enduring value of Cassian's Christology. To some extent, the criticism is quite similar despite the two fronts. This is attributable to the fact that Cassian's ostensible concern is simply the refutation of Nestorius. Consequently, his teaching itself takes on a polemic edge. Furthermore, Cassian's Christology only tends to generate any interest at all in the context of the early Christological controversies. So it is not particularly worth expending effort to keep the two lines of criticism sharply distinct.

Nestorius' apologists

It is fair to say that scholars have been almost uniform in their negative evaluation of Cassian's involvement in the Nestorian controversy. (The major exception to that generality will concern us later in this chapter.) The study of Nestorius was extremely lively around the turn of the twentieth century. In the Anglophone world, the greatest impact was probably that made by J. F. Bethune-Baker, who was nothing short of an apologist for Nestorius. His 'fresh examination of the evidence', published in 1908, was timely.¹ For in

¹ Bethune-Baker (1908).

1905, Freidrich Loofs had published a trilingual dossier of Nestorian texts, which he followed up about a decade later with a revisionist account of Nestorius similar to Bethune-Baker's.² Furthermore, in 1910, Paul Bedjan published an ancient Syriac translation of the defence that Nestorius wrote for himself from Egypt, the *Liber Heraclidis* (*lib Her*).³ (It should be noted that, even though the publication of *lib Her* followed Bethune-Baker's monograph, Bethune-Baker's case for revision is based squarely on the evidence of that work.)⁴ In the same year, François Nau published a translation of the defence in French; the following year, he went on to write a study of Nestorius as presented in the Oriental sources.⁵ In 1912, Martin Jugie published a lengthy book on Nestorius and the Nestorian controversy.⁶ And in 1914, Eduard Schwartz dedicated the first portion of his *Konzilstudien* to an exposition of Cassian and Nestorius.⁷

This proliferation of research provided a context for much the most intriguing discovery about Nestorian Christianity—the inscription found in a monument that had been erected c.781 at Xian Fu and that described the arrival of Christians from modern-day Iran into China during the T'ang dynasty.⁸ The Jesuit Sinologist, Athanasius Kircher, had published a translation, tonal transcription, and paraphrase of this inscription in the late seventeenth century.⁹ But the discovery seems not to have been assimilated into scholarly research before the early twentieth century, when the rediscovery of *lib Her* generated such a flurry of scholarship on Nestorius and Nestorianism. The Xian Fu monument serves as a reminder that heterodox Christians who left the Roman Empire did not simply vanish into nothingness. Missionaries from the Church of the East propagated their teaching amongst the Sogdians, Turks, Chinese, and

² See Nestorius, *fragmenta* (ed. Loofs [1905]) and Loofs (1914).

³ See Nestorius, *lib Her* (ed. Bedjan [1910]).

⁴ See Bethune-Baker (1908): xiv–xvi.

⁵ Nau (1910), (1911).

⁶ Jugie (1912).

⁷ Schwartz (1914): 1–17.

⁸ Legge (1888).

⁹ Kircher (1672); this is Müller's edition, based on Kircher's 1667 original. Müller's notes, esp. his 'Commentarius theologicus,' retain their interest.

Mongols.¹⁰ Several travelogues written at roughly the same time that *lib Her* came to light describe meetings with Christian communities in Persia where Nestorius was regarded as orthodox.¹¹ And a modern traveller has recently found that their descendants maintain the ancestral faith—though he was surprised to find that their church is no longer based in their ancestral homeland. In fact, a local informed him that Ealing has the largest population in Europe!¹²

Several important studies on Nestorius and Nestorianism appeared in the second half of the twentieth century. From 1949 to 1950, Émile Amann brought out a series of four learned articles concerning the Roman perspective on the Nestorian controversy.¹³ Roughly a decade later, Mgr. Glorieux compiled an extremely useful collection of 'pre-Nestorian' documents from the Latin West.¹⁴ In 1956, Luigi Scipioni published a monograph on the Christology of *lib Her* and, eighteen years later, he incorporated recent work on Nestorius into a study of the Council of Chalcedon.¹⁵ Luise Abramowski carried on further research into *lib Her*.¹⁶ Mention must also be made of Aloys, Cardinal Grillmeier's monumental *Christ in Christian Tradition*—though, for reasons that will emerge, we will need to postpone briefly any discussion of that book. From the current scholarly climate, it appears that Loofs and Bethune-Baker made their cases for Nestorius very well, as Nestorius is now part of the constellation of formerly marginal figures that now shines (if not brightly, at least tenaciously) just above the horizon of Late Antiquity.

This being the case, it will come as no surprise that Cassian has been roundly trounced for his part in perpetuating and advancing a putative misconception about Nestorius' teaching. Examples from Loofs and Amann are ready to hand. Noting that he has only found references to three homilies of Nestorius in Cassian's treatise, Loofs abominates the latter as a 'piece of monstrous daring' and asserts that it was only possible because Rome was strongly prejudiced against

¹⁰ See Baum and Winkler (2003); Bernard (1935); Foltz (1999): 61–73; Foster (1939).

¹¹ e.g. Perkins (1843); Bishop (1891).

¹³ Amann (1949–50).

¹⁵ Scipioni (1956) and (1974).

¹⁶ Abramowski (1963).

¹² See Dalrymple (1997).

¹⁴ Glorieux (1959).

Nestorius (perhaps because Nestorius had harboured some Pelagians).¹⁷

Amann devotes the fifth section of his book-length survey of Roman perspective on Nestorius to Cassian.¹⁸ He helpfully draws into his analysis the case of Leporius, an episode without taking stock of which it is not possible to appreciate Cassian's perspective, but Amann's treatment is nonetheless flawed because he turns instantly from mentioning Leporius to allegations of Cassian's 'inability to finish off a theological problem' (precisely because Amann supposes Cassian failed in opposing Augustine).¹⁹ In particular, Amann judged that Cassian's linking of Nestorian Christology to Pelagian anthropology—which is particularly evident in his report of the case of Leporius—is a dodge, but in due course we will find reasons to dissent from that judgement. Amann does, however, acknowledge that the treatise considered for its own merits is judicious, 'better than a number of similar productions', and, in view of its appeal to tradition, 'singularly felicitous'.²⁰ Yet Amann joins Loofs by desecrating Cassian's 'trying to bury under a torrent of words the poverty of his information' and, along with this, Cassian's prejudice.²¹ As a work of polemic, Amann judges it a disastrous failure; and he laments that the whole work is polemical in tone.²²

This approach to Cassian's treatise is not restricted to scholars of Nestorius. Even a specialist in Cassian's works has gone on record as disavowing the theological value of Cassian's *Incarnation*—precisely because it is prejudicial and so does not give a fair hearing to Nestorius.²³ With such a broad consensus aligned against Cassian, it takes an adventurous scholar to argue otherwise. Recently, there

¹⁷ Loofs (1914): 43. The latter bit of speculation is hardly novel. Cassian speculates on the damage that Nestorius did himself by harbouring the Pelagians: see *inc* 1.4.4.

¹⁸ Amann (1949–50): 2: 225–44.

¹⁹ Amann (1949–50): 2: 230: 'De l'incapacité de Cassien à serrer de près un problème théologique, son attitude en face de l'augustinisme en témoignait déjà.'

²⁰ Amann (1949–50): 2: 237.

²¹ Amann (1949–50): 2: 233: 'La composition du traité assez volumineux qui porte dans les manuscrits des titres assez variables et qu'on appelle d'ordinaire le *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium libri VII*, cette composition, dis-je, est assez médiocre, il y a beaucoup de redites et de reprises, l'auteur cherchant à noyer sous un flux de paroles, la pauvreté de son information.'

²² Amann (1949–50): 2: 237–8.

²³ Vannier (1993).

have been two such hardy souls: Lorenzo Dattrino and Donald Fairbairn.

The first, chronologically, is Dattrino. In his survey of the contemporary literature, he rightly expressed misgivings about the methodology regularly used to cast doubt on Cassian's integrity, accuracy, and perspicuity. Dattrino's work is not as readily available as one might hope, so an extract is justified.

To condemn Cassian as an arbitrary and subjective interpreter of the thought of Nestorius, even in its final form—and to do this on the basis of what the former bishop of Constantinople was to clarify only following the controversy that he himself stirred up when he attempted to defend himself against every accusation and to equivocate concerning the imprudent language he himself had used—does not measure up to objective criteria.²⁴

In other words, Dattrino has noted that the rush to embrace Nestorius can lead us to make the understandable, but unacceptable, mistake of comparing Cassian's polemic against Nestorius to Nestorius' (much later) *lib Her*. This is an observation worthy of acceptance. We can see why if we return to Bethune-Baker's study.

There, we find that Bethune-Baker presupposes the accuracy (in detail as well as in sweep) of *lib Her* and uses that work as the foundation for criticizing Nestorius' opponents. For instance, he writes:

If it [sc., *lib Her*] did not add much definite information to our store of his arguments and illustrations, it would be of value as putting them all in a new setting and a more systematic form. It will, however, be seen that it does contribute materially to a truer appreciation of the controversy than has been possible before, and it reveals to us the personality of Nestorius in full light. We know the man himself as he has never been known perhaps outside the circle of his own adherents; and knowledge of the man opens the way to understanding of his teachings.²⁵

This opens his method to Dattrino's criticism. What reason do we have for thinking that *lib Her* (which was written some two decades after Nestorius' deposition)²⁶ is an unbiased and historically reliable

²⁴ Dattrino (1991): 20.

²⁵ Bethune-Baker (1908): 33.

²⁶ Nestorius mentions the vindication of Flavian and Leo's faith, i.e. at the Council of Chalcedon (451): e.g. *lib Her* 2.2.7 (ed. Bedjan [1910]: 514; Nau [1910]: 327). He therefore wrote the treatise approximately twenty years after Cassian wrote his *Incarnation*.

account of his thought *during* the eponymous controversy? I am fully convinced of the value of sympathy as a hermeneutic device and think Bethune-Baker was right, given his task, to treat Nestorius sympathetically. But the problem enters when our sympathy leads us to supply a level of articulation to one's subject that is not otherwise warranted.

In this instance, the problem is an historical one. Bethune-Baker could freely suppose that Nestorius' ideas underwent no development from the time of the controversies to the time he composed *lib Her*; but by the same token Dattrino can freely suppose that his ideas did develop. *Prima facie*, Dattrino's supposition seems far more plausible. Indeed, Dattrino's position is supported, for example, by the fact that Nestorius blatantly misrepresents his attitude towards the term *Theotokos* in the later work.²⁷ In *lib Her*, Nestorius claimed to have accepted both of the terms *Theotokos* and *Anthropotokos*, when applied to Mary in an orthodox sense.²⁸ But in fact we have a very lengthy homily from Nestorius (dated to c.428–9) in which he categorically rejects the term *Theotokos*.²⁹ It would seem from this discrepancy that Nestorius may have written *lib Her* primarily from an interest in exculpating (not to say vindicating) himself. It is difficult to avoid the impression that, in pursuit of that aim, he indulged in a measure of re-creating his own image.

What we need to take from all of this is the recognition that the foundational document for modern revisionist work on Nestorius was written by Nestorius well after the events it describes; that, in making his case, Nestorius was not as impartial and disinterested as Bethune-Baker has suggested;³⁰ and that therefore invidious characterizations of Nestorius' detractors, or categorical rehabilitations of Nestorius, are far from guaranteed by it. So Dattrino has done well to point out that the question of Nestorius' orthodoxy (as putatively established by *lib Her*) is really beside the point when we are dealing with Cassian.

²⁷ This was already noted by Loofs (1914): 30.

²⁸ Nestorius, *lib Her* 1.2.7 (ed. Bedjan [1910]: 151; Nau [1910]: 92).

²⁹ See Nestorius, s 9 (ed. Loofs [1905]: 249–64).

³⁰ Bethune-Baker (1908): 32–3; cf. Loofs (1914): 26–60.

The second contemporary study that has gone against the current, Donald Fairbairn's monograph on patristic Christology, is best appreciated after we have examined the second prong of scholarly criticism against Cassian.

Cassian's critics

As noted above, some have queried the value of Cassian's Christology on its own merits. Three such scholars may be mentioned: Grillmeier, Vannier, and Stewart. The most straightforward of them is Stewart, whose judgement is representative of scholarly consensus and is expressed quite pithily: 'A great work of Christology this is not.'³¹ He describes the format and content of the work succinctly, and refers to Vannier's study. Then he opines that it is a second-rate work of theology (though it is not entirely clear on what grounds he makes this judgement) and endorses Philip Rousseau's *obiter dictum*: 'its chief significance is its very existence.'³² Stewart's discussion of the *Incarnation*, then, is peremptory. And yet his treatment of Cassian's Christology is by far the most promising one offered by any of the three considered here. We will have occasion to return to his evaluation of Cassian's Christology later.

Turning to Vannier,³³ her study is a relatively long and intricate examination of the *Incarnation*. She seeks to answer the question, is the *Incarnation* a work of theology? After analysing the contents and Cassian's sources and technique, Vannier concludes that it is not. The study is not without its merits—for example, Vannier has convincingly argued that Cassian owes his dossier of proof-texts on Christ's divinity to John Chrysostom, and plausibly suggested that Cassian's arguments about the authority of tradition inspired Vincent of Lérins—but in the end Vannier bases her judgement on a curious and (to my mind) implausible criterion. Following Amann and

³¹ Stewart (1998): 23; Stewart also calls it 'wearying' (p. 22)—and not without reason. But if we got rid of or ignored wearying patristic texts, we would have very little left.

³² Stewart (1998): 23, quoting Rousseau (1996): 84.

³³ Vannier (1993).

Loofs,³⁴ she disqualifies *Incarnation* from being considered a work of theology because, in it, Cassian's purpose is polemical and his decision is predetermined.

Vannier is undoubtedly right in pointing to those aspects of *Incarnation*.³⁵ But it is far from obvious that, in researching ancient Christian writings, we ought to think that the ancient author's methodology is what determines whether the work is theological or not. In fact, it is extremely counterintuitive to suppose that we should only consider theological those writings that are characterized by logical structure and consistency, precise consideration of the position one is arguing against and neutrality with respect to the subject under consideration. All those features might be desirable, but they are hardly necessary. And in any case the extremely awkward question that gets left out of such lists of *desiderata* is probably the most important: is it true? How precisely one goes about answering that question is not, and need not be, an easy matter; but it gets closer to the heart of the matter than do any of the other characteristics we have just entertained.

The final and most imposing treatment of Cassian's Christology is Grillmeier's. *Christ in Christian Tradition* is a monument of vast erudition, but it is only fair to say that Grillmeier's pages on Cassian are even more truculent than they are learned.³⁶ After a few prefatory remarks about Cassian's biography and his commission to write *Incarnation*, Grillmeier launches into his exposition with the following remarks:

It is amazing how little Cassian, who probably came from Scythia Minor, the present Dobrogea, and had long remained in the East, could sympathize with Eastern theology. *He himself is no great theologian*. Unfortunately, *he does not recognize the need of the hour*, to take the questions raised by Leporius in the West and Nestorius in the East as *the occasion for a deeper consideration of the christological terms and concepts used hitherto*. . . . Thus it was not the intention of the monk of St Victor to recognize the difficulties of his opponent and to cure them, but to oppose what seemed to him to be an

³⁴ Amann (1949–50): 2: 237–8; for Loofs, see the numerous references, above.

³⁵ Indeed, it is one of the most baffling features of the work that Cassian insists on adducing passages from Nestorius in order to convince his readers that he has not been prejudicial in the matter; e.g. *inc* 2.1.2.

³⁶ Grillmeier (1975): 468–72.

already established heresy with the tradition of the church. He is not a doctor, like Augustine, but a judge.³⁷

Grillmeier clearly has no positive regard for Cassian's competence. In the pages that follow, he garners a number of passages that he deems unsatisfactory and spices them with tangential remarks about how close Cassian cuts to Nestorianism, or Origenism, or Monophysitism, or Pelagianism—or how 'even the Archdeacon Leo may have shaken his head when reading such passages'.³⁸ But Grillmeier's conclusion is stated without the racy bits:

His own christology is by no means a unity, and is extremely unclear in parts. Nor does it offer any basis for founding a christology on the manhood of Christ. True, the natural and historical reality of the manhood of Jesus is fully assured by the double *homoousios* which is predicated of Christ. But Cassian makes no attempt, say, to show the content of the full humanity of Christ (in evaluating Christ's human nature and its power in understanding and will). He has, moreover, an incomplete, even false, idea of the relation of the Godhead of Christ to his human nature. The whole complex of the biblical-messianic spirit-christology is something which he will not recognize as such (cf. [*Incarnation*] VII, 17, nos. 1–7, [CSEL 17] pp. 372–5). He will not concede that Jesus as a man needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit, because in this way Christ is represented as weak and in need of help. There is a considerable share of the Pelagian idea of grace in this. . . .³⁹

Grillmeier's candid statement that Cassian's Christology 'is by no means a unity, and is extremely unclear in parts', taken with his aforementioned tendency to describe this bit as 'Nestorian' and that bit as 'Pelagian', actually does not inspire the sort of confidence that candour often does. The possibility should be held open that Cassian's thinking is not as haphazard as Grillmeier implies.⁴⁰ One

³⁷ Grillmeier (1975): 468 (author's emphasis).

³⁸ Grillmeier (1975): 469.

³⁹ Grillmeier (1975): 470.

⁴⁰ If one were looking for evidence that Grillmeier singularly failed to grasp Cassian's argument, it would be well worth pondering the paragraph that begins 'Through fear of teaching two persons' (Grillmeier [1975]: 471). In that paragraph, Grillmeier begins by asserting that Cassian's account of Christ's human nature is hollow; and ends with a catena of excerpts that 'open up a glimpse of a richer theology of the manhood of Christ'. It seems that, by creating the expectation that Cassian's thought is rife with inconsistencies, Grillmeier makes it much easier on himself when he encounters passages that appear at first blush to undermine his evaluation.

may wonder whether a reader who claims that some text makes no sense is in any position to offer an informed evaluation of it. Be that as it may, I will argue in the following pages that Cassian's Christology is in fact consistent and coherent, contrary to Grillmeier's claims.

Grillmeier's criticism of Cassian in the end reduces to frustration that Cassian has not offered an adequate account of the 'content of the full humanity of Christ'. This is somewhat odd, given that Grillmeier does allow that Cassian's robust assertion of Christ's 'double *homoousios*' guarantees 'the natural and historical reality of the manhood of Jesus'. Grillmeier's frustration that Cassian has not offered an evaluation of 'Christ's human nature and its power in understanding and will' might indicate that he is faulting Cassian for not articulating the orthodox position against dyothelitism—but surely that cannot be right. In the event, we will have occasion to see that Cassian does in fact tell us rather more about Christ's human nature than Grillmeier has implied. Meanwhile, although Cassian could theoretically be faulted for not offering a meditative account of Christ's human nature, even this would be churlish since, as we shall see, Cassian does offer a theologically informed description of Christ's human life.

Finally, Grillmeier asserts that Cassian has 'an incomplete, even false, idea of the relation of the Godhead of Christ to his human nature', and he goes on by criticizing Cassian's failure to acknowledge that the human nature of Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit. Grillmeier sees behind this failure the implicitly Pelagian idea that human nature would only need the gift of the Spirit if it were imperfect; but, since it is perfect, it has no need 'to be filled with the Holy Spirit'. Grillmeier's claim about the limited place of the Holy Spirit in Cassian's Christology is perfunctory: in examining Cassian's teaching, we will see how the Holy Trinity figures into it and in that context we will pay careful attention to Cassian's highly articulate account of how the Spirit and the Logos relate to the Incarnation. This account will be seen to answer more than adequately the charges that Grillmeier brought against Cassian. As for the accusation that underlying Cassian's Christology is a Pelagian concept of grace, this relies on an assumption about Cassian's teaching with regard to Christ that cannot be justified with recourse to *Incarnation*.

Grillmeier's criticism relies on talking of 'Jesus as a man' in a way that does not correspond to Cassian's principles, as the following survey will amply demonstrate.

For now, we need simply to be aware that scholars have generally accepted the view that Cassian's Christology is untenable (whether because it is erroneous, or because it is merely rebarbative). Sometimes this view is expressed with glib reminders that Cassian is theologically second rate; and, it must be said, often these reminders bear more of the weight of the conclusion than do the putative arguments. So it can be fairly said that research into Cassian's *Incarnation* is currently in a dismal state.

Credit for pointing out a way forward from the morass of problems that we are currently stuck in belongs to Donald Fairbairn. In an impressive monograph,⁴¹ he has challenged scholarly consensus by arguing closely and in detail that Cassian was far more representative of patristic Christology than has previously been thought. Fairbairn's study focuses primarily on Cyril of Alexandria and on Cassian, but offers numerous comparisons to John Chrysostom, John of Antioch, Leo the Great, and others. By these comparisons, he shows that Cyril and Cassian were in line with orthodox tradition. He does this by attending to the role of grace in the accounts about Christ offered by Cyril and Cassian, in contrast to those of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius. His conclusion—that, according to Theodore and Nestorius, Christ mediated the divine presence of the Logos; whereas, according to Cyril and Cassian, the Logos *was* the personal subject of Christ—is measured, well documented, and persuasive.

His conclusion provides a response to Grillmeier's allegation that Cassian's Christology fundamentally relied upon a Pelagian anthropology. Because Cassian affirmed that the Logos was the personal subject of Christ, he could not have posited a personal subject of the sort that Grillmeier called for. In no way does this mean that Cassian did not affirm the real existence of the human nature of Christ. Rather, as we shall see, it means that he did not believe that Christ's human nature was instantiated in a human person.

Grillmeier was roundly mistaken when he bracketed Cassian's affirmation of the double *homoousios* of Christ in order to insist

⁴¹ Fairbairn (2003).

that Cassian had drawn 'a very empty picture of the humanity of Jesus'.⁴² Because Cassian taught that Christ was consubstantial with God the Father and with us humans, and taught that the personal subject of Christ was the Logos, his picture of the humanity of Jesus Christ is anything but very empty; on the contrary, it is full of deity! According to Cassian's teaching, a full description of 'Jesus as a man' does *not* entail affirming that Jesus' human nature was expressed as a human person. Fairbairn's research helps us understand better this all-important part of Cassian's teaching, and so helps us understand how Grillmeier's evaluation of Cassian flew wide of the mark.

Another great benefit of Fairbairn's study is that he is not seduced by the retrospective appearance of inevitability that opens up around moments of historical significance. This is all to the good, because there is abroad the false idea that councils such as that of Ephesus and Chalcedon (for all their importance) provide a template that patrologists can use retrospectively to determine what is, and what is not, acceptable. This is a point that has been well made by Joseph Leinhard. In studying Marcellus of Ancyra, Leinhard has shown that the supposed classical formula of Cappadocian Trinitarianism—*μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις*—is actually exceedingly rare in their works. Scholars presume the classical formula, Leinhard has argued, to their peril.⁴³ The presumption is dangerous because, if we assume that some given phrase is normative and expect it to be there, our assessment of what we actually do find will probably be distorted.

Something similar can be observed in the case of Cassian's Christology: if we assume that the ideal form of a patristic Christology was realized in Athanasius' treatise, then we will inevitably have a seriously skewed view of Cassian's *Incarnation*. On a comparable note, if we suppose that a work of patristic theology is acceptable only if later developments can be found in it in seminal form (to unfold at a later date, no doubt enormously satisfying Cardinal Newman in the process), then we are bound to make serious mistakes in evaluating Cassian's Christology. In the rest of this chapter, I will set out a series of analyses that give some sense of how much we lose by embracing a skewed view of Cassian's Christology.

⁴² Grillmeier (1975): 471.

⁴³ See Leinhard (1999): 99–121, esp. Leinhard's caveat at p. 103.

2 ELEMENTS OF CASSIAN'S CHRISTOLOGY

The foregoing survey has shown that suggestions about Cassian's Christological incompetence converge on a set of themes. In the first place, discoveries made about a century ago have prepared us to accept very readily (perhaps too readily) the assertion that Nestorius was more a victim of ecclesiastical politics than a theological villain. As a practical corollary, Cassian's reputation has suffered since his treatise *Incarnation* was repeatedly battered by the tides of revisionist scholarship on Nestorius and Nestorian theology in the early twentieth century. Meanwhile, Cassian's *Incarnation* is popularly regarded as his only work of real theological importance. But since readers from Prosper's day to the present have entertained their doubts about Cassian's theological competence, many people bring to their reading of *Incarnation* some unhelpful predispositions. These two, largely independent, factors have converged with the result that Cassian's treatise is almost a pariah: despised as an effort at theology, it has been relegated to the unhappy heap where we keep texts that are only useful (if at all) because we occasionally find it convenient to extract an interesting fact or a curious phrase from them. (Two examples that immediately suggest themselves are the case of Leporius, and the Creed of Antioch—about both of which more will be said shortly.)

For these reasons, and on the basis of the aforementioned limitations in the critiques of Cassian, it is clear that a fresh reading of *Incarnation* is in order. In what follows, I offer first an overview of the treatise; then a synthetic presentation of its contents, by way of Leporius' confession of faith; next detailed analyses of the following topics from *Incarnation*: Cassian's use of Scripture and creed; the relevance of Christology for Cassian's monastic programme; and, finally, an evaluation of the work's merit. Though this chapter aims to encourage fresh and attentive readings of the *Incarnation*, it does not seek in any way to supplant that work. And so while this treatment aims to be accurate, it does not aim to be exhaustive.

A synopsis of Cassian's *Incarnation*

Cassian wrote *Incarnation* after his other books had been completed, and perhaps alludes to their popularity as the reason he was asked to write the work in hand. He begins the book with a covering letter addressed to Archdeacon Leo, who had commissioned the work. The commission from Leo does not survive, but Cassian gives us to understand the character of the task in no uncertain terms:

And so you order and command me to engage in battle with weak hands against the fresh heresy and new enemy of the faith and to stand up against the unwholesome maw of the venomous serpent with its mouth, as they say, wide open [cf. Gen. 3:1, Rev. 20:2]. In other words, you order and command that at my declamation, so to speak, prophetic power and the divine strength of evangelical preaching should destroy the dragon that is rising up against the churches of God with its sinuous movements. I accede to your request; I accede to your command.⁴⁴

Two points are noteworthy. First, Cassian writes against Nestorius as against an adversary who is still in power—which gives us an approximate date of 429–30 for the treatise. Second, Cassian understands his task to be 'destroy[ing] the dragon that is rising up against the churches of God'. This indicates that Cassian understood Nestorius already to be judged, which understanding he presumably gleaned from Leo. We have no good reasons for doubting Cassian when he explains his 'monstrous daring' (to use Loofs's expression) as the response called for by Leo. It appears that enough information had already filtered through to Rome to convince the See of Rome of the error of Nestorius' ways. And Leo called Cassian out 'into the awe-inspiring sphere of public judgement', to make a case against Nestorius and offer some explanation of the Catholic faith.⁴⁵ (This claim of Cassian's has been curiously, and persistently, neglected by those of his critics who object to *Incarnation* on grounds that it does not give Nestorius a fair hearing—which Cassian clearly never intended it to do, and which Leo apparently was not interested in, either.)

So Cassian launches into his seven books. He later tells us that the treatise is separable into two parts, Books I–V and VI–VII.⁴⁶ (Later in

⁴⁴ Cassian, *inc* praef 3.

⁴⁵ Cassian, *inc* praef 1.

⁴⁶ Cassian, *inc* 5.2.

this chapter, I will argue that the distinction is an important one for several reasons.) As the final two books are appreciably longer than the first five, this is much closer to an even division than it might seem. The first five books contain something of a surprise. From very early on, Cassian identifies and rails against the heresy of Leporius, rather than that of Nestorius. For the remainder of the first part, he uses very vague language in addressing his opponent. It is only with his introduction of the Creed of Antioch (*inc* 6) that he mounts a direct attack against Nestorius.

Books I–V begin, then, with the case of Leporius, who was by his own admission propagating a curious heresy, which Cassian analyses into elements of Nestorian Christology and Pelagian anthropology. Leporius was dissuaded from his heretical views, however, and his confession of faith is the point of departure for Cassian's treatise. After citing excerpts from that confession at some length, Cassian goes on to make his case against Nestorianism as mediated by Leporius. Thus, he incorporates several phrases from Nestorius' homilies and scrutinizes them. Finding them always objectionable, Cassian holds them up against Scripture and shows that they are at odds with scriptural teachings about Christ. For this reason, the first part of *Incarnation* is largely, though not exclusively, scriptural in flavour.

The second part, as mentioned, turns specifically against Nestorius by way of invoking the Creed of Antioch. This is a clever strategic move, because Cassian is able to assume Nestorius' assent to the Creed of the Church of his baptism—which Cassian could not assume with respect to his arguments from Scripture. Because, however, Cassian knows that credal statements represent a key to scriptural interpretation, he has no need to leave off arguing from Scripture. So he continues, perhaps in a more refined way, to show that the offensive claims of Nestorius are not consistent with Scripture as interpreted in the Creed of Antioch.⁴⁷ And he adds a final level of sophistication to his argument in its concluding chapters when he introduces testimonies from contemporary or near contemporary

⁴⁷ According to Cassian, the Creed of Antioch—like Leporius' confession (cf. *inc* 1.6)—affirms the Catholic faith (*inc* 6.6.1) and corresponds to the Holy Scriptures (*inc* 6.8.2).

teachers of the Church. He reserves his most fulsome praise for John Chrysostom, Nestorius' predecessor, and addresses himself at the end of the treatise to the faithful of Constantinople (rather than the Church in Rome). So ends the treatise.

The importance of Leporius' confession

Now that we have an overview of the treatise, we need to fill it in with a synthetic account of its contents. For reasons that will emerge, it is prudent to begin with the confession of Leporius and work through *Incarnation* from there. In *Incarnation* I–V, Cassian introduces the case of Leporius, a Gallic monk who propagated heretical teachings about Christ and was corrected, first by Cassian (and perhaps others) in Gaul and then by Augustine and other bishops in Africa. After recanting his heretical views, Leporius composed a *libellus emendationis* in which he details his former beliefs and contrasts them to his orthodox profession of faith. Cassian extensively quotes from and commends Leporius' *libellus*. Most scholars have been interested in Leporius as a curiosity, or as a way of Cassian stealing some of Augustine's credit. But it should be noted that, since Cassian addresses the target of his criticism in general terms up to *inc* 6 at which point he specifies Nestorius as the object of his attention, Leporius is in effect Cassian's primary target in the first five books and he therefore should not be passed over quickly.

Since Leporius even more than Nestorius demonstrably preached exactly the teaching about Christ that Cassian set out to refute, Leporius in an important sense represents the ideal reader of Cassian's treatise. It is also significant that, unlike Nestorius, Leporius goes from heresy to orthodoxy. Cassian gives us to understand that Leporius has been won over to the Catholic faith, and invites us to take the subsequent books of *Incarnation* as representing the arguments that persuaded Leporius.

Consequently, the inclusion in Cassian's *Incarnation* of Leporius' concise and acceptable statement of orthodox Christology is far more than just a windfall for R. Demeulenaere, the modern editor of Leporius' *Libellus emendationis*. In fact, it is a summary of the teaching that Cassian himself embraces. This is apparent from

Cassian's statement immediately following his lengthy excerpts from Leporius:

Therefore all the bishops of Africa (whence he wrote) and all those of Gaul (to whom he wrote) approved of this his confession, or rather the faith of all Catholics. And there has never been anyone who quarrelled with this faith without being guilty of unbelief; for it is a profession of heresy to deny established orthodoxy.⁴⁸

So Cassian has made Leporius' confession his own. We ought therefore to pay special attention to Leporius' statement and to take our cues for interpreting Cassian's treatise from it. In fact, Leporius' clear and incisive *Emendation* provides us with a framework for Cassian's teaching. Because he initiates his project with lengthy citations from Leporius, Cassian's perambulatory style in subsequent books need not frustrate the reader by inducing suspicions of disorganization and obscurity. What, then, does Leporius have to say?

Leporius' confession of faith

First off, Leporius offers a few brief descriptions of his former erroneous belief. For example, he writes,

If then . . . we claim that a man was born in conjunction with God, with the result that we ascribe to God alone what belongs to God separately while attributing to the man alone what belongs to the man separately—then most clearly we are adding a fourth Person to the Trinity and out of the one God the Son we start to make not one but two Christs—from which may our Lord and God Jesus Christ Himself deliver us!⁴⁹

Leporius thus disavows the idea that 'a man was born in conjunction with God'—because this would result in two Persons. One might think that affirming the union of such a man to God the Son would provide a way of salvaging this view. But Leporius does not allow the

⁴⁸ Cassian, *inc* 1.6.1.

⁴⁹ Leporius *ap. Cassian, inc* 1.6.2. Demeulenaere's critical edition of Leporius, *lib emend*, at several points prefers variant readings (e.g. 'reputemus' for Cassian's 'deputemus'), but in no case is Cassian's claim compromised by the variations. For consistency, I will defer to Cassian's version throughout and provide a reference to Demeulenaere's edition. Here, see Leporius, *lib emend* 3 (CCL 64: 113–14).

idea that a man *born with* God the Son could have been *united to* God the Son. 'We should not think . . . of God and man mixed together; and of some kind of body produced out of such a fusion of flesh and the Word. God forbid that we should imagine that the two natures being in a way moulded together should become one substance! For a mixture of this sort is destructive of both parts.'⁵⁰

Preserving the distinctive attributes of the respective natures (human and divine) is clearly very important to Leporius—and to Cassian. Consequently, neither of them accepts the proposal that Christ could have developed into his Godhead. They are neither of them interested in fine distinctions about when the alleged union of God and man in Christ Jesus occurred. As Leporius trenchantly puts it, 'Nor may we claim that gradually over time He matured into God, having been in one condition before the resurrection and in another after it; but rather, *He was always of the same fullness and power*.'⁵¹ (By precluding the possibility that Christ developed into his deity, Leporius rejects a central theme of Theodore of Mopsuestia's Christology.)⁵²

The enduring stability of the Second Person of the Trinity before, during and after His Incarnation is of the utmost importance to both Leporius and Cassian. Leporius explains what it means to believe that 'the Word was made flesh,' by writing,

not that He began by any conversion or change to be what He was not; rather that, by the power of divine economy, the Word of the Father never left the Father even though He deigned to become truly man. So the Only Begotten was incarnate through that hidden mystery that He alone understands (for it is ours to believe: His to understand).⁵³

The Incarnation, according to Leporius, did not diminish the Son's divinity. Instead, it allowed the Son to take on human nature in such a way as to be legitimately called 'the son of man'. Therefore, according to Leporius, 'while confessing both the Substance [or, "Nature"] of the flesh and the Word, with a pious confession of faith we always

⁵⁰ Leporius, *ap. Cassian, inc* 1.6.5–6; Leporius, *lib emend* 4 (CCL 64: 115).

⁵¹ Leporius, *ap. Cassian, inc* 1.5.7: 'nec quasi per gradus et tempora proficientem in Deum, alterius status ante resurrectionem, alterius post resurrectionem fuisse dicamus, set *eiusdem semper plenitudinis atque uirtutis*'. See Leporius, *lib emend* 5 (CCL 64: 116).

⁵² Cf. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *inc* 2 (ed. Swete [1882]: 292).

⁵³ Leporius, *ap. Cassian, inc* 1.5.4; Leporius, *lib emend* 3 (CCL 64: 114).

acknowledge one and the same person to be indivisibly God and man.⁵⁴ In other words, the Incarnation conferred upon the Son human attributes.⁵⁵ Because in the Incarnation the Son took on human Nature, human terms are applicable to God the Son (who was, after all, living a human life). This is an implication of Leporius' statement of faith that Cassian draws out quite clearly in his own treatise, as we shall see.

It is worth stressing the point that Cassian uses Leporius' confession very sensibly. With recourse to it, Cassian is able to begin his Christological treatise with a profession of unassailable orthodoxy that has been endorsed by the Catholic bishops of Africa and Gaul and that is itself drawn at least in part from an earlier source.⁵⁶ Moreover, Leporius' confession serves the attentive reader as a trial run for Cassian's treatise, as is indicated by Cassian's categorical endorsement of the confession as normative. So the regular complaint, lodged against Cassian by scholars, that *Incarnation* is unclear or poorly structured, can be met by pointing to the citations of Leporius' *Emendation* that are found in it. By means of these citations, Cassian provides a summary that is sufficient for understanding what he is doing in *Incarnation*—and that within the first few pages of the work. This judicious structure constitutes strong evidence that *Incarnation* was not a ranting diatribe against Nestorius that Cassian thoughtlessly slung together.

Cassian's Christology

Looking now to Cassian's own teaching, the most intuitive place to start is with the view of history implicit in Cassian's explanation of what transpired at the Incarnation. This can be expressed very briefly: the Holy Trinity exists, whereas everything else has contingently come into being.⁵⁷ In respect of the Holy Trinity, Cassian recognizes

⁵⁴ Leporius, *ap. Cassian, inc* 1.5.3; Leporius, *lib emend* 3 (CCL 64: 114).

⁵⁵ Cassian, *inc* 1.6 *passim*.

⁵⁶ See de Beer (1964) and Gori (1991).

⁵⁷ Cf. Cassian's contrast between Christ and Abraham, apropos of John 8:58 (*inc* 5.8.4): 'De Abraham dixit priusquam "feret," de se autem "Ego sum;" scilicet quia fieri temporalitatis est, esse aeternitatis.'

a single divine Nature, instantiated in three divine Persons, who express themselves by a single Energy or Will and who share a single Glory.⁵⁸ (In what follows, these words when capitalized are to be understood in the foregoing technical sense.) Inasmuch as the Trinity exists, the Logos (or God the Son) also exists.⁵⁹ In the fullness of time, the Holy Trinity brought about the Incarnation in the following manner: the Father sent the Logos, the Logos became incarnate, and the Holy Spirit brought about the Incarnation.⁶⁰ Considering the Logos in particular, Cassian teaches that the Logos took on human nature and so lived a human life. 'So He was the same on earth who was also in heaven; the same in His low estate who was also in the highest; the same in the littleness of manhood who was in the gloriosness of Godhead.'⁶¹ He did so without loss to the Glory that is appropriate to the divine Nature.⁶² The affirmation that the Logos is the Person of Christ (or, as Donald Fairbairn puts it, the 'personal subject' of Christ) is the cornerstone of his Christology. Cassian repeatedly affirms this teaching.⁶³ Cassian's clearest statement of the claim is as follows:

This is the true faith, this is the true salvation: to believe that God the Lord, Jesus Christ, is one and the same before all things and after all things. For, as it is written, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever' [Heb. 13.8]. The word 'yesterday' refers to all time past, when before the beginning he was born from the Father. The word 'today' refers the expanse of this age, when he was born once more—but from the Virgin, and suffered and rose again. But by saying 'the same forever,' the whole limitlessness of eternity to come is designated.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Cassian, *inc* 3.4.2–3; 3.7.5. Consider also Cassian's teaching on the Holy Spirit; see *inc* 2.2 *passim*; and 7.17–23. Cassian teaches that the Spirit was involved in the life of Christ. However, he argues at length that, because the Spirit's power and glory are proper to the Nature of God (which Nature Christ shares): the Spirit cannot be thought to provide something to Christ, as it were, externally. Thus at *inc* 7.21.3, he writes: 'quia quaeuis in trinitate persona honorem in se totius continet trinitatis'.

⁵⁹ Cf. Cassian's claim that the eternal existence of the Father implies the eternal existence of the Son: *inc* 4.1.3.

⁶⁰ See Cassian, *inc* 2.2.6; 3.13.2; and 7.21.3.

⁶¹ Cassian, *inc* 2.7.2.

⁶² Cassian, *inc* 6.18.2.

⁶³ e.g. see Cassian *inc* 4.1.3; 4.2.3; 4.6.6; 4.6.7; 4.7.3; 4.13.4; 5.6.2; 5.6.6; 5.9.1–4; 5.15; 6.18.2.

⁶⁴ Cassian, *inc* 6.19.4.

Cassian introduces a further refinement into his account of Christ by stipulating that Christ's human Nature was at no point instantiated before the Incarnation. As he puts it, 'Nor was there any time when that human was without God, since He received from God the very fact that He existed.'⁶⁵ Cassian thus teaches that, apart from the Person of the Logos, Christ's human Nature was not realized as a Person.⁶⁶ This claim sharply distinguishes Christ from the saints. While Cassian was prepared to accept that saints could be called gods by virtue of their extremely close relationship to the Trinity,⁶⁷ he insisted that the case of Christ was totally otherwise. (There is a strong contrast here between Cassian's teaching and that of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who envisaged the Logos relating to the *homo assumptus* through exactly the same mechanisms whereby God relates to the saints.)⁶⁸ Simply put, at no point did Christ exist in human Nature apart from God the Son. The union of two Natures in one Person (or, the 'hypostatic' union) occurred uniquely in the case of Christ.⁶⁹ Cassian was not prepared to tolerate even a hint of suggestion that the Son of God *used* the Son of Man in any way,⁷⁰ precisely because Cassian strongly insisted that the Son of God *is* the Son of Man.⁷¹

Even though it involved taking on human Nature, the Incarnation occurred without diminution of the Logos' divinity,⁷²

⁶⁵ Cassian, *inc* 2.7.2: 'Neque enim umquam homo ille erat sine deo fuerat, qui utique hoc ipsum, quod erat, a deo ceperat.'

⁶⁶ Thus, Cassian, *inc*.5.3: 'non solum unitum cum Christo uerbum, sed etiam propter unitatem ipsam Christus iam uerbum esse dicitur.'

⁶⁷ See Casiday (2003a).

⁶⁸ See Theodore of Mopsuestia, *inc* 7 (ed. Swete [1882]: 296–8); see further the discussion in Fairbairn (2003): 36–8. Fairbairn also notes that there is a general consensus among scholars that Nestorius 'did little to advance the thought of Theodore and that it was largely the latter's theology that lay behind the dispute' (28 n. 1). It is therefore conceivable that Theodore's position, as mediated by Nestorius, was what prompted Cassian's emphatic denials.

⁶⁹ Cassian, *inc* 3.2; 5.3–4.

⁷⁰ This explains his lack of patience with Nestorius' use of the metaphor of a statue to explain Christ: see Cassian, *inc* 2.3.5; cf. Nestorius, s 9 (ed. Loofs [1905]: 251).

⁷¹ e.g. Cassian, *inc* 4.6.6 ('Aduerte ergo tandem et percipe, quod idem est filius hominis qui uerbum dei'); 4.6.7 ('Ergo uides quod idem est filius hominis qui uerbum dei'); 4.7.3 ('Nam licet uenisse in mundum nunc filius hominis, nunc dei nominetur, id est uerbum, unus tamen in utroque nomine designatur').

⁷² Cf. Cassian, *inc* 6.19.1: 'Hoc enim, quod in carne atque ex carne uenit, ortus eius fuit, *non inminutio*, et natus tantum est, *non demutatus*, quia, licet in forma dei

notwithstanding the fact that exactly how such a thing could happen is not comprehensible to us.⁷³ In consequence of the Logos' taking on of human nature, the Logos took on human attributes. Such is the name, Jesus, or the title, Christ—both of which refer to the one Person who is the Logos incarnate.⁷⁴ Apart from a meditation on the Baby Jesus and an evocative claim that all the things that might have been thought to have changed the divine Nature for the worst merely occurred so that the human Nature could develop, Cassian does not speak to the human experiences of Jesus.⁷⁵ Yet he does roundly affirm that Jesus Christ had a real body, both before and after His death.⁷⁶ According to Cassian, Christ even in the flesh is Lord over all.⁷⁷

Grillmeier's misgivings redressed

Because of Cassian's debts to Evagrius and because of a host of presuppositions about Evagrian Christology, Grillmeier expressed serious misgivings about the way Cassian affirms that 'we no longer know Christ according to the flesh' (2 Cor. 5:16).⁷⁸ Grillmeier precipitously claims that, according to Cassian, 'Christ can no longer properly be called "man", as the Godhead lays claim to all that is in him ([*inc*] III, 3, no. 2, [CSEL 17] p. 265).'⁷⁹ This cannot be a correct interpretation of Cassian's meaning, since Cassian repeatedly avers that 'the true faith' is 'to believe that God the Lord, Jesus Christ, is one and the same before all things and after all things.'⁸⁰

manens formam serui asumperit, *infirmitas tamen habitus humani non infirmauit naturam dei*, sed incolumi utique atque integra diuinitatis uirtute in carne hominis totum quod actum est profectus fuit hominis, *non defectio maiestatis*.'⁷³

⁷³ See Cassian's assertion of God's power: *inc* 7.1.1–4.5.

⁷⁴ Cf. Cassian, *inc* 2.3.

⁷⁵ Cassian, *inc* 6.19.1 (quoted above); *inc* 7.12 (the Nativity). Cassian's reticence on this subject caused Grillmeier some consternation, as we have noted above and shall see in more detail below.

⁷⁶ See Cassian, *inc* 3.15, particularly at 3.15.5; *inc* 4.3.4.

⁷⁷ Cassian, *inc* 3.1. ⁷⁸ Cassian, *inc* 3.3–4.

⁷⁹ Grillmeier (1975): 468–9. Grillmeier's reference is in error: *inc* 3.3.2 is found on 263–4; but in any event what he seems to have meant to refer to is *inc* 3.4.2 (265) ('nomen enim in eo iam hominis non cadit, in quo totum diuinitas uindicauit.').

⁸⁰ Cassian, *inc* 6.19.4, quoted at n. 64, above.

It seems that, in his haste, Grillmeier overlooked Cassian's further clarifications of what he meant by saying that 'Divinity has conquered everything in [Christ].' For Cassian goes on to explain that, 'once fleshly infirmity has been overwhelmed by divine majesty, nothing remains in that sacred body *such that the weakness of the flesh can be recognized in it.*'⁸¹ This clarification should be understood in the context of Cassian's claim that Christ rose bodily from the dead,⁸² and that, after the Ascension, Jesus identifies Himself in a body that is refulgent with glory when he appears to Saul on the road to Damascus.⁸³ Clearly, Cassian did not teach that Christ's human Nature was suddenly obliterated by His divine Nature. Rather, he taught that the weaknesses endemic to human Nature—and therefore to the incarnate Son of God, who shared in that Nature (and this is precisely the point where Cassian is glad to part company with Nestorius)—came to an end for Christ after the Resurrection.

Because the Second Person of the Trinity took on human Nature, Cassian allows that it is possible in this special case to apply to Jesus the language appropriate to God, but more even radically to apply to the Logos language appropriate to man—and that, even retrospectively. (This practice is based on the belief that the distinctive attributes of each Nature were brought together in the one Person in such a way that they can be applied to each other; this phenomenon is called the *communicatio idiomatum.*)⁸⁴ Cassian develops this aspect of his teaching relatively fully. For instance, he stipulates that the *communicatio* does not imply that the human Nature of Christ existed before the Incarnation.⁸⁵ Cassian's discussion of synecdoche (the literary device whereby one refers to the whole by mentioning only a part) is related: because the whole of Christ is divine and human, one may refer to either His human attributes or His divine attributes while still referring to the whole Christ.⁸⁶

As examples of what this means in *Incarnation*, we may consider how Cassian looks to 1 Cor. 8:6 and Jude 5. These verses describe,

⁸¹ Cassian, *inc* 3.3.5: 'Et ideo non nouimus Christum secundum carnem, quia absorpta per diuinam maiestatem infirmitate corporea nihil sacro resedit corpori, ex quo imbecilitas in eo carnis possit agnoscī' (author's emphasis).

⁸² Cassian, *inc* 3.5.2.

⁸³ Cassian, *inc* 3.6.1–2.

⁸⁴ Cassian, *inc* 4.5.1; 5.7.1; 5.9.4; 6.22–3.

⁸⁵ See Cassian, *inc* 6.20.2.

⁸⁶ Cassian, *inc* 6.23.

respectively, all things existing on account of Christ and Christ leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. Thus, in Christian Scripture one finds that Christ is recognized and spoken of by name with respect to events that are reported in Jewish Scripture, and that are thus presented as Christ's actions even before the Incarnation. Furthermore, because Christ is the Logos, Cassian specifically insists that Christ's death was the Logos' death. No matter how repugnant some—like Nestorius—might find it, the Passion resulted in God the Son's death. And yet Christ rose bodily from the dead and ascended into heaven. Still Cassian insists that Christ's resurrection did not bring about a change in his identity: Christ was what he always had been and ever shall be—the Second Person of the Trinity.

The birth and death of Christ

We have implicitly contrasted Cassian's view of the death of Christ to Nestorius', and some further consideration of Cassian's position vis-à-vis that of Nestorius is in order. Nestorius was critical of using the term 'Theotokos' because he felt it posed the risk of confusing the two Natures of Christ.⁸⁷ This risk leads on to talking about God being born or dying, which Nestorius did not accept; instead, he associated the birth and death of Christ with the humanity of Christ.⁸⁸ Hence, he preached against the use of the term 'Theotokos' (or 'God-bearer') as

⁸⁷ See Nestorius, *ep III ad Caelestinum* (ed. Loofs [1905]: 181): 'Ego autem ad hanc quidem uocem, quae est *θεοτόκος*, nisi secundum Apollinaris et Arii furorem *ad confusionem naturarum* proferatur, uolentibus dicere non resisto; nec tamen ambigo, quin haec uox *θεοτόκος* illi uoci cedat, quae est *χριστοτόκος*, tamquam prolatae ab angelis et euangeliiis' (author's emphasis).

⁸⁸ See Nestorius, *ep II ad Cyrillum* (ed. Loofs [1905]: 177): *πανταχοῦ τῆς θείας γραφῆς, ἡνίκα ἀν μνήμην τῆς δεσποτικῆς οἰκονομίας ποιῆται, γέννησις ἡμῖν καὶ πάθος οὐ τῆς θεότητος ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος τοῦ Χριστοῦ παραδίδοται, ὡς καλεῖσθαι κατὰ ἀκριβεστέραν [sic] προσηγορίαν τὴν ἁγίαν παρθένον χριστοτόκον, οὐ θεοτόκον. ἄκουε ταῦτά γε τῶν εὐαγγελίων βοῶντων· βίβλιος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ Δαβὶδ, υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. Δῆλον δὲ, ὅτι τοῦ Δαβὶδ υἱὸς ὁ θεὸς λόγος οὐκ ἦν.* (Of course, Cassian's affirmation of the *communicatio idiomatum* allowed him to take up a position directly contrary to that final claim; see especially *inc* 3.8.2; 5.7.7.) For Cassian's version of Nestorius' teaching, see *inc* 6.9.3: "Et iterum fierine," inquis, "potest ut, qui ante omnia saecula natus est, secunda uice nascatur, et hoc deus?"

applied to the Blessed Virgin,⁸⁹ to which he preferred 'Theodochos' (or 'God-receiver'). This term ostensibly precludes any confusion about the origin of Christ's divine nature by ruling out the possibility that He owed it to the Virgin.⁹⁰ Many scholars have applauded his sensibility.⁹¹ But it is just at this point that Cassian would want to insist that Nestorius' nice distinctions cannot bear the weight of passages from Scripture where God *before the incarnation* is spoken of as Christ. It is also at this point that he would make his initially baffling claim that Nestorius was introducing a fourth Person into the Trinity.⁹² That latter claim makes more sense on Cassian's thinking than might be supposed. Granting Nestorius' insistence that God could neither be born nor die in Christ, we should ask just who it was who was born of the Virgin and crucified under Pontius Pilate?

This is the sticking point for Nestorius' theology, according to Cassian's thinking. For somebody was so born and did so die. Now we have seen that this is exactly what Nestorius could not accept; so Cassian pointed to Nestorius balking at that claim and pointed to the implications. If we opt out of affirming with the Creed that it was Christ, 'very God of very God', who was born and died, we are left to suppose that Christ must have been more than one Person. Regardless of how strenuously one claims that Christ was both of human and divine natures, if someone other than God died when Christ died, then Christ was two Persons—which is anathema.⁹³ Furthermore, any Person who was Christ was united to the Nature of God the Logos in such a way that that Person would have been implicated in the Trinity. So Cassian's allegation that Nestorius' claims imply a fourth Person is not actually as far removed from the discussion as it might have appeared.

⁸⁹ See Nestorius, *s* 9 (ed. Loofs [1905]: 249–63); and cf. Cassian, *inc* 2.2.1; 3.12.5; 5.1.3; 6.9.3; 7.30.2. I have carefully stated that Nestorius *preached* against the term 'Theotokos'—as indeed he certainly did. But, as we have seen, he also states in his letters a willingness to entertain the term when not used in an Apollinarian or Arian sense.

⁹⁰ See Nestorius, *s* 10 (ed. Loofs [1905]: 276): 'τὴν θεοδόχον τῷ θεῷ λόγῳ συνθεολογῶμεν μορφῆν, τὴν θεοδόχον τῷ θεῷ μὴ συνθεολογῶμεν παρθένον. θεοδόχον dico, non θεοτόκον, ὁ litteram, non κ exprimi uolens [*sic*]; unus est enim, ut ego secundum ipsos dicam, pater deus, θεοτόκος, qui hoc nomen compositum habet.' Cf. Cassian, *inc* 5.2.1.

⁹¹ In addition to Bethune-Baker and Loofs, see O. Chadwick (1950): 154–5.

⁹² See Cassian, *inc* 6.16. ⁹³ Cf. Cassian, *inc* 3.9.3, 3.10.7.

In general, Cassian demonstrates in his treatise not so much a failure to understand Nestorius, as an aptitude for sorting through Nestorius' distastes and arguments and seeing where they lead. Even if Nestorius may have retracted some of his jarring claims or clarified some ambiguities, it must be recalled that he did so after Cassian was long in his grave. In the event, Cassian is hardly the prejudiced and insensitive clod that some have made him out to be.⁹⁴

Christology and Scripture

Returning to Cassian's Christology as such, there are a number of subordinate themes introduced into *Incarnation* that require our attention. The first is a direct corollary of Cassian's insistent claim that the Logos is the Person who is Christ: namely, Christ is the fixed reference point for all human history. Because the Logos—the Second Person of the Trinity—is Christ, not only is the Logos credited in the New Testament with Creation, so, too, is Christ. Christ, then, was before all history; engaged himself in historical events (for instance, the Exodus, Paul's conversion, but most importantly throughout the Incarnation); will reign over all creation in the end. A second corollary follows from asserting that Christ is the hub of history. Because Christ is the fixed point of reference for all human history, and because Scripture is fundamentally a record of sacred history, Christ is therefore the thread that runs through Scripture. In other words, the most penetrating exposition of Scripture finds that Scripture

⁹⁴ Cf. O. Chadwick (1950): 160: 'Until recent years, Latin Christianity looked upon the Patriarch [i.e., Nestorius] with eyes biased against him through Cassian's misunderstanding. What Cassian understood of Nestorius came down to the west as Nestorianism.' As I have argued in the previous pages, Cassian's analysis is not so obviously a misunderstanding as Chadwick implies; furthermore, his claim as a whole gives rather too much credit to Cassian, I fear—particularly in light of how poorly *Incarnation* circulated, as is reflected by the paucity of MSS containing it (see Petschenig [CSEL 13: xiii]). It is more likely that what came down to the West as Nestorianism was, more or less, what the Fathers of Chalcedon understood of Nestorius. In the interests of fairness, however, I must point out that in his first edition of *John Cassian* Chadwick balanced his negative evaluation of Cassian's grasp of Nestorianism with a commendable treatment of Cassian's devotion to the Crucified Christ, and with several pages on 'the Monk and Christ'; see O. Chadwick (1950): 162–7.

consistently attests to Christ. (We might speak here of a Christological hermeneutic.)

Cassian draws another corollary from his claim that we can—indeed, following the example of Scripture, we *must*—speak of Christ before the Incarnation. After reading in Jude 5:1, Cor. 10:9, and Acts 15:10–11 that Christ saved the children of Israel during the Exodus, Cassian claims that Christ is responsible for the salvation of the saints of the Old Testament.⁹⁵ It was Christ, he insists, who gave them grace and who redeemed them. They were not redeemed in a different manner than Christians are redeemed. To put it otherwise, it is, ever has been, and ever shall be Christ who mediates grace.⁹⁶

In sum, there are three aspects of *Incarnation* that are of particular significance. These are the role of Leporius' confession in Cassian's argument; Cassian's use of Scripture; and the place of Christology in Cassian's monastic thought. I have already indicated the relevance of Leporius' *Emendation* for Cassian. Now that we have an overview of *Incarnation* and a synthesis of its argument, it will be appropriate to consider the remaining special topics before offering a tentative evaluation of the work as a whole.

Cassian's use of Scripture

Turning first to how Cassian employs Scripture in his Christology, the striking thing is how he weaves the various strands into a convergent and consistent account about Christ. I have already alluded to one of Cassian's strategies that facilitates this work, namely, his Christological hermeneutic. I have claimed that, because of his insistence that 'Jesus Christ' is 'the same yesterday, today, and forever' inasmuch as Jesus is God the Son, Cassian conceives of Jesus as the connective thread of history. Furthermore, since the Bible is fundamentally a testament to Jesus Christ's actions in history, Cassian understands the Bible to be pervaded by Christological significance. Previously, I asserted this as a corollary of some beliefs that Cassian can be seen to have held. I would like to go on now to

⁹⁵ See Cassian, *inc* 5.9.

⁹⁶ Cassian, *inc* 5.9.1–4; 5.15; more generally on the salvation wrought by Christ, see *inc* 2.5–6, 4.12.3.

substantiate it in some detail. I will do this by comparing Cassian's use of Scripture in *Incarnation* to the theory of spiritual knowledge Cassian relates in *Conference* 14. This comparison will enable us to appreciate Cassian's assertion that Scripture must be understood in context and his motivation for interpreting Scripture by Scripture. It will also help us to see that, for Cassian, contemplation is ultimately Christocentric.

Praktikê and *theorêtikê* as the foundations of interpretation

Cassian begins his account of spiritual knowledge by affirming that it is twofold, consisting as it does in *praktikê*, 'which is brought about by an improvement of morals and purification from faults', and *theorêtikê*, 'which consists in the contemplation of things divine and the knowledge of most sacred thoughts'.⁹⁷ While one can be accomplished in ascetic struggle, this accomplishment does not in itself guarantee success in contemplation.⁹⁸ (The reader may recall at this point that Abba Serapion caused a tremendous scandal simply because his years of struggle were not crowned by proficiency of contemplation.) In the event, the foundation of ascetic struggle is precisely what we should by now expect: 'its first technique is to know the nature of all faults and the manner of their cure; its second, to discover the order of the virtues and form our mind by their perfection'.⁹⁹ In other words, the taxonomy of virtues and vices found in the second part of the *Institutes* is foundational. Only when it has been implemented—only when the vices have been extirpated and the virtues established—can one begin to progress into spiritual knowledge. Because there is a multiplicity of virtues and vices, practical knowledge is correspondingly multifarious.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Cassian, *conl* 14.1: 'prima *πρακτικῆς*, id est actualis, quae emendatione morum et uitiorum purgatione perficitur: altera *θεωρητικῆς*, quae in contemplatione diuinarum rerum et sacratissimorum sensum cognitione consistit'.

⁹⁸ Cassian, *conl* 14.2.

⁹⁹ Cassian, *conl* 14.3: 'Nam primus eius est modus, ut omnium natura uitiorum et curationis ratio cognoscatur. Secundus, ut ita discernatur ordo uirtutum earumque perfectione mens nostra formetur'.

¹⁰⁰ Cassian, *conl* 14.4.1–7.4

Theoretical knowledge, by contrast, is concerned only with historical interpretation and spiritual sense. Spiritual sense is further subdivided into tropological, allegorical, and anagogical knowledge.¹⁰¹ With this, we arrive at an exact exposition of the four senses of Scripture.¹⁰²

Cassian then provides a virtuoso exposition of passages from the Old and New Testaments by Abba Nesteros, which demonstrated the validity and usefulness of recognizing the possibilities inherent in Scripture.¹⁰³ After reiterating the need for humility and love in this endeavour,¹⁰⁴ Nesteros then makes a remarkable claim.

Once the renewal of our mind develops through this effort, even the face of the Scriptures will start to be renewed, and the beauty of its holier sense will as it were grow with our growth. For their appearance is fitted to the capacity of human understanding, and appears earthly to the carnal, but godly to the spiritual. In this way, those to whom the holier sense had previously seemed to be covered in thick clouds are unable to fathom its depths or endure its refulgence.¹⁰⁵

In this passage, Nesteros indicates that the 'face' of the Scriptures adapts itself to our state of understanding. This ability of the Scriptures to adapt itself guarantees the immediate and eternal relevance of Scripture. When Cassian laments his inability to focus on Scripture because childhood memories of secular literature intrude,¹⁰⁶ Nesteros urges him to apply himself diligently to the study of Scripture. Nesteros assures Cassian that, if he does so, 'it will come to pass that not only every aim and purpose of your heart, but even all the meanderings and wanderings of your thoughts will be for you a sacred and unending rumination of the divine law'.¹⁰⁷

Exegesis and holiness

By this point, Nesteros has bound up understanding Scripture so tightly with holiness of life that it is hardly unexpected when

¹⁰¹ Cassian, *conl* 14.8.1: '... θεωρητική uero in duas diuiditur partes, id est historicam interpretationem et intelligentiam spiritalem. [...] Spiritalis autem scientiae genera sunt tria, tropologia, allegoria, anagoge'.

¹⁰² See de Lubac (1998): 134–7; Codina (1966): 105–15.

¹⁰³ Cassian, *conl* 14.8.2–7.

¹⁰⁴ Cassian, *conl* 14.10.

¹⁰⁵ Cassian, *conl* 14.11.1.

¹⁰⁶ Cassian, *conl* 14.12.

¹⁰⁷ Cassian, *conl* 14.13.7.

Germanus puts in an objection. Surely, he counters, Jews, heretics, and sinful Catholics are capable of intimate knowledge of Scripture, while innumerable saints are content with their pious ignorance. And again it is hardly unexpected when Nesteros will not have a bit of it. 'We have already said that men of this sort only have a certain skill for disputation and flair for speech—but they cannot penetrate to the very heart of the Scriptures and the mysteries of spiritual meaning.'¹⁰⁸ But before this seemingly glib remark settles in, Nesteros presses the point:

When it is said that 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden' in Christ [cf. Col. 2: 3], how can anyone be thought to have attained true wisdom who has refused to find Christ [sc., in the Scriptures] or, having found Him, utters blasphemy from his impious mouth, or even taints the Catholic faith with his unclean deeds?¹⁰⁹

In pursuing this theme, Nesteros glosses the necessary preparation of *praktikê* as 'walking undefiled in the way of Christ'.¹¹⁰ This turn to Christ is the climax of *Conference* 14. Thereafter, Nesteros is content to reiterate the need for a pure life and the ongoing pursuit of virtue.

By bringing Germanus up short in this way, Nesteros (and, by implication, Cassian) is basically rebuking him for his shortsightedness. Since Germanus would appear to have thought it possible to follow the regime outlined by Nesteros without the perpetual contribution of Christ, Nesteros sharply corrects him. This correction might not be justified by the contents of *Conference* 14 alone (after all, Nesteros had had very little to say about Christ before reaching the culmination of his teaching). But Cassian's readers have no excuse—particularly his modern readers, who have been given enormous assistance in this regard by Codina's monograph and other similar publications—and any of them who forget about the persistent need for Christ are well deserving of Nesteros' sharp correction.

¹⁰⁸ Cassian, *conl* 14.16.1: 'Praediximus namque huiusmodi homines disputandi tantum habere peritiam et elocutionis ornatum, ceterum scripturarum uenas et arcana spiritualium sensuum intrare non posse.'

¹⁰⁹ Cassian, *conl* 14.16.2: 'Cum enim in Christo omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi esse dicantur, quomodo is, qui Christum inuenire contempsit aut inuentum sacrilego ore blasphemat aut certe catholicam fidem inmundis operibus polluit, ueram scientiam adsecutus esse credendus est?'

¹¹⁰ Cassian, *conl* 14.16.3.

In everything leading up to *Conference 14*, Cassian has emphasized and reiterated the all-important place of Christ in the Christian life. So Nesteros has not simply slotted Christ into his teaching at the end. Rather, Christ has been there all along; and Germanus was foolish to have lost sight of Him. Indeed, it is not too much to claim that, according to Cassian, the spiritual life (of which spiritual knowledge is a component) takes place *in Christ*. Christ is the context.

The ambient Christology of Nesteros' exegesis

As noted, Nesteros does not pursue the actual interpretation of Scripture in detailed fashion in *Conference 14*. But Cassian does in *Incarnation*, and the way in which he does so makes it quite clear that Nesteros' teaching is presupposed throughout his Christological reading of the Scriptures. The most striking form that this teaching takes in Cassian's polemic is his forceful claim that Scriptures must be interpreted in a contextually responsible manner. Thus, he denounces Nestorius' claim that Paul's 'without mother, without genealogy' (Heb. 7:3) proves that Mary was not the Mother of God,¹¹¹ for violating the context of Scripture in order to make his point. Cassian challenges Nestorius to take on board the claim, also made by Paul in that verse, that the Lord was 'without father'. He asserts that, if Nestorius wants to take the verse to delimit the Son of God's parentage, then Nestorius ought to be consistent and proclaim that the Son of God is 'without father'—a patent absurdity!¹¹² (Cassian, by contrast, claims that 'without father' refers to Christ's humanity and 'without mother' refers to his deity—while insisting that both refer to the same Person.)¹¹³ Cassian then ventures a statement that applies categorically to heretical interpretations of Christ: 'But that madness, rushing headlong to deny God, did not understand that [orthodox profession]; and when it quoted what was written entire in a mutilated form, it failed to understand that the shameless and obvious lie could be refuted by laying open the contents of the

¹¹¹ Nestorius, s 9 (ed. Loofs [1905]: 252).

¹¹² See Cassian, *inc* 7.14.4.

¹¹³ Cassian, *inc* 7.14.16.

Sacred Volume.¹¹⁴ Cassian characterizes this as a 'diabolical' way of interpreting Scripture and points to the way Satan tried to pervert the Scriptures in order to tempt Christ.¹¹⁵ Now the important thing for us as scholars is to be patient and resist the urge to upbraid Cassian for vilifying the 'otherness' of his opponent by likening him to the Devil. If we do so, it will be easier for us to see the seriousness of Cassian's claim.

In the first place, Cassian is calling for a reading of Scripture that is holistic rather than fragmentary. This is not the place to entertain the merits and demerits of modern practice of Scriptural exegesis; but it can be pointed out that Cassian would not be at all inclined to accept an approach to the Scriptures that dissolves the unity that the Church recognizes in the diverse parts of Scripture. In the second place, Cassian claims that theological assertions can and must be held up to scrutiny and that this scrutiny ought to be informed by the Scriptures. This is exactly what Cassian has done with Nestorius' explanation of Heb. 7:3, and he has found it wanting precisely because it does not correspond to the verse as a whole. In the third place, Cassian has already committed himself to the proposition that a right and life-giving explication of Scripture is possible only for those who are leading a holy life; and that the holiness in question, while it may be found in diverse callings, is authenticated by the Church. (The Church is able to do this because, having received holiness from Christ, it is competent to recognize and to endorse holiness.) All these points are found in Nestoros' teaching.

'... in Christo et in ecclesia'

These criteria are useful for far more than merely denouncing heresy. They also serve to promote godliness and to draw sustenance from the Scriptures.¹¹⁶ According to Cassian, these criteria bear faithful

¹¹⁴ Cassian, *inc* 7.14.4: 'Sed hoc praeupta illa ad negandum deum insania non intellexit, quae, cum id truncum poneret quod integrum scriptum esset, non uidit reseruata sacri uoluminis serie redargui impudens atque apertum posse mendacium.' Cf. also *inc* 7.15–16; 7.18.2.

¹¹⁵ Cassian, *inc* 7.16.2–3.

¹¹⁶ On the Scriptures as *salutiferas*, see Cassian, *inc* 6.2.1.

witness to the life-giving mystery of the Incarnation.¹¹⁷ By using them, Cassian is able to build up an account of Christ that integrates various elements of Scripture into a whole. This is particularly clear in his technique of juxtaposing scriptural passages in order to draw out meaning that is not superficially obvious. For instance, he notes that both Christ and the Word are described in the New Testament as being Him 'through whom all things were made', from which he concludes that the Word is Christ.¹¹⁸

Similarly, he interprets 1 John 1:1–2 ('That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of the life,') in juxtaposition with Isa. 2:22 ('Cease ye from the man whose breath is in his nostrils for he is reputed high'). Cassian asserts that Isaiah's reference to a man persecuted has been clarified by John's teaching that it is the Son of God who was thus persecuted.¹¹⁹ Likewise, he interprets 1 Tim. 3:16 with recourse to Eph. 5:31, explaining that the 'great mystery' in the first place is the same 'great mystery' of the mystical marriage of the two Natures in Christ.¹²⁰

This last topic, Cassian's Christological interpretation of marriage,¹²¹ is worth further consideration. Cassian begins by citing the Lord's judgement on divorce—'what God has joined together, let not man put asunder' (Matt. 19:6)—but very quickly makes a transition to Paul's discourse on marriage (Eph. 5:22–33). Cassian seizes on the fact that Paul likens the marriage partners to Christ and the Church. He urges that this comparison serves to call our attention from carnal things to spiritual things. And he particularly calls our attention to Paul's claim that 'This is a great mystery.' Now readers familiar with the English translation of Eph. 5:32 will anticipate a problem here, since it generally continues: 'But I speak of Christ and of the Church.' This is a defensible translation of the Greek (*ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*)—but it is not Cassian's translation. Cassian reads '*εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*' as 'in Christo et in ecclesia'.

¹¹⁷ Cassian, *inc* 7.1.5; cf. 3.8.3.

¹¹⁸ Cassian, *inc* 4.6, referring to 1 Cor. 8:6 and John 1:3.

¹¹⁹ Cassian, *inc* 5.6.1–2; Cassian has already treated Isa. 2:22 at some length at 5:5.2.

¹²⁰ Cassian, *inc* 5.12.1–3.

¹²¹ Cassian, *inc* 5.11 *passim*.

Accordingly, he takes Paul not to mean that the foregoing is a description of how Christ is related to the Church, but rather to mean that he is speaking in Christ and in the Church.

According to Cassian, this means that Paul is speaking in the highest possible register of discourse. He does not suppose that those words give any indication of what the 'mystery' in question is, as is clear from the fact that he shortly raises that question. (His answer is, of course, that the mystery is the Incarnation, as per the 'mystery of godliness' mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:16.) But before he addresses that question, he makes a significant remark about understanding the spiritual sense of Scripture.

But since they [i.e. Paul's readers] do not grasp those more profound points, let them at least understand these easier ones. In this way, once they begin to grasp the more superficial meaning, they will be able to follow through to the loftier one; and the acquiring of a simpler point now may be the way to acquiring a deeper one later.¹²²

This teaching is quite in keeping with what we encountered in Nesteros' first conference. Cassian expects the readers of Scripture to develop in their understanding, and, when they attain maturity, he expects them to be able to understand that Christ is the ultimate referent of the Scriptures.

The availability of this technique

But just as we saw that the technique of prayer that Cassian teaches is not the exclusive provenance of Hellenized philosophers in Christian clothing, so too here the application of this mode of reading the Scriptures is immediately available irrespective of the believer's intellectual prowess. All that is needed, according to Cassian, is that the 'one simple, pious and sound confession: to adore, love, and worship Christ as God'.¹²³ Everything else follows from this. Consequently, Cassian is prepared to 'enumerate, rather than explain' the relevant

¹²² Cassian, *inc* 5.11.4: 'sed quia profundiora illa non capiunt, haec saltim facilliora cognoscant, ut, cum promptiorem intellectum coeperint capere, ad altiore[m] ualeant peruenire, et planioris nunc rei adipiscentia sit postea profundioris uia.'

¹²³ Cassian, *inc* 3.7.2.

passages: those who adore, love, and worship Christ as God are competent to grasp the profundities without Cassian's intervention.¹²⁴ Indeed, the whole of *Incarnation* 5 overflows with Cassian's compilation of relevant passages from the Scriptures that the reader is called to make sense of. Faced with the prospect of cataloguing them all, one might well echo Cassian's words: 'Time would fail me if I should try to examine or explain everything that can be assembled concerning this subject.'¹²⁵

Cassian's entire way of proceeding might strike modern readers as disingenuously contorting evidence to suit one's needs. But Cassian is committed to the proposition that 'all the Scriptures . . . cry out, as it were, with one mouth'—and so he is emboldened in his attempt to make sense of all the Scriptures with reference to Christ.¹²⁶ As he asks, 'What is there [*sc.*, in the Scriptures] that does not pertain to this subject, when all the Scriptures have been written with reference to it?'¹²⁷ It would not be amiss to recall at this point that the Lord, when He opened the minds of the Apostles, showed them that all the Scriptures were fulfilled in Him (Luke 24:44–9).

3 HOW CASSIAN'S CHRISTOLOGY IS RELATED TO HIS MONASTIC WORKS

It is clear from Nesteros' teaching and Cassian's reiteration of Nesteros' principles in *Incarnation* that, according to Cassian, the Lord continues to open the minds of His followers. Christ does so now as Christians 'walk undefiled in the way of Christ' through ascetic discipline. This leads us naturally to the matter of how *Incarnation* is related to Cassian's other, monastically orientated writings.

¹²⁴ Cassian, *inc* 4.7.2: 'enumeranda quaedam magis quam explicanda'; this attitude explains a feature of Cassian's treatise that has so long provided a target for his objectors, who claim that he merely piles on examples.

¹²⁵ Cassian, *inc* 4.7.1, 'Dies enim me deficiet, si omnia, quae ad hanc rem afferri possunt, conquirere aut explicare temptauro.'

¹²⁶ Cassian, *inc* 4.9.1: 'ut intellegant omnes *scripturam sacram* uenturum in carne dominum toto quodammodo suo corpore *quasi uno ore clamasse*' (author's emphasis).

¹²⁷ Cassian, *inc* 4.7.1, 'Nam quae sunt quae non pertineant ad hoc, cum omnia scriptura sint propter hoc?'

Earlier research

It is helpful to begin by noting the research that has already been done on this topic. In the first instance, Owen Chadwick included several pages under the heading 'The Monk and Christ' in the first edition of his *John Cassian*.¹²⁸ Given the brevity of the treatment, it is profound. After citing the regrettable view that Christ and Gospel fell by the wayside amongst 'hellenized savants' entering the Desert,¹²⁹ Chadwick goes on to show in a summary way that Cassian anticipated the themes of *Incarnation* throughout his monastic works. From this he concludes that 'Cassian, and therefore by implication his Origenist and desert tradition, believed that the soul shall behold God by contemplating the revelation of the incarnate Lord. The Gospel has dominated the Hellenism.'¹³⁰ While I would not care to endorse the dichotomy that underlies that final statement, it seems to me that Chadwick is right in thus describing the importance of the Incarnation for contemplation.

Several years after the publication of Chadwick's work, the Jesuit scholar Victor Codina brought out a monograph that must be regarded as the single most important study of Cassian's Christology.¹³¹ Codina's work appears to have been largely neglected, at least until Columba Stewart engaged with some of Codina's claims.¹³² Because Codina's research is thorough and meticulously documented, it is a pity that it has not made a greater impact. In just over 200 pages, Codina vindicates Chadwick's inferences. Codina dedicates half his study to the implicit Christology of the *Institutes* and *Conferences* and half to 'the spiritual importance of the treatise *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*'.¹³³ It will not be possible here to give a satisfactory account of Codina's rich and

¹²⁸ O. Chadwick (1950): 162–7.

¹²⁹ O. Chadwick (1950): 163.

¹³⁰ O. Chadwick (1950): 165.

¹³¹ Codina (1966).

¹³² e.g. Stewart (1998): 95; on the other hand, Grillmeier (1975)—though he refers at some points to Codina's work—rather mysteriously only took from it the notion that Cassian was in succession to Origen, and this merely provided Grillmeier with another stick with which to beat Cassian: see 468 n. 16.

¹³³ Codina (1966): 119.

thought-provoking study.¹³⁴ The important point for our purposes is that Chadwick and Codina have shown beyond reasonable doubt that Cassian's *Incarnation* draws together into an unmistakable pattern the elusive remarks about Christ that Cassian scattered across his other works. *Incarnation* is therefore a singularly significant writing for understanding Cassian's thought as a whole.

Incarnation in the scheme of Cassian's work

What has gone uncommented, however, is the place that *Incarnation* occupies in the overall scheme of Cassian's work. We know from an oblique remark early in the *Institutes* that from his earliest works Cassian had a reasonably clear idea of his project. Even before completing the *Institutes*, he could already explain that the *Institutes* 'are mainly aimed at what belongs to the outer man and the customs of the common monastic life; whereas the others [sc., the *Conferences*] deal rather with the training of the inner man and the perfection of the heart'.¹³⁵ This passage, if it is considered worthy of attention at all, merely verifies the impression that even a casual reader of Cassian's monastic works would get: the *Institutes* deal with 'the outer man' and the *Conferences* with 'the inner man'. That seems perfectly satisfactory, even comprehensive. People habitually neglect *Incarnation*, but if they were to take note of it, they might well think in light of the passage quoted above that it was an afterthought at best. But there are reasons for thinking otherwise.

In the first place, we have learned from Chadwick and Codina that the teaching found in *Incarnation* is in many ways a concatenation of disparate Christological remarks made by Cassian in his earlier writings. But it draws them together in a systematic way and, in the process, develops them. This suggests that *Incarnation* is not the last rambling work of an unwell old man.¹³⁶ Rather, *Incarnation* appears

¹³⁴ It behoves anyone with a serious interest in Cassian's Christology—or indeed his spiritual teaching—to read carefully what Codina has written.

¹³⁵ Cassian, *inst* 2.9.3: 'Siquidem hi libelli, quos in praesenti cudere domino adiuuante disponimus, ad exterioris hominis obseruantiam et institutionem coenobiorum competentius aptabuntur, illi uero ad disciplinam interioris ac perfectionem cordis et anachoretarum uitam atque doctrinam potius pertinebunt.'

¹³⁶ Pace Stewart (1998): 24: 'The shortcomings of the text may be attributable to his age and perhaps to poor health.'

to be the last creative outpouring of a prolific author. Even if Cassian had not in 420 already envisaged writing a treatise on Christology, then we need to be aware that *Incarnation* represents a natural extension of the works he had already produced. (This conjecture can also help us to make sense of why Cassian actually postpones directly engaging with Nestorius—despite his charge to do so—until halfway through the treatise; if I am right, the reason is because expounding on Leporius' statement of faith gives Cassian the chance to say what he has not yet otherwise found the opportunity to say.)

The second reason for thinking that *Incarnation* has an important place in Cassian's thought is obvious if we think back to Evagrius. We have noted in comparing Cassian's teaching about prayer to Evagrius' that Cassian tended to focus on Christ more than Evagrius had done.¹³⁷ Evagrius' teaching, it will be recalled, was strongly Trinitarian, and this gave us reason to suppose that Christocentric refocusing was a characteristic feature in Cassian's transformation of Evagrian theology. If, then, we compare Cassian's three writings with Evagrius' famous trilogy, we will find that supposition is confirmed. We find a good fit between the focus on ascetic practice that is central to both the *Praktikos* and the *Institutes*; on understanding that is central to both the *Gnostikos* and the *Conferences*; and on theology that is central to both the *Kephalaia Gnostika* and *Incarnation*.

What this means quite simply is that Cassian's *Incarnation* answers to the third and highest step of Evagrian spirituality: it is a work of theology in the fullest sense. For Cassian, the contemplation of Christ is a sublime mystery comparable to Evagrius' mystical chapters:

We do not heap up insults on Christ, nor do we separate the flesh from God, and we believe that all that Christ is, is in God. If then you believe the same that we believe, you must confess the same mysteries of the faith. But if you dissent from us—if you do not believe the Churches, the Apostle, and even God's own testimony about Himself—then show us in the vision that the Apostle saw [Acts 26:12–15], how much is flesh, and how much God. For I am unable to make such a distinction. I see the ineffable light, I see the inexpressible splendour, I see the radiance that human weakness cannot endure, and the glory of God shining with inconceivable light beyond what

¹³⁷ See ch. 4, 'Christocentric prayer', above.

mortal eyes can bear. Where in this is there a division or a separation? In the voice we hear Jesus, in the majesty we perceive God. What else can we believe but that Jesus and God exist in one and the same *hypostasis*?¹³⁸

This description of contemplating Christ God 'in ineffable light' recalls Abba Isaac's description of being transported in prayer.¹³⁹ There, the 'mind' was 'illuminated by an infusion of that celestial light', suggesting a formless apprehension of God. Here, having progressed further into the sublime mystery of the Lord's Incarnation, what Cassian perceives in the unbearable light of God's glory is not formless glory; rather, it is Jesus Christ.

4 WHAT MERIT THE TEACHING ITSELF HAS

This re-evaluation of Cassian's *Incarnation* has aimed to demonstrate that the work is not utterly repellent and should not be summarily dismissed. Along the way, I have argued that the scriptural interpretation found in it is incisive and, sometimes, brilliant. Dissenting from Grillmeier's position in particular, I have asserted that the work is theologically sound. Finally, I have claimed as a corollary to its soundness that *Incarnation* is not hobbled by polemic (as Vannier has seemed to suggest). Without pursuing the tangential discussion of Nestorius' theology in itself, I have offered references to the salient passages criticized by Cassian; I have shown that the modern scholarly climate is arguably too enthusiastic in its rehabilitation of Nestorian Christology (which has a direct and detrimental effect upon the scholarly view about Cassian); and I have referred the reader to two other recent works that have treated Nestorianism in greater detail than is possible here.

But all this effort, if successful, could be considered to result in not much more than retrieving *Incarnation* from the dustbin of history and, having cleaned it off, putting it gently down into an honourable obscurity. Can more than that be done? Is it possible to make a case for the ongoing value of *Incarnation*? I believe so. But first it is

¹³⁸ Cassian, *inc* 3.6.3–4.

¹³⁹ Cassian, *conl* 9.25.

important to acknowledge candidly that the work is not without its flaws.

Some problems in Cassian's *Incarnation*

The major defect often pointed out is the terminological imprecision.¹⁴⁰ The reader might sometimes get from *Incarnation* the impression that Cassian's Christology is monergistic, albeit *avant la lettre*.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, one often reads that Cassian's use of the phrase *homo assumptus* has a suspiciously Theodorean ring to it.¹⁴² The concern seems to be that Cassian may have envisaged a human person in a privileged relationship with God. This is suggested because Cassian used the concrete noun *homo* rather than, say, the abstract noun *humanitas*. Inasmuch as the noun *homo* does tend to suggest a Person rather than a Nature, this concern is not without foundation; but I would insist that generally too much is made of it.

In the first place, as we have already seen, Cassian is not the only writer in the West to use that phrase: Hilary of Poitiers, Apponius, Leporius, and Augustine of Hippo also had done so.¹⁴³ Indeed, the term is met very frequently in Leporius' statement of faith, which was endorsed by two laymen and four African bishops and, according to Cassian, carried the general approval of the Gallic Church as well.¹⁴⁴ It is churlish to single out Cassian for criticism because he used a term that had a wide circulation. Furthermore, the term is only

¹⁴⁰ Take as an example the following passage: 'Pro personarum enim diuersitate reddidit parenti unicuique similitudinem suam' (Cassian, *inc* 6.13.2). This is ambivalent. The *personae* in question could refer either to Christ or to his parents (i.e. God the Father and the Virgin Mary). In all likelihood, we should understand him to have meant the latter—particularly since in the immediately preceding sentence Cassian states: 'ego dominum Iesum Christum homouision fuisse dico et patri pariter et matri'. But nevertheless it is an unusual and, it must be said, regrettable way for him to have expressed himself. Other issues are raised and discussed by Fairbairn (2003): 189–9.

¹⁴¹ Consider Cassian's affirmation that Christ has but one power: *inc* 4.7.3 ('in diuersa nominum specie unam est uirtutem').

¹⁴² Thus, Grillmeier (1975): 468; Stewart (1998): 23; Fairbairn (2003): 133.

¹⁴³ See ch. 2, n. 186, above.

¹⁴⁴ Leporius' *lib emend* was signed by Domninus, Bonus, Aurelius of Carthage, Augustine of Hippo Regius, Florentius of Hippo Diarritus, and Secundus of Magarmelitana (CCL 64: 123).

repudiated at Constantinople II (553).¹⁴⁵ It is not in keeping with historical probity to hold a given author accountable to standards that were only articulated a century after that author's death.

It is also very odd indeed for the theologian to suppose that the bare conjunction of words confirms (or on the other hand demolishes) the orthodoxy of a given writing. Of course, this does not mean that we are entitled to neglect words; what it means is that we have to be conscientious of larger units of meaning as well. We do not consider the New Testament to be Arian because in it we find the phrase 'firstborn of all creation'. Neither, I suggest, should we rush to conclude that Cassian (or Augustine, or Leporius, or Hilary) is a Nestorian because we find in his writings the phrase 'homo assumptus'. Finally, as Fairbairn has noted, describing the human Nature of Christ as *homo* rather than *humanitas* is a stable feature of Latin Christian authors from as far back as we have evidence.¹⁴⁶ These observations point out that obsessive interest in Cassian's choice of words comes to very little when one takes a broader view of literature contemporaneous to his: if his language was sloppy, it was a kind of sloppiness endemic to fifth-century Christian Latin generally. The fact that sloppy language was in common usage for so long might well indicate that the problem comes from *our* expectations, rather than *their* language: orthodox Latin Christians seem to have understood each other well enough, even in cases where we find their language awkward, imprecise, or embarrassing.

As to the question of style, Chadwick was right to describe the polemic against Nestorius as 'bludgeoning'¹⁴⁷—though, again, no matter how unfashionable it might be to say so, it is not clear to me that Nestorius deserved less than a good bludgeoning. If we accept Fairbairn's analyses of Theodore, Nestorius, and Cassian (and it must be said that those analyses are extremely good), then we might want to say instead that Cassian's polemic was querulous but not inaccurate.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ See esp. *can* 12–13 (ed. Straub [1971]): 218–19.

¹⁴⁶ Fairbairn (2003): 190–2; Fairbairn also notes that most references to *homo assumptus* in *Incarnation* are actually found in Cassian's quotations from Leporius, *lib emend*.

¹⁴⁷ O. Chadwick (1950): 163.

¹⁴⁸ Cassian's complaint about Nestorius' talk of a statue is a good example. Cassian denies comparisons of Christ to a statue or a tool, which suggest God using human

The virtues of *Incarnation*

Even if we accept that Cassian was churlish in augmenting his case against Nestorius by adding on negligible points, it has to be admitted that his core argument—about God the Son being born, suffering, dying and being raised from the dead—is solid. And this is exactly what makes *Incarnation* worth reading even today. Its teaching may be confrontational, but it is consistent with orthodox principles. But saying that might make the book sound monumentally dull, so it should be added at once that *Incarnation* is attractive for its warm piety and its robust appreciation of the astounding humility of God. Cassian calls our attention to the message that God's love for humans found expression in the Son embracing human Nature with all its limitations and weaknesses. The resounding clarity of Cassian's teaching is such that the infelicities of the work should be forgiven. So it deserves to be better known, and certainly deserves to be better thought of, than it is—even if it is not a classic on the order of Athanasius' treatise.

The final point to be kept in mind is quite simply that Cassian's Christology represents the culmination of his writings; it corresponds to the grade of *theologia* on Evagrius' tripartite scheme. Even apart from its topical goal of combating Nestorianism, Cassian's *Incarnation* is meaningful. Though it goes beyond the evidence, it seems reasonable to me to conjecture that Cassian might well have written a treatise on Christology even if Nestorius had not stirred up so much attention in Rome.¹⁴⁹ This is because of the fitness of the teaching expressed in *Incarnation* with reference to the rest of Cassian's writings. If confessing Christ as Lord and God is indeed the

nature as an instrument rather than embracing it: see Cassian, *inc* 2.3.5; 5.14; 6.6.5; 7.8. This might appear tendentious, but shortly after his reference to the statue, Nestorius does claim, 'οὐκ ἔτεκεν, ὧ βέλιστε, Μαρία τὴν θεότητα . . . ἀλλ' ἔτεκεν ἄνθρωπον, θεότητος ὄργανον.' See Nestorius, s 9 (ed. Loofs [1905]: 251–2).

¹⁴⁹ In affirming this, I dissent at least in some measure from the generally held view expressed as follows by Codina (1966): 153: 'El tratado *De Incarnatione Domini* no es una mera exposición de cristología, sino un escrito polémico: *Contra Nestorium*. Es una obra escrita ocasionalmente, con un fin concreto: refutar la herejía nestoriana.'

'perfect culmination of a perfect confession',¹⁵⁰ then it makes good sense to suppose that Cassian would have aimed to offer up such a confession. This is of course precisely what he did in *Incarnation*. But I wonder if he may have offered up his teaching in some form even if Leo had not persuaded him. His teaching about Christ, stable across his writings, is surely the pinnacle of his work. By it, he leads us 'into the Holy of Holies'.

¹⁵⁰ Cassian, *inc* 4.13.4: 'Haec enim perfectae confessionis perfecta uirtus est, deum ac dominum Iesum Christum semper in dei patris gloria confiteri.'

Conclusion

The purpose of this monograph has been a re-evaluation of John Cassian's writings with attention to their historical and theological value. Because this question is in essence a very old one, I have opted to keep this enquiry within the broad parameters already in place, which is precisely why Cassian's self-appointed adversary, Prosper, has been much in evidence in these pages. I have, however, sought not to be unduly confined by those parameters, and so, in an effort to advance a discussion that demonstrably stalled out centuries ago, it has seemed useful to pursue this research without being restricted to a narrow discussion of controversial subjects such as grace and freedom. Hence, the extended surveys of what Cassian had to say about the human will, about tradition, and about prayer, all of which have shed light on his theological approach to these subjects. This fresh approach to the old problem has enabled me to advance the proposition that Cassian is a theologian of profundity and creativity.

Comparisons with his contemporaries have allowed us to appreciate his contributions to early theological—and early monastic—literature. We have, for instance, had occasion to consider his Christology as the keystone of his writings. I have indicated in discussing Cassian's Christology that previous studies of that subject have been hampered by their keenness to situate Cassian within the reconstructed development of Catholic orthodoxy. That keenness has allowed idealized expectations (which are as often as not anachronistic, and therefore of doubtful applicability) to determine the evaluation of Cassian's works. In such evaluations, no less than in the traditional critique of Cassian's understanding of grace, any possibility of meaningful understanding is compromised from the outset. Hence, the regularity with which one encounters disclaimers that Cassian is a cut-rate theologian, or an epigone of Evagrius, or the like, is attributable in no small measure to unhelpful and indeed unjustifiable expectations that readers have brought to his works.

Similarly, we have noted on several fronts that Cassian's readers quite frequently expect to find simple reportage in his writings.

When they encounter instead a complex synthesis of retrospective narration and pastoral sensibility (as, for example, conspicuously in *Conference 13*), they have tended to disparage Cassian for foisting his own teaching on the desert saints. In these cases, the expectation that Cassian is a mediocre theologian is at work, and the teaching in question is subject to withering evaluation along the lines just mentioned. But what is interesting in these cases is, again, that Cassian labours under the unreasonable expectations that come from assumptions about his project. Contrary to the idea that his aim was to report what he had seen and heard (and that only), his own testimony in the introductions to his *Institutes* speaks of a desire to mollify the rigours of Egyptian practice in view of the intended audience. Keeping in mind the ineluctable connection between practice and theory that we have found to be at work in Cassian's writings, one can appreciate that a willingness to modify practice is strongly suggestive of a willingness to modify theory. In this case, what we can expect is that Cassian was prepared to make his recollected conversations topical to the theological concerns of the 420s in much the same way that he was prepared to adapt the physical customs of the incomparable Egyptian saints for the benefit of the lesser Christians of Gaul. This organic connection between doing and thinking is of a piece with Cassian's project and, perhaps even more fundamentally, it is also consistent with the tradition of Egyptian monastic theology into which he was grafted.

The great burden of this book, then, has been to urge a reading of Cassian that is not beholden to polemic categories by demonstrating that the imposition of those categories distorts the subsequent analysis. In place of the conventional wisdom that I have tried to undo, I have offered a brief description of the relevant findings from related fields of study that are helpful for situating Cassian within his era. More than that, I have described Cassian's theological project—especially as regards his anti-Pelagian polemic with its deep roots in Christology and ascetic anthropology—in terms that derive from those findings; in so doing, I have indicated what a revisionist account of Cassian's works can reveal.

Because this project has attempted to foster skills that will enable Cassian's readers to come to an informed understanding of his writings, there is a basic sense in which it cannot be complete: the

argument points beyond the book, urging the reader to turn to Cassian with a fresh outlook. But this is not a deficiency. It is simply the case that the task of re-evaluating Cassian's works is in its infancy.

For example, the task of assessing Cassian's theology as a whole and on his own terms has yet to be attempted. Moreover, a number of further questions present themselves at the conclusion of this work. For instance, is it legitimate for Cassian to claim that what we now call Origenism was available to Egyptian monks without prejudice to their intellectual levels? The answer to this question bears on what we make of the first Origenist controversy. Preliminary indicators suggest that Cassian's perspective may provide a way forward for the modern discussion.

An example can be taken from the previously mentioned debate set off by Samuel Rubenson's argument that Anthony the Great was in fact responsible for seven of the letters that bear his name. This furore stemmed in part from a disparity between the comparatively higher level of theological culture evident in the letters as compared to the general testimony about Anthony's literacy. In evaluating Cassian's anecdote about Serapion, we observed that the ability to read is not necessarily a good indicator of theological accomplishment. (The example from the prodigious output of Didymus the Blind will be recalled.) We returned to that theme in expositing Nesteros' principles of the theological interpretation of Scripture, where we found that understanding was thought to be independent from intellectual finesse. On a different note, we alluded to other research that has sought to connect Evagrius Ponticus—arguably the intellectual monk par excellence—to grizzled old Coptic monks with specific reference to their theological vision and teachings. Similarly, we have adduced evidence that no cultural partition can be assumed to have isolated Coptic Christians from Greek Christians in Egypt. All these points indicate that Cassian's evidence on the 'First Origenist Controversy' may yet have much to tell us, pointing as he does to a form of theological practice that is rooted in Origen's spiritual heritage but that is not restricted to the intellectually precocious.

As for 'semi-Pelagianism', even if Cassian can be exonerated from those charges, what are we to make of contemporary and subsequent events in Gaul? Here, the question can be helpfully posed in terms that are, again, drawn from convention, but that ought not to be

allowed to limit the answers sought: those events are a good way of understanding what, if anything, 'Augustinianism' was in the generations after the great saint's death. I have stressed at several points that the success of Prosper's polemic depends upon assuming with him that Augustine's theology is monolithic. But I have also indicated that Cassian and Augustine made common cause—and that, for similar reasons—against Pelagius. Taken with evidence from other sources (such as the writings of Vincent of Lérins and of Faustus of Riez, which we have considered, and those of Caesarius and Julianus Pomerius, which we have not), this creates the intriguing possibility that multiple, and sometimes mutually inconsistent, trajectories of interpreting Augustine were available in the late ancient West. Because so much from Cassian's hand survives, his corpus will surely be an important source for any history of the reception of St Augustine.

These two questions bring us back to the bifurcation into the Greek East and the Latin West that is never far to seek in any sustained reflection upon Cassian's works. Simply put, his writings are important for the study of both fields—which rather sets him apart from a great many of his contemporaries, many of whose influence is much more culturally restricted. For modern scholars, Cassian is therefore remarkable for a reason not entirely unlike the reason Eulalius of Syracuse pressed upon Fulgentius of Ruspe: Cassian's writings bridge a significant divide. Or perhaps they bridge more than a single divide. Certainly his works are relevant to the study of monasticism, East and West, and to the host of topics that nestle under that heading. (One thinks of Cassian's impact on prayer, the deadly sins, and so forth.) No elaboration on the tension that exists between the Christian East and the Christian West is necessary, but it can be claimed without hyperbole that Cassian's works span another chasm. They are also relevant to historical theology, itself a field that is also marked by a real tension between the pole of historical enquiry and that of theological enquiry.

Their relevance consists in the fact that an adequate interpretation depends upon an ability to think beyond inherited frames of reference, to situate them in alien (because ancient) contexts and to resist capitulating in one's evaluation to the influence of intervening events. Historical sensibility frees Cassian's readers from the

propensity to invoke subsequent refinements in the business of assessing his theological significance; at the same time, refined theological understanding of Cassian's works sheds valuable light on the history of Christianity in the late ancient world. Thus, Cassian's writings build a bridge (so to speak) between two modes of intellectual activity. For that reason, a painstaking reading of Cassian opens up a host of further questions. Indeed, the list of further questions that can be put to Cassian is potentially endless. And this, I think, is a testament to his greatness: the works have not only enduring spiritual value, but enduring historical and theological value as well.

APPENDIX 1

Prosper's influence on modern scholarship

In chapter 1, above, I claimed that 'without exception, earlier serious engagements with Cassian have taken ('Prosperian' or medieval) Augustinianism as the basis for the evaluation and, inevitably, criticism of Cassian's works, as is evident over several centuries and across all the major languages of Western Europe'. In this appendix, I supply references and quotations in support of that claim.

In an earlier publication, I provided references to Cornelius Jansen, Alard de Gazet, Petrus Caccianus, Owen Chadwick, and Jaroslav Pelikan, amongst others.¹ That list favoured scholarship in Latin and English, but it is clear that modern scholars at work in German, French, and Italian are not free from the interpretive pressure exerted by Prosper. Here are some representative specimens, taken largely at random from the secondary literature.

German perspectives:

1. Grützmaker (1897): 747: 'Von den Collationen hat vor allen die 13. eine Bedeutung in dem Streit um die Gnadenlehre Augustins. ... Der Gegner, den er in diesen Schriften vorzüglich bekämpft, war Cassian, der in der 13. Collation eine Lehranschauung vorgetragten hatte, die erst im Mittelalter als Semipelagianismus bezeichnet wurde.'

2. Wrzół (1918–22): 1: 182: 'Cassian gilt als der Vater des Semipelagianismus, war sich jedoch seines Gegensatzes zur orthodoxen Lehre nicht bewußt.'

3. Schanz (1920): 516: 'Threm Ruhme taten die semipelagianische Gnadenlehre des Verfassers, die schon Prosper von Aquitanien in seinem Liber adversus collatorem bekämpfte, und um derentwillen die Schriften schom in gelasianischen Dekret unter die Apokryphen versetzt wurden, keinen Abbruch.'

4. O. Chadwick (1981): 651: '[*Conlationes Patrum*,] Buch XIII ist ein Beitrag zum semipelagianischen Streit ... in dem Cassian zu den Hauptgegnern der Lehre von der unwiderstehlichen Gnade zählte, wie sie von Augustin

¹ Casiday (2001a): 42 esp. at nn. 9–14.

und Prosper von Aquitanien vertreten wurden. Prosper richtete sein Werk *Contra Collatorem* gegen Cassian.²

French perspectives

1. Pichery (1920): 290: The *Institutes* and *Conferences* 'accueillies avec une extrême faveur, que les justes critiques de saint Prosper d'Aquitaine contre plusieurs propositions entachées de semi-pélagianisme ne parviennent pas à diminuer'.

2. Olphe-Galliard (1953): 220, 266: 'Rapports de la grâce avec la liberté (*Col. 13* où se manifeste principalement le semi-pélagianisme de l'auteur...); 'La posterité, toutefois, n'accueillera point en bloc sa doctrine, sans examen et sans réserve; elle laissera l'exclusive sur cette Conférence 13, où il s'était opposé à saint Augustin, aux dépens mêmes de l'orthodoxie. Remarquons-le: ses formules erronées ou simplement tendancieuses n'ont guère arrêté notre exposé de sa doctrine spirituelle. La Conférence 13 n'est point partie essentielle du corps de doctrine de Cassien et pourrait s'en détacher sans difficulté.'

Italian perspectives

1. Zannoni (1963): 919: 'Purtroppo, a questo riguardo, C., privo di sensibilità speculativa e alieno dalla precisione del linguaggio dogmatico, scivola in quell'eresia sottile che dal Medioevo in poi si chiamò *semipelagianesimo*, delle quale, anzi, egli viene considerato come il padre.'

2. Tibiletti (1977): 376: 'In Cassiano il termine "natura" ricorre in senso preagostiniano, col senso di "bene" (*gut*). Dopo che il termine era stato usato dal pelagianesimo in senso diverso, per negare la necessità della grazia, Cassiano ebbe il torto di usare il vocabolo nel senso primitivo.' Even though Tibiletti notes and endorses the developing practice of distancing Cassian from Pelagianism, his attempt, two pages on, to justify Cassian's perceived excesses further demonstrates the staying power of the habits of thought set up by Prosper: 'Gli aspetti del suo pensiero ritenuti erronei dal punto di vista dogmatico, ed occasionalmente affini al pelagianesimo, dovranno essere ricondotti al pensiero teologico e monastico orientale, di cui sono espressione.'

Such, then, is the conventional wisdom of twentieth-century Western scholarship. The examples could readily be multiplied. But this sampling gives a sense for the recalcitrance of the conventional view, in consideration of

² Chadwick is, of course, not German, but since he wrote these words for a major German reference work, he can be included under this rubric.

which it is implausible in the extreme to think that the disavowal of a single word (Semipelagianism) could possibly transform our understanding of Cassian.

APPENDIX 2

Cassian on miracles

The topic of how and what Cassian thought about miracles has arisen twice in the foregoing study, so it seems appropriate to devote some attention to it now. The most relevant passage in his works is to be found at *Institutes*, pref. 7–8, where he avows his intention to omit all references to miraculous occurrences from his writings:

Nor indeed shall I make an effort to weave a story of the miracles and prodigies of God. We not only heard many such incredible things from our elders, but even beheld them performed before our own eyes. Nevertheless, all of these accounts (which convey to the readers nothing by way of instruction in the perfect life, apart from amazement) will be left out. Instead, insofar as I am able with the Lord's help, I will attempt to explain faithfully the principles and especially the rules of their monasteries and the origins, causes and cures of the principle vices (of which, according to them, there are eight), in keeping with their traditions. For my purpose is to report a few things, not about the miracles of God, but about the correction of our habits and attainment of the perfect life, in accordance with what we learnt from our elders.¹

This passage is foundational for E.-Ch. Babut's influential claim that Cassian had taken aim at Sulpicius Severus' famously thaumaturgical depiction of Martin of Tours.² Although that application of the passage represents to my knowledge a fresh departure, Babut was certainly not the

¹ Cassian, *inst* pref. 7–8: 'Nec plane mirabilium dei signorumque narrationem studebo contexere. Quae quamuis multa per seniores nostros et incredibilia non solum audierimus, uerum etiam sub obtutibus nostris perspexerimus inpleta, tamen his omnibus praetermissis, quae legentibus praeter admirationem nihil amplius ad instructionem perfectae uitae conferunt, instituta eorum tantummodo ac monasteriorum regulas maxime quae principalium uitiorum, quae octo ab eis designantur, origins et causas curationes quae secundum traditiones eorum, quantum domino adiuuante potuero, fideliter explicare contendam. Propositum siquidem mihi est non de mirabilibus dei, sed correctione morum nostrorum et consummatione uitae perfectae secundum ea, quae a senioribus nostris accepimus, pauca disserere.'

² Babut (1912): 13–14, 17 and esp. 17 n. 1; see also Lorenz (1966): 18 and Stewart (1998): 17–18. On the other hand, C. Stancliffe (1983): 361 n. 68 sensibly expresses doubt about Cassian's hostility towards Martin and notes that Babut's claim rests on conjecture. The character of Martin's asceticism is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is appropriate to say I find no reason to put as sharp a point to Cassian's reforming

first to identify this trend in Cassian's writing; some fourteen years before his book appeared, Cuthbert Butler had praised Cassian for his 'marked sobriety in regard to supernatural occurrences'.³ But Babut's claim has given a polemical edge to Cassian's omission, and the idea that Cassian was taking a stand against excessive contemporary zeal for miracles has proven to be very evocative.⁴

But it is worth making two observations in this connection. First, the idea that Cassian was omitting reference to miracles by way of a polemic response to a local situation (albeit a polemic of a rather mild sort) does not actually contribute much to our understanding of Cassian's works. As conceived by Babut, that idea was a prop to his conjecture about why Cassian was silent about Martin of Tours; in other words, it supports an argument from silence. For Butler and for others, the observation seems basically to signal their appreciation of a refreshing anticipation of modern sensibilities. But in neither case does the idea shed light on Cassian's thought as such.

Second, it is simply not the case that Cassian disbelieved in miracles. He was no stranger to miraculous occurrences. Indeed, in the passage just quoted, he even claims to have witnessed '*multae per seniores nostros et incredibilia*'.⁵ So the modern categorical rejection of miracles (along the lines laid down by David Hume) is simply not operative in Cassian's writings. Furthermore, despite his explicitly stated intention to omit all such things, Cassian does in fact bring into his discussion the phenomenon of divine gifts of miraculous healing—that is, healing performed by miracle-workers—at *Conference* 15.1.2–3.

In view of this evidence from Cassian's writings, we should be clear that when Cassian avoids mentioning miracles, it is not because he does not think they occur; on the contrary, he demonstrably *does* think miracles occur and claims to have witnessed them. What, then, are we to make of his decision to omit them from his account? I find no compelling reason to accept the claim that he was trying to discredit Martin of Tours and thus cast suspicion on his legitimacy. It therefore strikes me as unlikely that he was

zeal as other students of Cassian have done; and that in particular I do not accept the premise of the argument as regards Cassian's supposed attitude towards miracles.

³ Palladius, ed. Butler (1898–1904): 1: 204.

⁴ Cf. N. Chadwick (1955): 218–19; O. Chadwick (1968): 50–1; Stewart (1998): 17, 31–2.

⁵ Cassian, *inst* pref. 7 (author's emphasis); Butler (1898–1904): 1: 204 must have forgotten about this passage, since he claims that he did 'not recollect that [Cassian] anywhere claims to have himself witnessed a miracle'. In any case, perhaps the writer who digested Cassian's works for the *Apophthegmata* had recalled this passage and considered it adequate to justify ascribing to Cassian a miracle-story in the grandest tradition of the 'less sober' ancient works; see *apoph* Cassian 2 (PG 65: 244).

motivated by polemical considerations. A better way of looking at this matter is suggested by Cassian's overarching concern across his entire corpus for teaching the principles of monastic life.⁶ Cassian's decision is chiefly a pedagogical one: miracles can easily become a distraction and relating miracles can very readily degenerate into sensationalism, so miracles are best passed over in silence. This does not mean that miracles do not occur, or that they should not occur. The issue at hand, rather, is Cassian's very sensible doubt as to whether sensationalism—'which convey[s] to the readers nothing by way of instruction in the perfect life, apart from amazement'—is a fit medium for education.

⁶ This is an observation that Mark Sheridan has made on several occasions in correspondence; I am particularly indebted to him for it as a solution to the question in hand.

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(NB: No claim is here intended that these treatises were written by the same author.)

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