THE BYZANTINE SPIRITUAL

ASCETIC AND FATHERS

ABOUT THE COLLECTED WORKS

Fr. Florovsky devoted much attention to his *Collected Works*. Until shortly before his death, he had continued to supply a variety of materials. These included suggestions for the structuring of the volumes; changes in certain texts; new materials; updated materials; notes; revisions; suggestions for revisions; updated bibliography; and several outlines for a new structure to his work on the Byzantine Fathers. Substantial time has been expended to implement his suggestions and instructions. Some materials will be included in the final volume, a volume which also contains an Index to the entire *Collected Works*, Appendices, Notes, Bibliography, and Miscellanea. To publish *The Collected Works* in English has entailed the translation of his works from several languages, including Russian, Bulgarian, Czech, Serbian, German and French.

THE BYZANTINE ASCETIC AND SPIRITUAL FATHERS

VOLUME TEN
in ***THE COLLECTED WORKS*** of

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THE COLLECTED WORKS OF GEORGES FLOROVSKY

Volume I.....*Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*
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[Additional forthcoming volumes. The final volume contains an Index to the entire *Collected Works*, Bibliography, Appendices, and Miscellanea]

SECOND PRINTING

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IN MEMORIAM

FR. GEORGES FLOROVSKY
1893-1979

"Preeminent Orthodox Christian Theologian, Ecumenical Spokesman, And Authority on Russian Letters."

[All quotations are from pages 5 and 11 of the *Harvard Gazette* of October 1, 1982, written by George H. Williams, Hollis Professor of Divinity *Emeritus*, Harvard Divinity School and Edward Louis Keenan, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University and "placed upon the records" at the Harvard Faculty of Divinity Meeting on September 16, 1982.]

"Archpriest Professor Georges Vasilyevich Florovsky (1893-1979), preeminent theologian of Orthodoxy and historian of Christian thought, ecumenical leader and interpreter of Russian literature . . . died in Princeton, New Jersey in his 86th year" on August 11, 1979.

Born in Odessa in 1893, Fr. Florovsky was the beneficiary of that vibrant Russian educational experience which flourished toward the end of the 19th century and produced many gifted scholars. His father was rector of the Theological Academy and dean of the Cathedral of the Transfiguration. His mother, Klaudia Popruzhenko, was the daughter of a professor of Hebrew and Greek. Fr. Florovsky's first scholarly work, "On Reflex Salivary Secretion," written under one of Pavlov's students, was published in English in 1917 in the last issue of *The Bulletin of the Imperial Academy of Sciences*.

In 1920, with his parents and his brother Antonii, Fr. Florovsky left Russia and settled first in Sophia, Bulgaria. He left behind his brother, Vasilii, a surgeon, who died in the 1924 famine, and his sister Klaudia V. Florovsky, who became a professor of history at the University of Odessa. In 1921 the President of Czechoslovakia, Thomas Masaryk, invited Fr. Florovsky and his brother Antonii to Prague. Fr. Florovsky taught the philosophy of law. Antonii later became a professor of history at the University of Prague.

In 1922 Georges Florovsky married Xenia Ivanovna Simonova and they resettled in Paris where he became cofounder of St. Sergius Theological Institute and taught there as professor of patristics (1926-1948). In 1932 he was ordained a priest and placed himself canonically under the patriarch of Constantinople.

In 1948 he came to the United States and was professor of theology at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary from 1948 to 1955, and dean from 1950. From 1954 to 1965 he was professor of Eastern Church History at Harvard Divinity School and, concurrently (1962-1965) an associate of the Slavic Department and (1955-1959) an associate professor of theology at Holy Cross Theological School.

"Although Fr. Florovsky's teaching in the Slavic Department [at Harvard University] was only sporadic, he became a major intellectual influence in the formation of a generation of American specialists in Russian cultural history. His lasting importance in this area derives not from his formal teaching but from the time and thought he gave to informal "circles" that periodically arose around him in Cambridge among those who had read *The Ways of Russian Theology* [then only in Russian], for decades a kind of "underground book" among serious graduate students of Russian intellectual history, and had sought him out upon discovering that he was at the Divinity School . . . During a portion of his incumbency at Harvard . . . patristics and Orthodox thought and institutions from antiquity into 20th century Slavdom flourished. In the Church History Department meetings he spoke up with clarity. In the Faculty meetings he is remembered as having energetically marked book catalogues on his lap for the greater glory of the Andover Harvard Library! In 1964 Fr. Florovsky was elected a director of the Ecumenical Institute founded by Paul VI near Jerusalem." Active in both the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, Fr. Florovsky was Vice President-at-Large of the National Council of Churches from 1954 to 1957.

"After leaving Harvard, Professor *Emeritus* Florovsky taught from 1965 to 1972 in Slavic Studies at Princeton University, having begun lecturing there already in 1964; and he was visiting lecturer in patristics at Princeton Theological Seminary as early as 1962 and then again intermittently after retirement from the University. His last teaching was in the fall semester of 1978/79 at Princeton Theological Seminary."

"Fr. Florovsky in the course of his career was awarded honorary doctorates by St. Andrew's University . . . Boston

University, Notre Dame, Princeton University, the University of Thessalonica, St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, and Yale. He was a member or honorary member of the Academy of Athens, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the British Academy, and the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius."

Fr. Florovsky personified the cultivated, well-educated Russian of the turn of the century. His penetrating mind grasped both the detail and depth in the unfolding drama of the history of Christianity in both eastern and western forms. He was theologian, church historian, patristic scholar, philosopher, Slavist, and a writer in comparative literature. "Fr. Florovsky sustained his pleasure on reading English novels, the source in part of his extraordinary grasp of the English language, which, polyglot that he was, he came to prefer above any other for theological discourse and general exposition. Thus when he came to serve in Harvard's Slavic Department, there was some disappointment that he did not lecture in Russian, especially in his seminars on Dostoievsky, Soloviev, Tolstoi, and others. It was as if they belonged to a kind of classical age of the Russian tongue and civilization that, having been swept away as in a deluge, he treated as a Latin professor would Terrence or Cicero, not presuming to give lectures in the tonalities of an age that had vanished forever."

Fr. Florovsky's influence on contemporary church historians and Slavists was vast. The best contemporary multi-volume history of Christian thought pays a special tribute to Fr. Florovsky. Jaroslav Pelikan of Yale University, in the bibliographic section to his first volume in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, writes under the reference to Fr. Florovsky's two works in Russian on the Eastern Fathers: "These two works are basic to our interpretation of trinitarian and christological dogmas" (p. 359 from *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition: 100-600*). George Huntston Williams, Hollis Professor *Emeritus* of Harvard Divinity School, wrote: "Faithful priestly son of the Russian Orthodox Church . . . , Fr. Georges Florovsky – with a career-long involvement in the ecumenical dialogue – is today the most articulate, trenchant and winsome exponent of Orthodox theology and piety in the scholarly world. He is innovative and creative in the sense wholly of being ever prepared to restate the saving truth of Scripture and Tradition in the idiom of our contemporary yearning for the transcendent."

AUTHOR'S PREFACE (1978)

These four volumes on the Eastern Fathers of the fourth century and the Byzantine fathers from the fifth to eighth centuries were originally published in 1931 and 1933 in Russian. They contained my lectures given at the Institute of Orthodox Theology in Paris from 1928 to 1931 and were originally published in Russian more or less in the form in which they were originally delivered. They therefore lacked exact references and appropriate footnotes. Another reason for the omission of reference material in the 1931 and 1933 publications is that the books were originally published at my own expense and strict economy was therefore necessary. In fact, their publication was only the result of the generous cooperation and help of personal friends. These English publications must be dedicated to their memory. The initiative of the original publication was taken by Mrs. Elizabeth Skobtsov, who became an Orthodox nun and was later known under her monastic name of Mother Maria. It was she who typed the original manuscripts and she who was able to persuade Mr. Iliia Fondaminsky, at that time one of the editors of the renowned Russian review, *Sovremennye Zapiski* [*Annales Contemporaines*], to assume financial responsibility. Both these friends perished tragically in German concentration camps. They had been inspired by the conviction that books in Russian on the Fathers of the Church were badly needed, not only by theological students, but also by a much wider circle of those concerned with doctrinal and spiritual vistas and issues of Eastern Orthodox Tradition. Their expectation was fully justified: the volumes in Russian rapidly sold out and were warmly appreciated in the general press.

When I began teaching at the Paris Institute, as Professor of Patrology, I had to face a preliminary methodological problem. The question of the scope and manner of Patristic studies had been vigorously debated by scholars for a long time. (There is an excellent book by Fr. J. de Ghellinck, S.J.,*Patristique et Moyen Age*, Volume II, 1947, pp. 1-180). The prevailing tendency was to treat Patrology as a history of Ancient Christian Literature, and the best modern manuals of Patrology in the West were written precisely in this manner: Bardenhewer, Cayré, Tixeront, Quasten, adherents to this school of thought, made only sporadic reference to certain points of doctrine but their approach was no doubt legitimate and useful. However, another cognate discipline came into existence during the last century,*Dogmengeschichte*, or the

school of the history of doctrine. Here scholars were concerned not so much with individual writers or thinkers but rather with what can be defined as the "internal dialectics" of the Christian "mind" and with types and trends of Christian thought.

In my opinion, these two approaches to the same material must be combined and correlated. I have tried to do precisely this with the revision of some of the material for the English publications. I have written some new material on the external history and especially on the ecumenical councils. But in essence Patrology must be more than a kind of literary history. It must be treated rather as a history of Christian doctrine, although the Fathers were first of all *testes veritatis*, witnesses of truth, of the faith. "Theology" is wider and more comprehensive than "doctrine." It is a kind of Christian Philosophy. Indeed, there is an obvious analogy between the study of Patristics and the study of the history of Philosophy. Historians of Philosophy are as primarily concerned with individual thinkers as they are interested ultimately in the dialectics of ideas. The "essence" of philosophy is exhibited in particular systems. Unity of the historical process is assured because of the identity of themes and problems to which both philosophers and theologians are committed. I would not claim originality for my method, for it has been used occasionally by others. But I would underline the theological character of Patrology.

These books were written many years ago. At certain points they needed revision or extension. To some extent, this has been done. Recent decades have seen the rapid progress of Patristic studies in many directions. We now have better editions of primary sources than we had forty or even thirty years ago. We now have some new texts of prime importance: for example, the Chapters of Evagrius or the new Sermons of St. John Chrysostom. Many excellent monograph studies have been published in recent years. But in spite of this progress I do not think that these books, even without the revisions and additions, have been made obsolete. Based on an independent study of primary sources, these works may still be useful to both students and scholars.

GEORGES FLOROVSKY
SEPTEMBER, 1978

CHAPTER ONE

THE ASCETIC IDEAL AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Reflections on the Critique of the Theology of the Reformation

If the monastic ideal is union with God through prayer, through humility, through obedience, through constant recognition of one's sins, voluntary or involuntary, through a renunciation of the values of this world, through poverty, through chastity, through love for mankind and love for God, then is such an ideal Christian? For some the very raising of such a question may appear strange and foreign. But the history of Christianity, especially the new theological attitude that obtained as a result of the Reformation, forces such a question and demands a serious answer. If the monastic ideal is to attain a creative spiritual freedom, if the monastic ideal realizes that freedom is attainable only in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and if the monastic ideal asserts that to become a slave to God is ontologically and existentially the path to becoming free, the path in which humanity fully becomes human precisely because the created existence of humanity is contingent upon God, is by itself bordered on both sides by non-existence, then is such an ideal Christian? Is such an ideal Biblical – New Testamental? Or is this monastic ideal, as its opponents have claimed, a distortion of authentic Christianity, a slavery to mechanical "monkish" "works righteousness"?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DESERT

When our Lord was about to begin his ministry, he went into the *desert* – *εἰς τὴν ἔρημον*. Our Lord had options but he selected – or rather, "was lead by the Spirit," into the desert. It is obviously not a meaningless action, not a selection of type of place without significance. And there – in the desert – our Lord engages in spiritual combat, for he "fasted forty days and forty nights" – *νηστεύσας ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα καὶ νύκτας τεσσαράκοντα ὕστερον ἐπείνασεν*. The *Gospel of St. Mark* adds that our Lord "was with the *wild beasts*" – *καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων*. Our Lord, the God-Man, was truly God and truly man. Exclusive of our Lord's redemptive work, unique to our Lord alone, he calls us *to*

follow him – καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι. "Following" our Lord is not exclusionary; it is not selecting certain psychologically pleasing aspects of our Lord's life and teachings to follow. Rather it is all-embracing. We are to follow our Lord in every way possible. "To go into the desert" is "to follow" our Lord. It is interesting that our Lord returns to the desert after the death of St. John the Baptist. There is an obvious reason for this. "And hearing [of John the Baptist's death] Jesus departed from there in a ship to a *desert place* privately" – *ἀνεχώρησεν ἐκεῖθεν ἐν πλοίῳ εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ' ἰδίαν.* When St. Antony goes to the desert, he is "following" the example of our Lord – indeed, he is "following" our Lord. This in no way diminishes the unique, salvific work of our Lord, this in no way makes of our Lord God, the God-Man, a mere example. But in addition to his redemptive work, which could be accomplished only by our Lord, our Lord taught and set examples. And by "following" our Lord into the desert, St. Antony was entering a terrain already targeted and stamped by our Lord as a specific place for spiritual warfare. There is both specificity and "type" in the "desert." In those geographical regions where there are no deserts, there are places which are similar to or approach that type of place symbolized by the "desert." It is that type of place which allows the human heart solace, isolation. It is the type of place which puts the human heart in a state of aloneness, a state in which to meditate, to pray, to fast, to reflect upon one's inner existence and one's relationship to ultimate reality – God. And more. It is a place where spiritual reality is intensified, a place where spiritual life can intensify and simultaneously where the opposing forces to spiritual life can become more dominant. It is the terrain of a battlefield but a spiritual one. And it is our Lord, not St. Antony, who has set the precedent. Our Lord says that "as for what is sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceit of riches choke(s) the word, and it becomes unfruitful" – *ὁ δὲ εἰς τὰς ἀκάνθας σπαρείς, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τὸν λόγον ἀκούων, καὶ ἡ μέριμνα τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ ἡ ἀπάτη τοῦ πλούτου συμπνίγει τὸν λόγον, καὶ ἄκαρπος γίνεται.* The desert, or a place similar, precisely cuts off the cares or anxieties of the world and the deception, the deceit of earthly riches. It cuts one off precisely from "this-worldliness" and precisely as such it contains within itself a powerful spiritual reason for existing within the spiritual paths of the Church. Not as the only path, not as the path for everyone, but as one, fully authentic path of Christian life.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW

In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (5:16) it is our Lord who uses the terminology of "good works." " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your *good works* and may glorify your Father who is in heaven" – *οὕτως λαμψάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅπως ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα καὶ δοξάσωσιν τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.* Contextually these "good works" are defined in the preceding text of the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" – *μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.* "Blessed are they who are hungering and are thirsting for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" – *μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται* "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" – *μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.* Is it not an integral part of the monastic goal to become meek, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and to become pure in heart? This, of course, must be the goal of all Christians but monasticism, which makes it an integral part of its ascetical life, can in no way be excluded. Are not the Beatitudes more than just rhetorical expressions? Are not the Beatitudes a part of the commandments of our Lord? In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (5:19) our Lord expresses a deeply meaningful thought – rather a warning. "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" – *ὃς ἐὰν οὖν λύσῃ μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων καὶ διδάξῃ οὕτως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἐλάχιστος κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν.* And it is in this context that our Lord continues to deepen the meaning of the old law with a new, spiritual significance, a penetrating interiorization of the "law." He does not nullify or abrogate the law but rather extends it to its most logical and ontological limit, for he drives the spiritual meaning of the law into the very depth of the inner existence of mankind.

"You heard that it was said to those of old . . . but I say to you" – *ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις . . . ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν.* Now, with the deepening of the spiritual dimension of the law, the old remains, it is the base, but its spiritual reality is pointed to its source. "You shall not kill" becomes inextricably connected to "anger." "But I say to you that everyone being angry with his brother shall be liable to the judgment" – *ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι*

πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει No longer is the external act the only focal point. Rather the source, the intent, the motive is now to be considered as the soil from which the external act springs forth. Mankind must now guard, protect, control, and purify the inner emotion or attitude of "anger" and, in so doing, consider it in the same light as the external act of killing or murder. Our Lord has reached into the innermost depth of the human heart and has targeted the source of the external act. "You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who is seeing a woman lustfully, has already committed adultery with her in his heart" – *οὐ μοιχεύσεις· ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ βλέπων γυναῖκα πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτὴν ἤδη ἐμοίχευσεν αὐτὴν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτου.* From a spiritual perspective the person who does not act externally but lusts within is equally liable to the reality of "adultery." "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and you shall hate your enemy'. But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those persecuting you so that you may become sons of your Father in heaven" – *ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη, ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου καὶ μισήσεις τὸν ἐχθρόν σου. ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς.*

THE INADEQUACY OF THE CRITIQUE BY ANDERS NYGREN

The Christian idea of love is indeed something new. But it is not something so radically odd that the human soul cannot understand it. It is not such a "transvaluation of all ancient values," as Anders Nygren has claimed in his lengthy study *Agape and Eros* (originally published in Swedish in 1947 as *Den kristna kärlekstanken genom tiderna. Eros och Agape*; published in two volumes in 1938 and 1939; two volumes published in one paperback edition by Harper and Row in 1969). Although there are certain aspects of truth in some of Nygren's statements, his very premise is incorrect. Nygren reads back into the New Testament and the early Church the basic position of Luther rather than dealing with early Christian thought from within its own milieu. Such an approach bears little ultimate fruit and often, as in the case of his position in *Agape and Eros*, distorts the original sources with presuppositions that entered the history of Christian thought 1500 years after our Lord altered the very nature of humanity by entering human existence as God and Man. There is much in Luther that is

interesting, perceptive, and true. However, there is also much that does not speak the same language as early Christianity. And herein lies the great divide in the ecumenical dialogue. For the ecumenical dialogue to bear fruit, the very controversies that separate the churches must not be hushed up. Rather they must be brought into the open and discussed frankly, respectfully, and thoroughly. There is much in Luther with which Eastern Orthodox theologians especially can relate. Monasticism, however, is one area in which there is profound disagreement. Even Luther at first did not reject monasticism. Luther's Reformation was the result of his understanding of the New Testament, an understanding which Luther himself calls "new." His theological position had already been formed before the issue of indulgences and his posting of his *Ninety-Five Theses*. Nygren, loyal to Luther's theological vision, has a theological reason for his position in *Agape and Eros* . Nygren identifies his interpretation of *Agape* with the monoenergistic concept of God, a concept of God that would be correct in and of itself, for God is the source of everything. But once we confront the mystery of creation, the mystery of that "other" existence, that created existence which includes mankind, we face a totally different situation. The existential and ontological meaning of man's created existence is precisely that God did not have to create, that it was a free act of Divine freedom. But - and here is the great difficulty created by an unbalanced western Christianity on the doctrine of grace and freedom - in freely creating man God willed to give man an inner spiritual freedom. In no sense is this a Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian position. The balanced synergistic doctrine of the early and Eastern Church, a doctrine misunderstood and undermined by Latin Christianity in general from St. Augustine on – although there was always opposition to this in the Latin Church – always understood that God initiates, accompanies, and completes everything in the process of salvation. What it always rejected – both spontaneously and intellectually – is the idea of irresistible grace, the idea that man has no participating role in his salvation. Nygren identifies any participation of man in his salvation, any movement of human will and soul toward God, as a pagan distortion of *Agape*, as "*Eros*." And this attitude, this theological perspective will in essence be the determining point for the rejection of monasticism and other forms of asceticism and spirituality so familiar to the Christian Church from its inception.

If Nygren's position on *Agape* is correct, then the words of our Lord, quoted above, would have had no basis in the hearts of the listeners for understanding. Moreover, our Lord, in using the verbal form of Agape – *ἀγαπᾶτε* – uses the "old" commandment as

the basis for the giving of the new, inner dimension of the spiritual extension of that commandment of *agape*, of love. If Nygren is correct, the "old" context of *agape* would have been meaningless, especially as the foundation upon which our Lord builds the new spiritual and ontological character of *agape*. Nygren's point is that "the Commandment of Love" occurs in the Old Testament and that it is "introduced in the Gospels, not as something new, but as quotations from the Old Testament." He is both correct and wrong. Correct in that it is a reference taken from the Old Testament. Where else was our Lord to turn in addressing "his people"? He is wrong in claiming that it is nothing but a quotation from the Old Testament, precisely because our Lord uses the Old Testament reference as a basis upon which to build. Hence, the foundation had to be secure else the building would have been flawed and the teaching erroneous. Indeed, Nygren himself claims that "Agape can never be 'self-evident'." In making such a claim, Nygren has undercut any possibility for the hearers of our Lord to understand any discourse in which our Lord uses the term "Agape." And yet Nygren writes that "it can be shown that the Agape motif forms the principal theme of a whole series of Parables." What is meant by this statement is that Nygren's specific interpretation of Agape forms the principal theme of a whole series of Parables. If this is the case, then those hearing the parables could not have understood them, for they certainly did not comprehend Agape in the specificity defined by Nygren, and hence the parables – according to the inner logic of Nygren's position – were meaningless to the contemporaries of our Lord, to his hearers.

To be filled by the love of and for God is the monastic ideal. In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (22:34-40) our Lord is asked which is the greatest commandment. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind [understanding]. This the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. In these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" – *ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ καρδίᾳ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ διανοίᾳ σου. αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μεγάλη καὶ πρώτη ἐντολή. δευτέρα δὲ ὁμοία αὐτῇ, ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. ἐν ταύταις ταῖς δυσὶν ἐντολαῖς ὅλος ὁ νόμος κρέμαται καὶ οἱ προφῆται.* The monastic and ascetic ideal is to cultivate the love of the heart, the soul, and the mind for God. Anders Nygren's commentary on this text in his *Agape and Eros* is characteristic of his general position. "It has long been recognized that the idea of Agape represents a distinctive and original feature of Christianity. But in

what precisely does its originality and distinctiveness consist? This question has often been answered by reference to the *Commandment of Love*. The double commandment, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all they heart' and 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself', has been taken as the natural starting-point for the exposition of the meaning of Christian love. Yet the fact is that if we start with the commandment, with Agape as something demanded, we bar our own way to the understanding of the idea of Agape. . . If the Commandment of Love can be said to be specifically Christian, as undoubtedly it can, the reason is to be found, not in the commandment as such, but in the quite new meaning that Christianity has given it . . . To reach an understanding of the Christian idea of love simply by reference to the Commandment of Love is therefore impossible; to attempt it is to move in a circle. We could never discover the nature of Agape, love in the Christian sense, if we had nothing to guide us but the double command . . . It is not the commandment that explains the idea of Agape, but insight into the Christian conception of Agape that enables us to grasp the Christian meaning of the commandment. We must therefore seek another starting-point" (pp. 61-63). This is indeed an odd position for one who comes from the tradition of *sola Scriptura*, for the essence of his position is not *sola Scriptura* but precisely that Scripture must be interpreted – and here the interpretation comes not from within the matrix of early Christianity but from afar, from an interpretation that to a great extent depends on an interpretation of Christianity that came into the history of Christian thought approximately 1500 years after the beginning of Christian teaching, and that is with the assumption that Nygren is following the general position of Luther. In his analysis of certain interpretations of what constitutes the uniqueness of Christian love and in his rejection of these interpretations as that which determines the uniqueness of Christian love Nygren is in part correct. "This, in fact, is the root-fault of all the interpretations we have so far considered; they fail to recognize that Christian love rests on a quite definite, positive basis of its own. What, then, is this basis?" Nygren approaches the essence of the issue but neglects the important aspect of human ontology, a human ontology created by God. "The answer to this question may be found in the text . . . 'Love your enemies'. It is true that love for one's enemies is at variance with our immediate natural feelings, and may therefore seem to display the negative character suggested above; but if we consider the motive underlying it we shall see that it is entirely positive. The Christian is commanded to love his enemies, not because the other side teaches hatred of them, but

because there is a basis and motive for such love in the concrete, positive fact of God's own love for evil men. 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good'. *That* is why we are told: 'Love your enemies . . . that ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven'." What Nygren writes here is accurate. But it neglects the significance of human ontology; that is, that we are commanded to love our enemies because there is a spiritual value within the very fabric of human nature created by God, even fallen nature, and that that spiritual value is to be found in each and every man, however dimly we may perceive it. If we begin to love our enemy, we will begin to perceive in that enemy characteristics, aspects that were veiled, that were dimmed by the blindness of our hatred. We are commanded to love our enemy not only because God loves mankind, not only because God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good" but God loves mankind because there is a value in mankind. Nygren writes (p.79) that "the suggestion that man is by nature possessed of such an inalienable value easily gives rise to the thought that it is this matchless value on which God's love is set." It is perhaps inaccurate to assert that Nygren misses the central issue that that which is of value in man is God-created, God-given. It is more accurate to assert that Nygren rejects completely the issue, and he does so because of his theological doctrine of God and man. This again is part of that great divide which separates certain churches within the ecumenical dialogue. There is a basic and fundamental difference of vision on the nature of God and man. One view claims its position is consistent with apostolic Christianity, consistent with the apostolic deposit, and consistent with the teaching and life of the early Church and of the Church in all ages. Another view begins with the Reformation. Both views claim the support of the New Testament. Luther's writings on the Divine nature of love are not only interesting but valuable, not only penetrating but in *one emphasis* accurate. Indeed, if one considers Luther's doctrine of Divine love by itself, exclusive of his other doctrines, especially those on the nature of man, the nature of salvation, the nature of justification, the doctrine of predestination and grace, one encounters a view not dissimilar from that of ancient Orthodox Christianity. At times Luther can even appear to be somewhat mystically inclined. Luther's well-known description of Christian love as "*eine quellende Liebe*" [a welling or ever-flowing love] is by itself an Orthodox view. For Luther, as for the Fathers of the Church, this love has no need of anything, it is not caused, it does not come into existence because of a desired object, it is not aroused by desirable qualities of an object. It is the nature of God. But, at the same time, it is God who

created mankind and hence the love of God for mankind, though in need of nothing and attracted by nothing, loves mankind not because of a value in man but because there is value in man because man is created by God. Herein lies the difference and it is indeed a great divide when one considers the differing views on the other subjects closely related to the nature of Divine love.

PERFECTION, ALMSGIVING, PRAYER, FASTING, AND CHASTITY

In monastic and ascetical literature from the earliest Christian times the word and idea of "perfect" are often confronted. The monk seeks perfection, the monk wants to begin to become established on the path that may lead to perfection. But is this the result of monasticism? Is it the monastic and ascetical tendencies in early Christianity which bring forth the idea of perfection, which bring forth the idea of spiritual struggle and striving? It is our Lord, not the monks, who injects the goal of perfection into the very fabric of early Christian thought. In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (5:48) our Lord commands: "Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" – *ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν.*

Traditional monastic and ascetical life has included among its activities almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. Were these practices imposed upon an authentic Christianity by monasticism or were they incorporated into monastic and ascetical life from original Christianity? In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* it is once again our Lord and Redeemer who has initiated almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. Our Lord could very easily have abolished such practices. But rather than abolish them, our Lord purifies them, gives them their correct status within the spiritual life which is *to do them* but to attach no show, no hypocrisy, no glory to the *doing* of them. It is proper spiritual perspective that our Lord commands. "Take heed that you do not your righteousness before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward with your Father in heaven" – *προσέχετε δὲ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ὑμῶν μὴ ποιεῖν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς· εἰ δὲ μήγε, μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχετε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ ὑμῶν τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς*(6:1). "Therefore, when you do alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be glorified by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you are doing alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms

may be in secret; and your Father who is seeing in secret will reward you" – *ὅταν οὖν ποιῇς ἐλεημοσύνην, μὴ σαλπίσῃς ἔμπροσθέν σου, ὥσπερ οἱ ὑποκριταὶ ποιοῦσιν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς ῥύμαις, ὅπως δοξασθῶσιν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν. σοῦ δὲ ποιοῦντος ἐλεημοσύνην μὴ γνώτω ἡ ἀριστερά σου τί ποιεῖ ἡ δεξιά σου, ὅπως ᾖ σου ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ. καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ αὐτὸς ἀποδώσει σοι* (6:2-4). And prayer is commanded to be done in a similar manner to ensure its spiritual nature. At this juncture our Lord instructs his followers to use the "Lord's Prayer," a prayer that is so simple yet so profound, a prayer that contains within it the glorification of the name of God, a prayer that contains within it the invoking of the coming of the kingdom of God, a prayer that acknowledges that the will of God initiates everything and that without the will of God man is lost – *γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου*. It is a prayer of humility in that it asks for nothing beyond daily sustenance. It is a prayer of human solidarity in forgiveness, for it asks God to forgive us only as we forgive others, and in this a profound reality of spiritual life is portrayed, a life that unites man with God only as man is also united with other persons, with mankind, in forgiveness. And then there is the prayer to be protected from temptation and, if one falls into temptation, the prayer to be delivered from it. So short, so simple, yet so profound both personally and cosmically. Is monasticism a distortion of authentic Christianity because the monks recite the Lord's Prayer at the instruction of and command of our Lord? If monasticism used free, spontaneous prayer, then it could be faulted for not having "followed" our Lord's command. But that is not the case. Is monasticism a deviation because of the frequent use of the Lord's Prayer? Our Lord was specific: when praying, pray this. It does not preclude other prayers but prominence and priority is to be given to the Lord's Prayer. Indeed, it is certainly foreign to our Lord to restrict the frequency of prayer. The "vain repetitions," or more accurately in the Greek, the prohibition of "do not utter empty words as the gentiles, for they think that in their much speaking they will be heard" – this is in essence different than our Lord's intention - *μὴ βατταλογήσητε ὥσπερ οἱ ἐθνικοί, δοκοῦσιν γὰρ ὅτι ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν εἰσακουσθήσονται*. And our Lord says more on this subject, a subject considered of importance to him. In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (9:15) our Lord makes the point that when he is taken away, then his disciples will fast – *καὶ τότε νηστεύσουσιν*. In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (17:21) our Lord ex-

plains to his disciples that they were unable to cast out the devil because "this kind goes out only by prayer and fasting" – *τοῦτο δὲ τὸ γένος οὐκ ἐκπορεύεται εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ.* This verse, it is true, is not in all the ancient manuscripts. It is, however, in sufficient ancient manuscripts and, moreover, it is contained in the *Gospel of St. Mark* (9:29). It is obvious that our Lord assigns a special spiritual efficacy to prayer and fasting.

Chastity is a monastic and ascetic goal. Not only an external celibacy but an inner chastity of thought. Is this too something imposed upon authentic, original Christianity by a Hellenistic type of thinking or is it contained within the original deposit of apostolic and Biblical Christianity? Again it is our Lord who lays down the path of celibacy and chastity. In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (19:10-12) the disciples ask our Lord whether it is expedient to marry. "Not all men can receive this saying but those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to grasp it, let him grasp it" – *οὐ πάντες χωροῦσιν τὸν λόγον τοῦτον, ἀλλ' οἷς δέδοται. εἰσὶν γὰρ εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς ἐγεννήθησαν οὕτως, καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνούχοι οἵτινες εὐνουχίσθησαν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. ὁ δυνάμενος χωρεῖν χωρείτω.* The monastic and ascetical goal merely "follows" the teaching of our Lord. Original Christianity never imposed celibacy. It was, precisely as our Lord has stated, only for those to whom it was given, only to those who might be able to accept such a path. But the path was an authentically Christian path of spirituality laid down by our Lord. In early Christianity not even priests and bishops were required to be celibate. It was a matter of choice. Later the Church thought it wise to require celibacy of the bishops. But in Eastern Christianity celibacy has never been required of one becoming a priest. The choice to marry or to remain celibate had to be made before ordination. If one married before ordination, then one was required to remain married, albeit the ancient Church witnessed exceptions to this. If one was not married when one was ordained, then one was required to remain celibate. The Roman Church, not the Eastern Orthodox Church, extended the requirement of celibacy to priests and had a very difficult time attempting to enforce it throughout the ages. One can never force forms of spirituality upon a person and expect a spiritually fruitful result. The words of our Lord resound with wisdom – to those to whom it is given, to those who can live in this form of spirituality.

POVERTY AND HUMILITY

Poverty is not the goal but the beginning point of monastic and ascetical life in early Christianity. Was this a precedent established by St. Antony, a new notion and movement never before contained within Christian thought? Again it is our Lord who establishes the spiritual value of poverty. In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (19:21) our Lord commands the rich man who has claimed he has kept all the commandments: "If you will to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor . . . and come follow me" – *εἰ θέλεις τέλειος εἶναι, ὕπαγε πώλησόν σου τὰ ὑπάρχοντα καὶ δὸς τοῖς πτωχοῖς, καὶ ἕξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανοῖς, καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι* . It was not St. Antony who established the precedent. Rather it was St. Antony who heard the word of our Lord and put it into action, who "did the word of the Lord." It is Christ, the God-Man who has put forth the ideal of perfection, who has commanded us to be perfect (see also 5:48), who has put forth the ideal of poverty as a starting-point for a certain form of spiritual life. Elsewhere in the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (13:44) Christ makes a similar point, asserting that one sells everything in exchange for the kingdom of heaven. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" – *ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν θησαυρῷ κεκρυμμένῳ ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, ὃν εὑρὼν ἄνθρωπος ἔκρυψεν, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτοῦ ὑπάγει καὶ πωλεῖ πάντα ὅσα ἔχει καὶ ἀγοράζει τὸν ἀγρὸν ἐκεῖνον.*

All Christianity exalts humility. It should therefore not be a surprise if monastic and ascetical spirituality focus on humility. In the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (18:4) our Lord proclaims that "he who therefore will humble himself as this little child, he is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" – *ὅστις οὖν ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν ὡς τὸ παιδίον τοῦτο, οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ μείζων ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν.* Elsewhere (23:12) our Lord says that "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" – *ὅστις δὲ ὑψώσει ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, καὶ ὅστις ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται* . The emphasis on humility may appear self-evident. Behind it, however, lies a reality of the nature of God to which few pay much attention. In the Incarnation two very core elements of any spirituality are clearly evidenced – the love and humility of God. The idea that humility is rooted in God may appear astonishing. The humility of God

cannot, of course, be considered in the same light as ascetical humility, or any human form of humility. However, the human forms of humility are derived from the very nature of God, just as the commandment to love is rooted in God's love for mankind. God's humility is precisely that being God he desires, he wills to be in communion with everything and everything is inferior to God. This has great theological significance, for it reveals the value of all created things, a value willed by God. There is even a parallel here with the saints who loved animals and flowers. And from this idea, an idea intrinsically derived from the Incarnation and *kenosis* of God the Son, one can clearly see the real Divine origin in action of Christ's teaching about "others." In the very notion of a vertical spirituality a concern for others is presupposed. And while one is ascending to God – an abomination for Nygren – his fellow man must be included in the dimensions of spirituality. Through the Incarnation all forms of human existence are sanctified. Through the Incarnation both the love and the humility of God are made known. And man is to love God and fellow mankind because love contains absolute, positive value, a value derived because love is the very nature of God. And man is to experience humility, to become inflamed by humility precisely because humility belongs also to God and hence its value is derived from God. But to become filled innerly with love and humility is not easy. It demands not a mere acknowledgement of the fact that God is love and humility is Divine. Rather, it demands the complete purification of our inner nature by God. And this is the struggle, the spiritual warfare that must be waged to enter and maintain the reality of love and humility. The path of monasticism and asceticism is an authentic path, a path also ordained by our Lord.

THE WRITINGS BY ST. PAUL AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE REFORMATION

The writings by or attributed to St. Paul form a critical point in the entire great divide between the churches of the Reformation and the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church. The *Epistle to the Romans* is one of the most important references of this controversy. This epistle and the *Epistle to the Galatians* formed the base from which Luther developed his doctrine of faith and justification, a doctrine that he himself characterized in his preface to his Latin writings as a totally new understanding of Scripture. These two works continue to be the main reference points for contemporary theologians from the tradition of the Reformation. It was from this *new understanding* of the Scriptures that the rejection

of monasticism obtained in the Reformation. In general it is not an exaggeration to claim that this thought considers St. Paul as the only one who understood the Christian message. Moreover, it is not St. Paul by himself nor St. Paul from the entire corpus of his works, but rather Luther's understanding of St. Paul. From this perspective the authentic interpreters of our Lord's teaching and redemptive work are St. Paul, as understood by Luther, then Marcion, then St. Augustine, and then Luther. Marcion was condemned by the entire early Church. St. Augustine indeed does anticipate Luther in certain views but not at all on the doctrine of justification and Luther's specific understanding of faith. It is more St. Augustine's doctrine of predestination, irresistible grace, and his doctrine of the total depravity of man contained in his "novel" – to quote St. Vincent of Lérins – doctrine of original sin that influenced Luther, who himself was an Augustinian monk.

The rejection of monasticism ultimately followed from the emphasis placed upon salvation as a free gift of God. Such a position is completely accurate but its specific understanding was entirely contrary to that of the early Church. That salvation was the free gift of God and that man was justified by faith was never a problem for early Christianity. But from Luther's perspective and emphasis any type of "works," especially that of the monks in their ascetical struggle, was considered to contradict the free nature of grace and the free gift of salvation. If one was indeed justified by faith, then – so went the line of Luther's thought – man is not justified by "works." For Luther "justification by faith" meant an extrinsic justifiction, a justification totally independent from any inner change within the depths of the spiritual life of a person. For Luther "to justify" - *δικαιοῦν* - meant to declare one righteous or just, not "to make" righteous or just - it is an appeal to an extrinsic justice which in reality is a spiritual fiction. Luther has created a legalism far more serious than the legalism he detected in the Roman Catholic thought and practice of his time. Morever, Luther's legalistic doctrine of extrinsic justification is spiritually serious, for it is a legal transaction which in reality does not and can not exist. Nowhere was the emphasis on "works" so strong, thought Luther, as in monasticism. Hence, monasticism had to be rejected and rejected it was. But Luther read too much into St. Paul's emphasis on faith, on justification by faith, and on the free gift of the grace of salvation. St. Paul is directly in controversy with Judaism, especially in his *Epistle to the Romans*. It is the "works of the law," the law as defined by and interpreted by and practiced by Judaism in the time of St. Paul. Our Lord has the same reaction to the externalization and mechanical understanding

of the "law." Indeed, the very text of the *Epistle to the Romans* reveals in every passage that St. Paul is comparing the external law of Judaism with the newness of the spiritual understanding of the law, with the newness of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ through the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord. God has become Man. God has entered human history and indeed the newness is radical. But to misunderstand St. Paul's critique of "works," to think that St. Paul is speaking of the "works" commanded by our Lord rather than the Judaic understanding of the works of the "law" is a misreading of a fundamental nature. It is true, however, that Luther had a point in considering the specific direction in which the Roman Catholic merit-system had gone as a reference point similar to the Judaic legal system. As a result of Luther's background, as a result of his theological milieu, whenever he read anything in St. Paul about "works," he immediately thought of his own experience as a monk and the system of merit and indulgences in which he had been raised.

It must be strongly emphasized that Luther does indeed protect one aspect of salvation, the very cause and source of redemption and grace. But he neglects the other side, the aspect of man's participation in this free gift of Divine initiative and grace. Luther fears any resurgence of the Roman Catholic system of merit and indulgences, he fears any tendency which will constitute a truly Pelagian attitude, any tendency that will allow man to believe that he – man – is the cause, the source, or the main spring of salvation. And here Luther is correct. Nygren's Agape-Eros distinction is correct in this context, for any spirituality that omits Agape and concentrates only on Eros, on man's striving to win God's influence, is fundamentally non-Christian. *But the issue is not that simple.* Both extremes are false. God has freely willed a synergistic path of redemption in which man must spiritually participate. God is the actor, the cause, the initiator, the one who completes all redemptive activity. But man is the one who must spiritually respond to the free gift of grace. And in this response there is an authentic place for the spiritually of monasticism and asceticism, one which has absolutely nothing to do his the "works of the law," or with the system of merit and indulgences.

ROMANS

In his *Epistle to the Romans* St. Paul writes in the very introduction (1:4-5) that through Jesus Christ "we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name" – *δι ' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς*

ὑπακοὴν πίστεως . . . ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ. The notion of "obedience of faith" has a meaning for St. Paul. It is much more than a simple acknowledgement or recognition of a faith placed within one by God. Rather, it is a richly spiritual notion, one that contains within it a full spirituality of activity on the part of man – not that the activity will win the grace of God but precisely that the spiritual activity is the response to the grace of God, performed with the grace of God, in order to be filled by the grace of God. And it will be an on-going spiritual "work," one which can never be slackened, and one totally foreign from the "works" of the Judaic law.

St. Paul writes (2:6) that God "will render to each according to his works" – *ὃς ἀποδώσει ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτου.* If St. Paul was so concerned about the word "works," if he feared that the Christian readers of his letter might interpret "works" in some totally different way from what he intended, he certainly could have been more cautious. But St. Paul clearly distinguishes between the "works" of the Judaic law and the "works" of the Holy Spirit required of all Christians. Hence, it is difficult to confuse these two perspectives and it is significant that the early Church never confused them, for they understood what St. Paul wrote. If anything – despite the lucidity of St. Paul's thought – there were tendencies at times to fall not into Luther's one-sided interpretation but rather to fall somewhat spontaneously into an Eros-type of striving.

It is the "doers of the law" who will be justified" – *οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιωθήσονται* (2:13). The notion of "doers" implies action, activity. Elsewhere in the same epistle (5:2) St. Paul writes that through our Lord Jesus Christ "we have had access [by faith] into this grace in which we stand" – *τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν (τῇ πίστει) εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ᾗ ἑστήκαμεν.* The very idea of "access into grace" – *προσαγωγὴν εἰς τὴν χάριν* – is dynamic and implies spiritual activity on the part of mankind.

After the lengthy proclamation of the grace of God, the impotence of the "works of the law" in comparison with the "works" of the new reality of the Spirit, St. Paul resorts to the traditional spiritual exhortation (6:12f). "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body in order to obey its lusts. Nor yield your members to sin as weapons of unrighteousness" – *μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ. μηδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὅπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἁμαρτία.* The exhortation presupposes that man has some type of spiritual activity and

control over his inner existence. The very use of the word "weapon" invokes the idea of battle, of spiritual warfare, the very nature of the monastic "ordeal."

In the same chapter (6:17) St. Paul writes: "But grace to God that you who were slaves of sin obeyed out of the heart a form of teaching which was delivered to you" – *χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἦτε δοῦλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὑπηκούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς*. In the second chapter of the *Epistle to the Romans* (2:15) St. Paul writes about the universal aspect of the "law" that is "written in the hearts" of mankind, a thought with profound theological implications – *οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν*. In using the image of the "heart," St. Paul is emphasizing the deepest aspect of the interior life of mankind, for such was the use of the image of the "heart" among Hebrews. When he writes that they obeyed "out of the heart," St. Paul is attributing some type of spiritual activity to the "obedience" which springs from the "heart." And to what have they become obedient? To a form or standard of teaching or doctrine delivered to them – this is precisely the *apostolic deposit*, the body of early Christian teaching to which they have responded and have become obedient. And in so doing, they have become "enslaved to righteousness," the righteousness of the new law, of the life of the Spirit – *ἐλευθερωθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ* (6:18). And the "fruit" of becoming "enslaved to God" is precisely sanctification which leads to life eternal – *δουλωθέντες δὲ τῷ θεῷ, ἔχετε τὸν καρπὸν ὑμῶν εἰς ἁγιασμόν, τὸ δὲ τέλος ζωὴν αἰώνιον* (6:22). Throughout is a process, throughout is a dynamic spiritual activity on the part of man. St. Paul becomes more explicit about the distinction between the old and the new law (7:6). "But now we are discharged from the law, having died in that which held us captive, so as to serve in in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter" – *νυνὶ δὲ κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἀποθανόντες ἐν ᾧ κατειχόμεθα, ὥστε δουλεύειν ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γράμματος*.

St. Paul writes that we "are children of God, and if children, also heirs, heirs on the one hand of God, co-heirs on the other hand, of Christ" (8:17). But all this has a condition, has a proviso, for there is the all important "if indeed" – *εἴπερ*. "*If we co-suffer* in order that we may be glorified" – *ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ. εἰ δὲ τέκνα, καὶ κληρονόμοι. κληρονόμοι μὲν θεοῦ, συγκληρονόμοι δὲ Χριστοῦ, εἴπερ συμπάσχομεν ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν*. Our glorification, according to St. Paul, is contingent upon a mighty

"if" and that "if" leads us to the spiritual reality, the spiritual reality of "co-suffering." The very use of the word "co-suffer" – *συμπάσχομεν*– presupposes the reality of the idea of "co-suffering" and both presuppose an active, dynamic spiritual action or activity on the part of the one who co-suffers, else there is no meaning to the "co."

In the *Epistle to the Romans* (12:1) St. Paul uses language that would be meaningless if man were merely a passive object in the redemptive process, if justification by faith was an action that took place only on the Divine level. "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service" – *παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ, παραστῆσαι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν θυσίαν ζῶσαν ἁγίαν εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ, τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν.* St. Paul is asking the Christian to *present*, a reality which presupposes and requires human activity. But not only "to present" but "to present" the body as a living sacrifice, as holy, and as acceptable or well-pleasing to God. And this St. Paul considers our "reasonable service" or our "spiritual worship." The language and the idea speak for themselves. Using the imperative, St. Paul commands us: "Be not conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewing of the mind in order to prove [that you may prove] what [is] that good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God" – *καὶ μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός, εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον.* Taken by itself and out of context this language could be misinterpreted as Pelagian, for here it is man who is transforming the mind, man who is commanded to activate the spiritual life. Such an interpretation is, of course, incorrect but it reveals what one can do to the totality of the theological thought of St. Paul if one does not understand the balance, if one does not understand that his view is profoundly synergistic. Synergism does not mean that two energies are equal. Rather it means that there are two wills – one, the will of God which precedes, accompanies, and completes all that is good, positive, spiritual and redemptive, one that has willed that man have a spiritual will, a spiritual participation in the redemptive process; the other is the will of man which must respond, cooperate, "co-suffer." In 12:9 St. Paul exhorts us to "cleave to the good" – *κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ* – and in 12:12 he exhorts us "to be steadfastly continuing in prayer – *τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτεροῦντες*. Such a position certainly does not

exclude monastic and ascetical spirituality but rather presupposes it.

I AND II CORINTHIANS

Celibacy is a part of the monastic life and it too has its source in the teachings of the New Testament. In *I Corinthians* 7: 1-11 St. Paul encourages both marriage and celibacy – both are forms of Christian spirituality, and St. Paul has much to say about marriage in his other epistles. But his point is that celibacy is a form of spirituality for some, and it therefore cannot be excluded from the forms of spirituality within the Church. In verse 7 St. Paul writes that he would like all to be like him – *θέλω δὲ πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἶναι ὡς καὶ ἐμαυτόν*. But he realizes that each person has his own gift from God – *ἀλλὰ ἕκαστος ἴδιον ἔχει χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ, ὁ μὲν οὕτως, ὁ δὲ οὕτως*: "I say therefore to the unmarried men and to the widows, it is good for them if they remain as I. But if they do not exercise self-control, let them marry" – *λέγω δὲ τοῖς ἀγάμοις καὶ ταῖς χήραις, καλὸν αὐτοῖς ἐὰν μείνωσιν ὡς κἀγώ· εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται, γαμησάτωσαν*In verses 37-38 St. Paul summarizes: "the one who has decided in his own heart to keep himself virgin, he will do well. So, therefore, both the one marrying his betrothed [virgin], does well, and the one not marrying will do better" – *καὶ τοῦτο κέκρικεν ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ καρδίᾳ, τηρεῖν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ παρθένον, καλῶς ποιήσει. ὥστε καὶ ὁ γαμίζων τὴν ἑαυτοῦ παρθένον καλῶς ποιεῖ, καὶ ὁ μὴ γαμίζων κρεῖσσον ποιήσει*. The monastic practice of celibacy is precisely not excluded by the New Testament. Rather, it is even encouraged both by our Lord and by St. Paul – and without jeopardy to the married state. The decision cannot be forced. Rather, it must come from the heart. And, indeed, it is not for everyone.

The comparison of the spiritual life to that of running a race and to that of warfare is throughout the New Testament. Without diminishing his basis of theological vision – that it is God who initiates everything – St. Paul writes in *I Corinthians* 9:24-27 in a manner, which, if taken by itself, would indeed appear Pelagian, would indeed appear as though all the essence of salvation depends upon man. But in the total context of his theology there is no contradiction, for there are always two wills in the process of redemption – the Divine, which initiates; and the human, which responds and is, in the very response active in that grace which it has received. "Do you not know that the ones running in a race all

run indeed. But one receives the prize? So run in order that you may obtain. And everyone struggling exercises self-control in all things. Indeed, those do so therefore in order that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. I, therefore, so run as not unclearly. Thus I box not as one beating the air. But I treat severely my body and lead it as a slave, lest having proclaimed to others, I myself may become disqualified" – *οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι οἱ ἐν σταδίῳ τρέχοντες πάντες μὲν τρέχουσιν, εἷς δὲ λαμβάνει τὸ βραβεῖον; οὕτως τρέχετε ἵνα καταλάβητε. πᾶς δὲ ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος πάντα ἐγκρατεύεται, ἐκεῖνοι μὲν οὖν ἵνα φθαρτὸν στέφανον λάβωσιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἄφθαρτον. ἐγὼ τοίνυν οὕτως τρέχω ὡς οὐκ ἀδήλως, οὕτως πυκτεύω ὡς οὐκ ἀέρα δέρων· ἀλλὰ ὑπωπιάζω μου τὸ σῶμα καὶ δουλαγωγῶ, μή πως ἄλλοις κηρύξας αὐτὸς ἀδόκιμος γένωμαι.* In this text we encounter the race – the spiritual race – and the prize; we encounter the grammatical and the thought structure of "in order that you may obtain," a structure which implies contingency and not certainty. We encounter the race as a spiritual struggle in which "self-control in everything" must be exercised. And then St. Paul describes his own spiritual battle – he treats his body severely, leads it as though it were a slave, and to what end? So that he will not become disapproved. The entire passage is very monastic and ascetic in its content. Despite St. Paul's certainty of the objective reality of redemption which has come through Christ as a Divine gift, he does not consider his own spiritual destiny to be included in that objective redemption which is now here unless he participates in it – and until the end of the race. In 10:12 he warns us: "Let the one who thinks he stands, let him look lest he falls" – *ὥστε ὁ δοκῶν ἑστάναι βλεπέτω μὴ πέσῃ.* In 11:28 he writes: "Let a man prove or examine himself. . ." – *δοκιμαζέτω δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτόν.* In the latter context the "proving" or "examining" is in the most serious of contexts, for it is spoken in connection with the Holy Eucharist, which is spoken of so objectively that if one "eats this bread" or "drinks this cup" "of the Lord" "unworthily," that person "shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" and shall "bring damnation to himself" – for that reason, continues St. Paul, some are weak, sickly, and some have died. But our focus here is on self-examination, on those who think they stand. This again is an integral aspect of the monastic and ascetical life; that is, a constant examination of one's spiritual life. In *II Corinthians* 13:5 St. Paul again stresses self-examination: "Examine yourselves, if you are in the faith. Prove yourselves" –

ἑαυτοὺς πειράζετε εἰ ἐστὲ ἐν τῇ πίστει, ἑαυτοὺς δοκιμάζετε.

In 15:1-2 St. Paul introduces a significant "if" and "also." "I make known to you, brothers, the Gospel which I preached to you, which you *also* received, in which you also stand, through which you also are saved, *if* you hold fast to that which I preached to you" – *γνωρίζω δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, ὃ καὶ παρελάβετε, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἑστήκατε, δι' οὗ καὶ σώζεσθε, τίνι λόγῳ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν εἰ κατέχετε.*

In *I Corinthians* 14:15 St. Paul speaks of praying with both spirit and mind, a thought that weaves its way through monastic and ascetical literature. The use of the mind in prayer finds its fullest expression in the controversial use of the "mind" in the thought of Evagrius Ponticus. The text, even within its general context in the chapter, is clear. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray also with the mind; I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the mind" – *προσεύξομαι τῷ πνεύματι, προσεύξομαι δὲ καὶ τῷ νοΐ· ψαλῶ τῷ πνεύματι, ψαλῶ δὲ καὶ τῷ νοΐ.*

St. Paul's hymn to love, to Agape, fills the entirety of *I Corinthians* 13. Despite later interpretations of the use of the word "faith" in this chapter, specifically the interpretations that entered Christian thought with the Reformation, there was no misunderstanding of this "hymn to love" in the early Church – indeed, in the history of Christian thought until the Reformation it was understand quite directly. It is only through a convoluted exegetical method imposed by a specific – and new – theological understanding that this great "hymn to love" had to be understood by distinguishing different meanings attached to the word "faith." Though one speaks with the tongues of men and of angels, though one has the gift of prophecy, though one understands all mysteries, though one understands all knowledge, though one has all faith "to remove mountains," though one bestows all one's goods to feed the poor, though one gives one's body to be burned – though one has all this, but not love, one is "nothing," one "becomes as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal," one "profits" not at all – *ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, γέγονα χαλκὸς ἠχῶν ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον. καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείαν καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν, κἂν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάναι, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐθέν εἰμι. κἂν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου, καὶ ἐὰν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά*

μου ἵνα καυχήσομαι, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι. St. Paul is quite explicit on what love is. "Love suffers long, love is kind, love is not jealous, does not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, does not act unseemly, does not seek its own things, is not provoked, does not reckon evil, does not rejoice over wrong, but rejoices with the truth. Love covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never falls. But prophecies – they will be abolished; tongues – they will cease; knowledge – it will be abolished. . . And now remains faith, hope, love, these three. But the greatest of these is love" – *ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ, χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐ ζηλοῖ, ἡ ἀγάπη οὐ περπερεύεται, οὐ φυσιοῦται, οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ, οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς, οὐ παροξύνεται, οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν, οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· πάντα στέγει, πάντα πιστεύει, πάντα ἐλπίζει, πάντα ὑπομένει. ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει· εἴτε δὲ προφητεῖαι, καταργηθήσονται· εἴτε γλῶσσαι, παύσονται· εἴτε γνῶσις, καταργηθήσεται. . . νυνὶ δὲ μένει πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη, τὰ τρία ταῦτα· μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη.* The goal of monastic and ascetical struggle, of the "ordeal," is love – to love God, to love mankind, to love all created things, to be penetrated by God's love, to participate in love, which is God and flows from God, and to enter a union with God, with love. Often monastic literature will speak of "achieving" this love, as though it is the work of man. But that it not the total context of love in monastic literature, not even in those texts which appear as though everything were nothing but a striving on the part of man in the "ordeal." This language is spoken because it is spontaneous with spiritual nature. This language is spoken because it runs parallel with that assumed knowledge – that God is the source of everything. And yet St. Paul himself often uses language which could come directly from monastic statements. True, both would be taken out of their total context, but it is true that the two languages are spoken – the language referring to God as the source, as the initiator, to the grace of God, to the gift of all spirituality; and the language which concentrates on man's activity, on man's response to the love and redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. When one line of thought is being used, it in no way denies the other line of thought. Rather, it is precisely the opposite, for monastic and ascetical literature can only speak about man's activity if it is presupposed that God has accomplished the redemptive activity in and through our Lord, that God is working in man through the Holy Spirit. Else, all that is written is without meaning, temporarily and ultimately. St. Paul's command in *I Corinthians* 14:1 to "pursue love and eagerly desire

the spiritual things" is responded to directly by monastic and ascetical spirituality – *διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην, ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικά*

In *II Corinthians* 2:9 St. Paul writes in the very same spirit that an abbot might employ with his novices: "For to this end indeed I wrote – in order that I might know your proof, if you are obedient in all things" – *εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ ἔγραψα, ἵνα γνῶ τὴν δοκιμὴν ὑμῶν, εἰ εἰς πάντα ὑπήκοοί ἐστε*. Obedience is an important theme and reality in the monastic and ascetic "ordeal" and that very theme of obedience is mentioned often throughout the New Testament.

Monastic and ascetical literature will often use the terms "fragrance" and "aroma" and again the source is the New Testament. In *II Corinthians* 2:14-15 St. Paul writes: "manifesting through us the fragrance of his knowledge in every place. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those perishing, to the latter an aroma from death unto death, to the former an aroma from life unto life" –*καὶ τὴν ὀσμὴν τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ φανεροῦντι δι ' ἡμῶν ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ· ὅτι Χριστοῦ εὐωδία ἐσμὲν τῷ θεῷ ἐν τοῖς σῳζομένοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, οἷς μὲν ὀσμὴ ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον, οἷς δὲ ὀσμὴ ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωήν.*

In *II Corinthians* 3:18 St. Paul uses an expression which is often found in ascetical literature – "from glory to glory." "But we all, with face having been unveiled, beholding in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same icon from glory to glory, even as from the Spirit of the Lord" – *ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος*. The Greek verbal structure throughout the New Testament cannot be stressed enough, for it conveys a dynamic activity that is seldom found in other languages and in translations. In this text the emphasis is on the process of "we are being changed." Elsewhere emphasis is often on "we are being saved" – rather than "we are changed" and "we are saved." When the objective nature of redemption is the focus, then the Greek verbal structure uses "we are saved." But mainly, when the process is the focus, the dynamism is expressed by the verbal structure of "we are being saved." In this text it is significant that the objective nature is expressed by "having been unveiled," while the on-going process of our participation in the spiritual process of salvation is expressed by "we are being changed." Here is expressed the dynamism of synergy.

In *II Corinthians* 4:16 St. Paul again emphasizes the dynamism and process of the spiritual reality in man. "Our inner [life] is being renewed day by day" – *ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἡμέρα.* The monastic life attempts to respond to such a text by the daily regulation of prayer, meditation, self-examination, and worship – precisely to attempt to "renew" daily "our inner" spiritual life. In 10:15 the dynamic aspect of growth is stressed and precisely in reference to "faith" and "rule." "But having hope as your faith is growing to be magnified unto abundance among you according to our rule" – *ἐλπίδα δὲ ἔχοντες αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν μεγαλυνθῆναι κατὰ τὸν κανόνα ἡμῶν εἰς περισσείαν.* In 4:12 St. Paul again places the inner depth of man's spiritual life in the "heart," something which Eastern monasticism will develop even in its life of prayer –*ἐν καρδίᾳ.*

The entire fifth chapter of *II Corinthians* is an exceptionally important text. Here, as elsewhere, St. Paul uses language which, when used by others, distresses sorely many scholars working from the Reformation perspective – he uses the notion of "pleasing God," something which some scholars find indicative of man's solicitation to "win" God's favor. But when St. Paul uses such language it passes in silence, it passes without objection – precisely because St. Paul has established his position that God is the source of everything. But monastic and ascetical literature also presuppose that God initiates and is the source of everything. But it is in the very nature of daily spiritual life in monasticism and in ascetical spirituality to focus on man's activity. It is precisely focus, not a theological position. "We therefore are ambitious [to make it our goal], whether being at home or being away from home, to be *well-pleasing* to him. For it is necessary for all of us to be manifested before the tribunal of Christ in order that each one may receive something good or something worthless, according to what *one has practiced* through the body. Knowing, therefore, the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" – *διὸ καὶ φιλοτιμούμεθα, εἴτε ἐνδημοῦντες εἴτε ἐκδημοῦντες, εὐάρεστοι αὐτῷ εἶναι. τοὺς γὰρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα κομίσηται ἕκαστος τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος πρὸς ἃ ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθὸν εἴτε φαῦλον.* In *II Corinthians* 11:15 St. Paul writes that one's "end will be according to [one's] works" – *ὧν τὸ τέλος ἔσται κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν.* Also this is not the only time that the New Testament uses the word "practice," a word which becomes systematized in monasticism. After a profound exposition on the initiative of God in the redemptive work of Christ (5:14-20), in which St. Paul writes that "all things are of

God, who, having reconciled us to himself through Christ" – *τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ*, St. Paul writes in verse 21: "Be reconciled to God" – *καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ*. Moreover, he not only uses the imperative form but also precedes this with "we beg on behalf of Christ" – *δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστου*. His language here becomes meaningless unless there is spiritual activity on the part of man. And what is more, St. Paul uses a very interesting structure in relationship to the "righteousness of God," for he writes that the redemptive work of Christ was accomplished "in order that we might become the righteousness of God in him" – *ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῳ*. Here the significance is on "we might become" rather than "we are" or "we have become." Implicit is a synergistic dynamism. This is further stressed in 6:1: "And working together [with him] we entreat you not to receive the grace of God to no purpose" – *συνεργοῦντες δὲ καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν μὴ εἰς κενὸν τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ δέξασθαι ὑμᾶς*. And St. Paul then quotes from Isaiah 49:8 in which it is said that God "hears" and "helps" – *ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ . . . ἐβοήθησά σοι*.

In *II Corinthians* 6:4-10 St. Paul writes what could be a guide to monastic spiritual life. "In everything commending ourselves as ministers of God – in much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in tumults, in labors, in vigils, in fasting, in purity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love, in a word of truth, in power of God – through the weapons of righteousness on the right and left hand, through glory and dishonor, through evil report and good report . . . as dying, and behold, we live . . . as being grieved but always rejoicing, as poor but enrichening many, as having nothing yet possessing all things" – *ἐν παντὶ συνιστάνοντες ἑαυτοὺς ὡς θεοῦ διάκονοι, ἐν ὑπομονῇ πολλῇ, ἐν θλίψεσιν, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν στενοχωρίαις, ἐν πληγαῖς, ἐν φυλακαῖς, ἐν ἀκαταστασίαις, ἐν κόποις, ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις, ἐν νηστείαις, ἐν ἀγνότητι, ἐν γνώσει, ἐν μακροθυμίᾳ, ἐν χρηστότητι, ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ, ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἀνυποκρίτῳ, ἐν λόγῳ ἀληθείας, ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ· διὰ τῶν ὅπλων τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῶν δεξιῶν καὶ ἀριστερῶν, διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀτιμίας, διὰ δυσφημίας καὶ εὐφημίας. . . ὡς ἀποθνῃσκοντες καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶμεν. . . ὡς λυποῦμενοι ἀεὶ δὲ χαίροντες, ὡς πτωχοὶ πολλοὺς δὲ πλουτίζοντες*. The vigils, the fasting, the purity, the *gnosis* or knowledge – these are to be reflected in monastic and ascetical life. Moreover, St. Paul again uses the image of warfare and refers to the "weapons of

righteousness." The language used by St. Paul in this passage can only have significance if man participates synergistically in the redemptive process. If the doctrine of "righteousness" in the thought of St. Paul has only a one-sided meaning – that is, the "righteousness of God," which is, of course, the source of all righteousness – then why the talk of "weapons of righteousness" placed in the very hands, both right and left, of man? If man is solely "reckoned righteous" by the "vicarious sacrifice" of our Lord Jesus Christ, why the need to speak of "weapons of righteousness," unless there is a second aspect of the redemptive process which ontologically includes man's spiritual participation? In *II Corinthians* 10:3-6 St. Paul continues with the reference to "warfare" and again stresses "obedience." "For though walking in the flesh, we wage war not according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but [have] the power of God to overthrow strongholds, overthrowing reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God and taking captive every design unto the obedience of Christ" – *ἐν σαρκὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦντες οὐ κατὰ σάρκα στρατευόμεθα, τὰ γὰρ ὅπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικὰ ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων, λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες καὶ πᾶν ὕψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστου.*

St. Paul writes in *II Corinthians* 7:1 about cleansing, about "perfecting holiness," and about the "fear of God." After referring to our having "these promises," he exhorts: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and of spirit, *perfecting* holiness in the fear of God" – *καθαρίσωμεν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, ἐπιτελοῦντες ἁγιωσύνην ἐν φόβῳ θεου.* This exhortation is precisely what monastic and ascetical life attempts to implement. In 13:9 St. Paul writes: "We pray also for you *restoration*" – *τοῦτο καὶ εὐχόμεθα, τὴν ὑμῶν κατάρτισιν.* In order for one to be "restored," one would have to have been at a certain level previously. The text bears witness to the dynamic nature of faith, of spiritual life in Christ, of the rising and falling away, and then the restoration.

In *II Corinthians* 7:10 St. Paul speaks in terms quite similar to those found in monastic and ascetical literature, for he speaks of "grief" which works "repentance" which leads to "salvation." "For grief, in accordance with God, works repentance unto unregrettable salvation" – *ἡ γὰρ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη μετάνοιαν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἀμεταμέλητον ἐργάζεται.* St. Paul contrasts this "Godly grief" with the "grief of the world which works out death"

– *ἡ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου λύπη θάνατον κατεργάζεται*. The theme of "sorrow" and "grief" over one's sin – precisely "grief in accordance with God" or "Godly grief" – is a constant in monastic spiritual life.

St. Paul ends the text proper of *II Corinthians* with a final exhortation. "Restore yourselves, admonish yourselves, think the same, become at peace, and the God of love and of peace will be with you" – *καταρτίζεσθε, παρακαλεῖσθε, τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε, εἰρηνεύετε, καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν*. Here the emphasis is again on "restoration." St. Paul's sequence of language – if taken by itself and out of context – could be easily misinterpreted as man causing God's action, for he writes "become at peace *and*." It is precisely that "and" that introduces the activity of God. God "will be with you," if you achieve peace – this is how this text could well be interpreted if we did not possess the body of St. Paul's works. What could have happened to the thought of St. Paul is what usually happens to the thought expressed in monastic and ascetical literature.

GALATIANS

Along with the *Epistle to the Romans*, St. Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians* is the other work from the corpus of St. Paul most often quoted by the theologians of the Lutheran and Calvinistic Reformation and those theologians who have followed in those theological traditions. They were also the two works most quoted by St. Augustine to support his doctrine of irresistible grace and predestination. But one encounters the same problem in *Galatians* – that is, that there is a second line of thought which, by itself, could be interpreted in a Pelagian sense. The point here is, of course, that both views are one-sided, that the thought of St. Paul is far richer than any one-sided interpretation allows for, far more realistic both with the glory of God and with the tragedy of man's experience in evil, corruption, and death. But St. Paul not only extols the glory of God, the power and initiative of grace but also the joyfulness of an objective redemption in which each person must participate in order for the redemption of man to be completed.

In the first chapter of *Galatians* St. Paul in verse 10 uses language which implies the seeking of favor with God. "For now do I persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men?" – *ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν; ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν?* At one point, in *Galatians* 4:9, St. Paul catches himself falling into the very understandable usage of human language: "But

now knowing God, or rather, being known by God" – *νῦν δὲ γνόντες θεόν, μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεου*. Imprecision of language occurs even with St. Paul.

The second chapter of *Galatians* provides an illumination of the central controversial issue in the theology of St. Paul. In context St. Paul is addressing the hypocrisy of St. Peter in Antioch, for St. Peter ate with the Gentiles until those from the "circumcision" party arrived from Jerusalem. At that time St. Peter withdrew from the Gentiles, "fearing those of the circumcision" – *φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς*. St. Paul challenges St. Peter face to face. Again the whole controversy is between the "works of the law" and the "works of the Spirit," between the laws of Judaism and the spiritual laws of Christ as a direct result of his Divine redemptive work. It is, therefore, in this context that St. Paul brings the doctrine of justification into discussion. In verse 16 St. Paul writes: "And knowing that a man is not justified out of works of the law but through faith of Christ Jesus, even we believed in Christ Jesus in order that we might be justified out of faith of Christ and not out of the works of the law because out of works of the law all flesh will not be justified" – *εἰδότες δὲ ὅτι οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σάρξ*. In the Greek construction used by St. Paul a dynamism still exists, for we believed "in order that we might be justified" and "out of faith." This latter expression contains breadth, expansion of spiritual life generating from faith. It is a rich expression and its fulness and dynamism must not be diminished by a reductionist interpretation. And the very use of "in order" has implications theologically, as does the construction "that we might be justified." St. Paul could very well have written that we have believed and are hence justified. But that is not what he has written. The objective reality of redemption, the objective reality of mankind being justified by Christ is one thing. The subjective reality of each person participating in this already accomplished redemptive work of justification, of being really "right" with God is another dimension, a dimension which requires and addresses the entire spiritual composition of man. In the very next text St. Paul writes "if seeking to be justified in Christ" – *εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ*. In 5:5 he can write "for we in the Spirit eagerly expect the hope of righteousness" – *ἡμεῖς γὰρ πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα*. What is the ontological meaning of "the hope of righteousness" if

"righteousness" is "imputed" to us as though a legal transaction, and if it is the "passive righteousness" of God which "justifies" us? No, St. Paul's vision is far deeper. The "hope of righteousness" is precisely our hope to share in that objective "righteousness of God" which is now freely given by God in and through Christ. But we "hope" because there is "work" for us to do in order to take hold of and participate in that righteousness eternally. God creates in his freedom. God created man with this image of freedom. Christ accepts the Cross in freedom. Freedom is the foundation of creation and redemption. And man's freedom, however weakened, can still be inspired by the free gift of Grace. And in this freedom man must, as St. Paul writes in his *Epistle to the Philippians* 2:12, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" – *μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε*. It cannot be denied that monastic and ascetical spirituality took this seriously. In *Galatians* 5:1 St. Paul writes that "Christ freed us for freedom. Therefore stand firm" – *τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν στήκετε οὖν*.

The total theological significance of all that took place in the coming of Christ, in the Incarnation of the God-Man, in his life, his teachings, his death, his resurrection, his establishment of the Church and the mystical sacramental life in the Church, his Ascension, his sending of the Holy Spirit, and his Second Coming and Judgment – all this has radically altered the old law of works, and the meaning was clear to the early Church. It is true that what St. Paul says about the "works of the law" can be applied to any form of Christianity that deviates from the precision of the balance, that deviates from the authentic "works of the Spirit," replacing them by a mechanical and mechanistic attitude. And in *Galatians* 3:27 St. Paul immediately connects "justification by faith" with the mystical sacrament of baptism. "For you are all sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" – *πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ· ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε*. Within this context what is the distinction between the "justification by faith" and "by faith" being "baptized into Christ," and, hence, having "put on Christ"?

St. Paul is addressing Christians, those who have been baptized, those who have accepted the faith. Despite all his language about "justification by faith," about "putting on Christ" through baptism, about the objective aspect of redemption having been accomplished, St. Paul still can write in *Galatians* 4:19 that he

"travails in birth until Christ is formed" in them – *ὠδίνω μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῇ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν.* What can this mean except that the redemptive process for man is one of struggle, one of rising and falling, one of continual spiritual dynamism? In 5:7 he writes that they "were running well" and asks "who hindered you?" – *ἐτρέχετε καλῶς· τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν,* invoking again the image of a race.

In *Galatians* 5:14 St. Paul repeats Christ's commandment of love, a thought not foreign to St. Paul, especially when one considers his "Hymn to Love [Agape] in *I Corinthians* 13. "For the whole law has been summed up in one expression: you shall love your neighbor as yourself" – *ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἑνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν.* He then distinguishes the "works of the Spirit" from the "works of the flesh," explicitly linking the latter with the old law. And then he again exhorts and commands from the realism of spiritual life (5:25). "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" – *εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματικ καὶ στοιχῶμεν.* What is the meaning of such an exhortation? It has a meaning based on realism only if the "living in the Spirit" refers to the entirety of the objective work of the redemptive work of Christ now accomplished and available to mankind, a redemption which surrounds them by the life of the Church in which they live but a redemption in which they must actively participate, in which they must "walk" if they are to obtain and receive the final work of redemption, the union of man and God in love, in goodness, in truth. The "walk" is an obvious expression of activity, of movement toward a goal. In *Galatians* 6:2 St. Paul links the commandment of love and the "walking " in the Spirit with "the law of Christ." "And thus you will fulfill the law of Christ" – *καὶ οὕτως ἀναπληρώσετε τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.* The very language of "the law of Christ" and the "fulfilling" of that law" is theologically significant, for "the law of Christ" refers to everything communicated to the Church through Christ. The monastic and ascetical life is precisely such an attempt to fulfill this "law of Christ." His concluding thought in *Galatians* is: "Peace and mercy upon those many who will walk by this rule" –*καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, εἰρήνη ἐπ' αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔλεος.* The "new creation" about which St. Paul speaks is both an already accomplished redemptive reality and, for us as individuals with spiritual freedom, the "new creation" – *καινὴ κτίσις* – is a reality which must be "formed," a reality which can come about only through process, when the subjective reality of each person is

"formed" into the objective reality of the "new creation" wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ.

EPHESIANS

In *Ephesians* 1:14 St. Paul uses extremely interesting language in relationship to our "salvation" in Christ "in whom we believed and thereafter were sealed with the Holy Spirit "who is an earnest of our inheritance unto redemption of the possession" – *ὅς ἐστιν ἀρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως* The meaning here is clear: the seal of the Holy Spirit is the "deposit" toward an inheritance of which we take possession when we acquire it. It is a dynamic text. That possession of such an inheritance requires that we walk in "good works" in clear in *Ephesians* 2:10: "For we are a product of him, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God previously prepared in order that we might walk in them" – *αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἐσμεν ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς, οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς, περιπατήσωμεν.* In *Ephesians* 6:11 St. Paul again uses the image of warfare and of putting on the "whole armor of God" – *ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεου.* The "walk" is evoked again in 5:8 and 5:15. "Walk as children of the light" – *ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε.* "See, therefore, that you walk carefully" – *βλέπετε οὖν ἀκριβῶς πῶς περιπατεῖτε.* In 5:9 he writes that "the fruit of the light [is] in all goodness and righteousness and truth" – *ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ φωτὸς ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαθωσύνῃ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἀληθεία.* It is the "walking in the light" that produces "the fruit" which is all goodness, righteousness and truth" and this is described as "proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord" – *δοκιμάζοντες τί ἐστιν εὐάρεστον.*

In *Ephesians* 5:14 St. Paul quotes from what was probably a hymn of the early Church, a text which has the ring of a monastic motif to it. "Rise, sleeping one" – *ἔγειρε, ὁ καθεύδων.* And to what purpose ought one to rise? In 5:1 he commands us to "be therefore imitators of God" – *γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεου.* In 4:23 St. Paul writes that we are "to be renewed in the spirit of your mind" – *ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοὸς* – and "to put on the new man" – *καὶ ἐδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον.* He begs us in 4:1 "to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called" – *ἀξίως περι πατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε.* In 4:15 he exhorts that "we may grow into him [Christ] in all

respects" – *αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα.* In 6:18 St. Paul stresses the importance of prayer. "By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time" – *διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως, προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ.* All these are aspects of the monastic and ascetical life.

PHILIPPIANS

The *Epistle to the Philippians* contains many expressions that directly relate to an active spiritual life. In 1:25 he speaks of "advance and joy of the faith" – *προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως.* In 1:27 he speaks of "conducting" oneself "worthily of the Gospel" – *μόνον ἀξέως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε.* "Stand in one spirit, with one soul striving together in the faith of the Gospel" – *στήκετε ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου.* Here is the "striving" so disliked by Nygren.

For St. Paul we are required not only to believe but also to suffer. In *Philippians* 1:29 he writes: "*οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν ἀλλὰ καὶ το ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν.* And he refers to this as a "struggle," an "ordeal" – *ἀγῶνα.* In 2:16 he speaks of the possibility of "running and laboring in vain" – *ὅτι οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον οὐδὲ εἰς κενὸν ἐκοπίασα.* In 3:8 St. Paul speaks of "gaining Christ" – *ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω* – and this within the context of the "righteousness of the law" as opposed to the "righteousness based on faith" – *δικαιοσύνην ἐπι τῇ πιστει. Philippians* 3:11-16 is one of the more interesting texts. "If somehow I may attain to the resurrection out of the dead. Not that I received already or already have been perfected, but I follow if indeed I may lay hold, in as much as I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brothers, not yet do I reckon myself to have laid hold. But one thing [I do], forgetting on one hand the things behind, and stretching forward on the other hand to the things which are ahead, I follow the mark for the prize of the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, as many as [are] perfect, let us think this . . . Nevertheless, to what we arrived, let us walk by the same" – *εἴ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν. οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι, διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω, ἐφ ᾧ καὶ κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ ἐμαυτὸν οὔπω λογίζομαι κατειληφέναι· ἓν δέ, τὰ μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος, κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς το βραβεῖον τῆς*

ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν . . . πλὴν εἰς ὃ ἐφθάσαμεν, τῷ αὐτῷ. στοιχεῖν. Here St. Paul speaks both of laying hold of Christ and being "laid hold of by Christ." The synergistic activity is obvious and realistic. All the language in the passage indicates and underscores the activity of God and the activity of man, of the objective reality of an achieved redemption and man's process of "laying hold," of "stretching forward" to the ultimate goal, a goal unachievable if man does not become spiritually active. The Greek verbal structures of "I may attain" and "I may lay hold of" are not without meaning.

In *Philippians* 4:8-9 St. Paul speaks universally as he does in *Romans* 1. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovable, whatsoever things are well-spoken of, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, consider these things" – *ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, ὅσα σεμνά, ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα ἁγνά, ὅσα προσφιλῆ, ὅσα εὔφημα, εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος, ταῦτα λογίζεσθε.* These qualities – the true, the just, the pure, the lovable – are not qualities which have been revolutionized by the new creation wrought by the Incarnation of the God-Man, they have not come into existence nor been revolutionized by Christian thought. Rather, they are within the very texture of human nature and existence, things that every conscience knows spontaneously. What Christianity has done, however, is to break forth a new path for mankind to participate in the true, the just, the pure in a new way and with a new power through Christ. They now no longer exist as ideals, as the absolute, but are existentially and ontologically accessible to human nature through redemption. St. Paul speaks almost a Platonic language here, and yet it is thoroughly Christian.

COLOSSIANS

In St. Paul's *Epistle to the Colossians* 1: 22-23 and 29 the realism of synergy is depicted. "But now he reconciled in the body of his flesh through his death to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, if indeed you continue in the faith having been founded and steadfast and not being moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard" – *νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατηλλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου, παραστῆσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αυτοῦ, εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἑδραῖοι καὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς*

ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε. The objective reconciliaton now exists but in order to participate in it one must be found holy, blameless, and irreproachable, and this is all contingent upon the significant "if" – "if indeed you continue in the faith." In verse 29 we encounter the ideas of "maturity," "labor," and "struggle" or "ordeal." "In order that we may present every man mature in Christ, for which also I labor struggling according to his energy energizing in me in power" – *ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ· εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει. Colossians* 1:10 expresses the same idea of "worth," of "pleasing" God, of "bearing fruit in every good work," and of "increasing in the knowledge of God" – *περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ.* But the very power comes from the might of the glory of God. "With all power dynamized according to the might of his glory" – *ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτου. Colossians* 2:6-7 expresses also the two spiritual wills and activities in the process of redemption. "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, and being confirmed in the faith as you were taught" – *ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε, ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ ἐποικοδομούμενοι ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει καθὼς ἐδιδάχθητε .*

The depth of the idea of synergy is found not only in co-dying and co-suffering with Christ but also in co-resurrection with him. In *Colossians* 3:1 St. Paul writes: "If therefore you were co-raised with Christ, seek the things above" – *εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε.* St. Paul continues the use of many imperative exhortations in chapter 3. "Put to death therefore your members on earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry" – *νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, πορνείαν, ἀκαθαρσίαν, πάθος, ἐπιθυμίαν κακήν, καὶ τὴν πλεονεξίαν ἥτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλολατρία* (5). "Put away now all things . . ." – *νυνὶ δὲ ἀπόθεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ πάντα* (8). And then the command (4:2) to continue in prayer and vigil – *τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτερεῖτε, γρηγοροῦντες.*

I AND II THESSALONIANS

In *I Thessalonians* St. Paul continues this second aspect of the redemptive process by referring to the "work of faith" (1:3), by

expressing concern that "labor may be in vain" (3:5), by exhortating "if you stand in the Lord" (3:8), by exhortating that the "breastplate of faith and love" be put on (5:8), and by commanding to test everything, to hold fast to what is good, to abstain from every form of evil (5:21-22). In 3:10 St. Paul writes: "Praying exceedingly night and day . . . to adjust the shortcomings of your faith" – *νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ δεόμενοι . . . καὶ καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν.* Why the need to adjust the shortcomings of faith, if faith "alone" is the sole criterion of salvation, as is held by certain schools of theology rooted in the tradition of the Reformation? In 4:4-5 St. Paul writes interestingly. "For this is the will of God: your sanctification . . . that each one of you know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor" – *τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμὸς ὑμῶν . . . εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ.* The goal here of the spiritual life in Christ is sanctification and the significant text is to "know how to possess" this "vessel." Such language expresses the dynamism of a synergistic process of redemption. In 5:9 St. Paul uses the expression "unto the obtaining of salvation" – *εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας.* In *II Thessalonians* 2:14 St. Paul uses the expression "unto obtaining of the glory of our Lord" – *εἰς περιποίησιν δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.* In *II Thessalonians* 1:11 St. Paul prays that they may be deemed worthy of the calling and that they may fulfill every "good pleasure of goodness and work of faith in power" – *ἵνα ὑμᾶς ἀξιώσῃ τῆς κλήσεως ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν καὶ πληρώσῃ πᾶσαν εὐδοκίαν ἀγαθωσύνης καὶ ἔργον πίστεως ἐν δυνάμει.*

I AND II TIMOTHY

In *I Timothy* 1:5-6 we read: "Now the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unpretended faith, from which things some, missing aim, turned aside" – *τὸ δὲ τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας ἐστὶν ἀγάπη ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας καὶ συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς καὶ πίστεως ἀνυποκρίτου, ὧν τινες ἀστοχήσαντες ἐξετράπησαν.* In 1:18-19 the image of warfare is again used. "This charge I commit to you, child Timothy . . . in order that you might war by them the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some, thrusting away, have made shipwreck concerning the faith" – *ταύτην τὴν παραγγελίαν παρατίθεμαί σοι, τέκνον Τιμόθεε . . . ἵνα στρατεύῃ ἐν αὐταῖς τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν, ἔχων πίστιν καὶ ἀγαθὴν*

συνείδησιν, ἣν τινες ἀπωσάμενοι περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἐναυάγησαν. I Timothy 2:1-3 has the same intensity of spiritual activity found in monastic and ascetical literature: "I exhort, therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and eucharists be made on behalf of all men, on behalf of kings and all those in high positions, in order that we may lead a peaceable and quiet life in all piety and seriousness. This is good and acceptable before God our Savior, who wishes all men to be saved and to come to a full knowledge of truth" – *παρακαλῶ οὖν πρῶτον πάντων ποιεῖσθαι δεήσεις, προσευχάς, ἐντεύξεις, εὐχαριστίας, ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων, ὑπὲρ βασιλέων καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ὄντων, ἵνα ἤρεμον καὶ ἡσύχιον βίον διάγωμεν ἐν πάσῃ εὐσεβείᾳ καὶ σεμνότητι. τοῦτο καλὸν καὶ ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ, ὃς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν.* The same emphasis continues in 4:7-10, especially the expressions "exercise yourself" – *γύμναζε δὲ σεαυτόν*, and "for unto this we labor and struggle" – *εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ κοπιῶμεν καὶ ἀγωνιζόμεθα. I Timothy* 6:11-12 again stresses the "struggle," that "laying hold" of that which has been objectively accomplished in redemption. "Struggle the good struggle of the faith, lay hold on eternal life" – *ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως, ἐπιλαβοῦ τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς*. And in the verse preceding this one is commanded "to pursue righteousness, piety, faith, love, endurance, meekness" – *δίωκε δὲ δικαιοσύνην, εὐσέβειαν, πίστιν, ἀγάπην, ὑπομονήν, πραϋπαθίαν*. What spiritual meaning can the "pursuit of righteous - ness" have unless it in fact indicates that, although the "righteousness of God" is established in Christ Jesus, we still must actively struggle in spiritual warfare in order to "lay hold on" this "righteousness"? Already in *I Timothy* 5:9 it is clear that "widows" of a certain age had a special place within the spiritual life of the Church. "Let a widow be enrolled" – *χήρα καταλεγέσθω*. Enrolled into what? It is obviously a special activity within the spiritual life of the Church to which widows were enrolled, already a special form of spiritual activity in the earliest life of the Church.

In *II Timothy* 1:6 both the objective reality of the gift of redemption and the subjective, individual work necessary to "lay hold on" this redemptive work are clearly apparent. "I remind you to fan the flame of the gift of God, which is in you" – *ἀναμιμνήσκω σε ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅ ἐστιν ἐν σοι*. The synergy of redemption is spoken of in 2:11-12 with the all-significant "if." "For if we co-died with him, we shall also co-live

with him; if we endure, we shall also co-reign with him" – *εἰ γὰρ συναπεθάνομεν, καὶ συζήσομεν· εἰ ὑπομένομεν, καὶ συμβασιλεύσομεν.* In 2:21 sanctification is contingent upon self-purification. "If, therefore, anyone purifies himself . . . he will be a vessel unto honor, having been sanctified" – *ἐὰν οὖν τις ἐκκαθάρῃ ἑαυτὸν . . . ἔσται σκεῦος εἰς τιμήν, ἡγιασμένον.* In 2:22 again we are exhorted to "flee youthful lusts" and "to pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace" and the "calling on the Lord" must be done "out of a pure heart" – *τὰς δὲ νεωτερικὰς ἐπιθυμίας φεῦγε, δίωκε δὲ δικαιοσύνην, πίστιν, ἀγάπην, εἰρήνην μετὰ τῶν ἐπικαλουμένων τὸν κύριον ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας.* In 4:7 the path of salvation is presented again as a struggle. "I have struggled the good struggle, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" – *τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἠγώνισμαι, τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα, τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα.*

HEBREWS

The *Epistle to the Hebrews* is rich in its thought on both aspects of redemption – on the work of God, and on the spiritual struggle on the part of man. In 3:14 the language is striking. "For we have become sharers of Christ, if indeed we hold fast the beginning of the foundation until the end" – *μέτοχοι γὰρ τοῦ Χριστοῦ γεγόναμεν, ἐάνπερ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν κατάσχωμεν.* In 4:1 the idea is similar. "Let us fear, therefore, lest a promise being left to enter into his rest, any of you seems to have come short" – *φοβηθῶμεν οὖν μήποτε καταλειπομένης ἐπαγγελίας εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ δοκῇ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ὑστερηκέναι.* The idea of "entering this rest" is continued in 4:11. "Let us be eager, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest anyone falls in the same example of disobedience" – *σπουδάσωμεν οὖν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν κατάπαυσιν, ἵνα μὴ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τις ὑποδείγματι πέσῃ τῆς ἀπειθείας.* In 6:1 "the beginning" of the process is spoken of, accompanied by the exhortation: "let us be borne on to maturity" – *ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερώμεθα.* In 6:11 one must show eagerness to the "full assurance of the hope unto the end" – *ἐνδείκνυσθαι σπουδὴν πρὸς τὴν πληροφορίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἄχρι τέλους.* The same exhortations of "let us" are found throughout *Hebrews*. In 10:22-23 it is: "Let us approach with a true heart" and "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope unyieldingly" – *προσερχώμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας . . .*

κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινῆ. In 11:1 a definition of faith is proferred. "Now faith is the foundation of things being hoped, the proof of things not being seen" – *ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων*. This definition of faith is often dismissed too readily. It is a deep idea, especially when considered in its original Greek structure. Faith is the "foundation," the "reality" upon which the "hope" of the Christian faith is built. And in its reality it contains the very proof, the evidence of the heavenly kingdom. The entire eleventh chapter reveals that "faith" was active under the "old law," although the faith of and in Christ is of deeper ontological significance precisely because it is the foundation into a new reality not available under the "old law." After a lengthy exposition of examples of "faith" under the "old law," the *Epistle to the Hebrews* in 12:1 engages in an exhortation that concerns the very spiritual activity of the new faith. "Putting away every hindrance and the most besetting sin, let us run through endurance the struggle set before us" – *ὄγκον ἀποθέμενοι πάντα καὶ τὴν εὐπερίστατον ἁμαρτίαν, δι᾽ ὑπομονῆς τρέχωμεν τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα*. The reality of "discipline" is stressed in *Hebrews*, especially in 12:7: "Endure unto disciple" – *εἰς παιδείαν ὑπομένετε*. And that one can "fail from the grace of God" is clear from 12:15 – *ὑστερῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ*.

I AND II PETER

In *I Peter* 1:9 it is not the begining of faith or faith in general which results in salvation but it is precisely the "end of faith" which "obtains" salvation – *κομιζόμενοι τὸ τέλος τῆς πίστεως σωτηρίαν ψυχῶν* Purification and obedience are dominant themes in *I Peter*. "Having purified your souls in the obedience of truth unto an unpretended brotherly love, love one another earnestly from the heart (1:22) – *τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας εἰς φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον, ἐκ καρδίας ἀλλήλους ἀγαπήσατε ἐκτενῶς*. The process of growth in the spiritual life is stressed in 2:2: "in order that . .. you may grow into salvation" – *ἵνα . . . αὐξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν*. The "war" between lust and the soul is spoken of in 2:11: "I exhort you as sojourners and aliens to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" – *παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, αἵτινες στρατεύονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς*.

In *II Peter* 1:4 a profound theological thought is expressed. The promises which God has given are great and precious; corruption is in the world because of lust; and man can not only escape the corruption but also become partakers or participators in the Divine nature, an idea which is developed in early Christian and in Eastern Orthodox theological thought, an idea which lays the foundation for the doctrine of *theosis*, of divinization. "He has given to us precious and very great promises in order that through these you might become partakers of the Divine nature, escaping from the corruption that is in the world by lust" – *τὰ τίμια καὶ μέγιστα ἡμῖν ἐπαγγέλματα δεδώρηται, ἵνα διὰ τούτων γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως, ἀποφυγόντες τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ φθορᾶς*. Precisely because of this we are instructed in the following verses *to supplement our faith*, and then the dynamic spiritual process of growth is presented. "And for this very reason bringing in all diligence, supply in your faith virtue, and in virtue [supply] knowledge, and in knowledge [supply] self-control, and in self-control [supply] endurance, and in endurance [supply] piety, and in piety [supply] brotherly love, and in brotherly love [supply] love" – *καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο δὲ σπουδὴν πᾶσαν παρεισενέγκαντες ἐπιχορηγήσατε ἐν τῇ πίστει ὑμῶν τὴν ἀρετήν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀρετῇ τὴν γνῶσιν, ἐν δὲ τῇ γνώσει τὴν ἐγκράτειαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐγκρατείᾳ τὴν ὑπομονήν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ὑπομονῇ τὴν εὐσέβειαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ εὐσεβείᾳ τὴν φιλαδελφίαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ τὴν ἀγάπην*.

In *II Peter* 1:10 there is mention of one's "calling" and "election." And yet in the very same text one is exhorted to be "diligent" precisely to make this "calling and election" firm. "Be diligent to make your calling and election firm" – *σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλῆσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι*. And in 2:20-22 the falling away from the "way of righteousness" is not only possible, but it actually takes place, and it is worse than had one not known the "way of righteousness" at all. And the texts speaks about those who had a "full knowledge of the Lord." "For if, having escaped the defilements of the world by a full knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, these persons again have been defeated, having been entangled, the last things have become to them worse than the first. For it was better for them not to have fully known the way of righteousness than, fully knowing, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them" – *εἰ γὰρ ἀποφυγόντες τὰ μιάσματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τούτοις δὲ πάλιν ἐμπλακέντες ἡττῶνται, γέγονεν αὐτοῖς τὰ ἔσχατα*

χείρονα τῶν πρώτων. κρεῖττον γὰρ ἦν αὐτοῖς μὴ ἐπεγνωκέναι τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης, ἢ ἐπιγνοῦσιν ὑποστρέψαι ἐκ τῆς παραδοθείσης αὐτοῖς ἁγίας ἐντολῆς. συμβέβηκεν αὐτοῖς. . .

THE EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN

In the three *Epistles of St. John* we encounter the same language, the same reality of the two aspects of redemption. The same "ifs" are there, the same emphasis of purification (see *I John* 3:3), the same language about "pleasing God," and the same emphasis on "keeping the commandment" and "not sinning." There is an organic link between loving God and keeping his commandments – the full range of the commandments of Christ.

THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES AND LUTHER'S EVALUATION

Luther's attitude toward the *Epistle of St. James* is well-known. In fact, Luther positioned not only *James* at the end of the German Bible but also *Hebrews*, *Jude*, and *Revelation*. And his criterion was that they lacked evangelical "purity." He was not the first to do so. His colleague at Wittenberg, upon whom Luther later turned, Carlstadt, had distinguished among the books of the New Testament – and the Old Testament – before Luther took his own action. As early as 1520 Carlstadt divided the entirety of Scripture into three categories: *libri summae dignitatis*, in which Carstadt included the Pentateuch as well as the Gospels; *libri secundae dignitatis*, in which he included the Prophets and fifteen epistles; and *libri tertiae dignitatis*.

Luther rejected the *Epistle of St. James* theologically but of necessity retained it in the German Bible, even if as a kind of appendix. The ending of Luther's *Preface* to his edition of the German Bible, which was omitted in later editions, reads in the German of his time: "*Summa, Sanct Johannis Evangel. und seine erste Epistel, Sanct Paulus Epistel, sonderlich die zu den Römern, Galatern, Ephesern, und Sanct Peters erste Epistel. Das sind die Bücher, die dir Christum zeigen, und alles lehren, das dir zu wissen noth und selig ist ob du sohon kein ander Buch noch Lehre nummer sehest and horist. Darumb ist Sanct Jakobs Epistel ein recht strohern Epistel, gegen sie, denn sie doch kein evangelisch Art an ihr hat*" – "for that reason St. James' *Epistle* is a thoroughly straw epistle, for it has indeed no evangelical merit to it." Luther rejected it theologically "because it gives righteousness to works in

outright contradiction to Paul and all other Scriptures . . . because, while undertaking to teach Christian people, it does not once mention the passion, the resurrection, the Spirit of Christ; it names Christ twice, but teaches nothing about him; it calls the law a law of liberty, while Paul calls it a law of bondage, of wrath, of death and of sin."

Luther even added the word "alone" – *allein* – in *Romans* 3:28 before "through faith" – *durch den Glauben* – precisely to counter the words in *James* 2:24: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith only" – ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον. What is more is that Luther became very aggressive and arrogant in his response to the criticism that he had added "alone" to the Biblical text. "If your papist makes much useless fuss about the word *sola, allein*, tell him at once: Doctor Martin Luther will have it so and says: Papist and donkey are one thing; *sic volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas*. For we do not want to be pupils and followers of the Papists, but their masters and judges." Luther continues in a bantering manner in an attempt to imitate St. Paul in the latter's response to his opponents. "Are they doctors? So am I. Are they learned? So am I. Are they preachers? So am I. Are they theologians? So am I. Are they philosophers? So am I. Are they writers of books? So am I. And I shall further boast: I can expound Psalms and Prophets; which they cannot. I can translate; which they cannot . . . Therefore the word *allein* shall remain in my New Testament, and though all pope-donkeys should get furious and foolish, they shall not get the word out." In some German editions the word "*allein*" was printed in larger type! Some critics of Luther's translation have accused him of deliberately translating inaccurately to support his theological view. As early as 1523 Dr. Emser, an opponent of Luther, claimed that Luther's translation contained "a thousand grammatical and fourteen hundred heretical errors." This is exaggerated but the fact does remain that there are numerous errors in Luther's translation.

Indeed, the entire Reformation in its attitude towards the New Testament is directly in opposition to the thought on this subject of St. Augustine, who was highly esteemed in many respects by the Reformation theologians and from whom they took the basis for some of the theological visions, especially predestination, original sin, and irresistible grace for Luther and Calvin. On this subject, as on some many others, there is no common ground between Luther and Calvin on the one hand and St. Augustine on the other. St. Augustine wrote: "I should not believe the Gospel except as moved by the authority of the Church" –*ego evangelio non crederem, nisi*

me moveret ecclesiae auctoritas. It should be pointed out that Calvin did not take objection to the *Epistle of St. James*.

Luther was so caught up in the abstraction of a passive righteousness, so infuriated by his experience as a monk in practicing what he would refer to as "righteousness of works," so caught up in attempting to create a specific meaning to one line of the thought of St. Paul that he misses the very foundation from which the theological thought of St. James comes forth – and that is the initiative and will of God. Luther's criticism that St. James does not mention the passion, the resurrection, and the Spirit of Christ is inane, for his readers knew the apostolic deposit – there was no need to mention the very basis and essence of the living faith which was known to those reading the epistle. Such a criticism by Luther reveals the enormous lack of a sense for the historical life of the early Church, for the Church was in existence and it is from the Church and to the Church that the epistles are written. Historically, the Church existed before any texts of the "new covenant" were written. The Church existed on the oral tradition received from the apostles, as is clearly revealed from the pages of the New Testament itself.

The very foundation of the theological vision of St. James is *the will of God* . In 1:17-18 St. James writes: "Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom change has no place, no turning, no shadow. Having willed, he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" – *πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δώρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστιν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα. βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας, εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχήν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων*. In 4:15 St. James writes: "You are instead to say: if the Lord wills, we will both live and will do this or that" – *ἀντὶ τοῦ λέγειν ὑμᾶς· ἐὰν ὁ κύριος θελήσῃ, καὶ ζήσομεν καὶ ποιήσομεν τοῦτο ἢ ἐκεῖνο*.

One theologically weak text in the *Epistle of St. James* is in 4:8: "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you." *Taken by itself* it has a Pelagian ring to it. And in monastic and ascetical literature one often encounters such expressions. But the meaning in both this epistle and in monastic and ascetical literature *must be understood within their total context*. Once the synergism of the redemptive process takes place in the human heart, then the existential reciprocity of grace and response is so dynamic that one can, as it were, use such expressions, precisely because it is assumed that God has initiated and that grace is always at work in

the human heart, in all the depths of the interior of man as well as in external life. The text in the *Epistle of St. James* must be understood within the context of 1:18 and 4:15. Moreover, it is to be noted that this text is preceded by "Be subject, therefore, to God" – *ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ*. In being "subject to God," a relationship is already in place, a relationship which presupposes the initiative of God and the response of man.

The *Epistle of St. James* contains many expressions that will be used in monastic and ascetical life. Temptation (1:14), the passions (4:1), purifying, cleansing, humbling oneself (4), and "be distressed and mourn and weep" (4:9) – *ταλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πενθήσατε καὶ κλαύσατε*. The excoriating words against the rich (5:1-6) underguird the monastic vow of poverty.

THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The life of the early Church as described in the *Acts of the Apostles* is so clear that no analysis or presentation of texts is necessary to demonstrate that the essentials exist for a form of spirituality similar to that of monastic and ascetical Christianity. Mention should also be made of the life of St. John the Baptist. "It is on solid grounds that a student of monastic origins like Dom Germain Morin upheld his apparent paradox: it is not so much the monastic life which was a novelty at the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth, but rather the life of adaptation to the world led by the mass of Christians at the time when the persecutions ceased. The monks actually did nothing but preserve intact, in the midst of altered circumstances, the ideal of the Christian life of early days . . . And there is another continuous chain from the apostles to the solitaries and then to the cenobites, whose ideal, less novel than it seems, spread so quickly from the Egyptian deserts at the end of the third century. This chain is constituted by the men and women who lived in continence, ascetics and virgins, who never ceased to be held in honor in the ancient Church."

CHAPTER TWO

OPPOSITION TO ASCETICISM AND MONASTICISM

With the strong current of asceticism contained in the New Testament, with the historical activity of asceticism in the earliest years of the Church, with the extension of ascetical practices embracing martyrdom - in short, with the command to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ – it may indeed appear odd that opposition to asceticism and monasticism actually took place. It did not begin with Luther but it was with Luther that asceticism and monasticism were rejected completely. It was the Reformation that overthrew this form of spirituality, and it is therefore still an ecumenical problem to be addressed frankly. The rejection of asceticism and monasticism as authentic forms of Christian spirituality by the Reformation was indeed not moderate. It was a vehement rejection of what was considered to be a complete distortion of Christianity. Scholars who write from the tradition and perspective of the Reformation boldly state their position. The following quotations are representative of that position.

Monasticism "is an abnormal phenomenon, a humanly devised service of God, and not rarely a sad enervation and repulsive distortion of the Christianity of the Bible." Monasticism "claims to be the highest and purest form of Christian piety and virtue, and the surest way to heaven. Then, we should think, it must be preëminently commended in the Bible, and actually exhibited in the life of Christ and the apostles. But just in this biblical support it falls short." It is unnecessary to comment on the inaccuracy of this statement. It is a conclusion reached only through the perspective of the theological position of the Reformation. Monasticism is "upon the whole a miserable emaciation and caricature [of the Gospel]." There is a "contrast between pure and normal Bible-Christianity and abnormal Monastic Christianity." "The heroism of the anchoretic life . . . this moral heroism . . . oversteps not only the present standard of Christianity, but all sound measures; it has not support either in the theory or the practice of Christ and the apostolic church, and it has far more resemblance to heathen than to biblical precedents. Many of the most eminent saints of the deserts differ only in their Christian confession; and in some Bible phrases learnt by rote, from Buddhist fakirs and Mohammedan dervises. Their highest virtuousness consisted in bodily exercises of their own devising, which, without love, at best profit nothing at

all, very often only gratify spiritual vanity, and entirely obscure the gospel way of salvation." Such a statement reveals not only the inner ability to understand the essence and goal of ascetical and monastic life but also the external, historical facts – as a matter of fact, monks were required to memorize enormous portions of Holy Scripture, and monasticism in essence always understood that its "exercises" were tools, were means to an end, and by themselves of no value. "Anchoretism almost always carries a certain cynic roughness and coarseness, which, indeed, in the light of that age may be leniently judged, but certainly have no affinity with the morality of the Bible, and offend not only good taste, but all sound moral feeling . . . ascetic holiness . . . reverses the maxim of sound evangelical morality." "Many of these saints were no more than low sluggards or gloomy misanthropes, who would rather company with wild beasts, with lions, wolves, and hyenas, than with immortal men, and above all shunned the face of a woman more carefully than they did the devil." This statement from a scholar nourished from the "evangelical" tradition of the Reformation would perhaps have to consider our Lord in this category, for our Lord set the precedent during his forty days in the desert where he "was with the wild beasts" – *καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων* (*Mark* 1:13). "It is no recommendation to these ascetic eccentricities that while they are without Scripture (*sic*!) authority, they are fully equalled and even surpassed by the strange modes of self-torture practiced by ancient and modern Hindoo (*sic*!) devotees, for the supposed benefit of their souls and the gratification of their vanity in the presence of admiring spectators." It is indeed difficult to find a more distorted statement of Christian asceticism and monasticism. Indeed, there were extremes within Christian ascetical and monastic practices but there are extremes in every form of Christian spirituality. Indeed, distortions can be found in Christian ascetical and monastic life but those distortions were not the norm, were not the ideal, and they were usually overcome. One does not judge any form of Christian spirituality but its extremes and distortions but by its ideal and normative behavior. And there is more. "In general, the hermit life confounds the fleeing from the outward world with the mortification of the inward world of the corrupt heart. It mistakes the duty of love; not rarely, under its mask of humility and the utmost self-denial, cherishes spiritual pride and jealousy; exposes itself to all the dangers of solitude, even to savage barbarism, beastly grossness or despair and suicide."

Not all scholars nourished from a Reformation tradition which rejected asceticism and monasticism write negatively about the

subject. Indeed, many present the historical data objectively, even if they differ about the authenticity of this form of spirituality. Some, indeed, treat the subject with some sympathy. Indeed, ecumenical dialogue on this vital difference on this form of spirituality is encouraged by indications of a revival of interest in monasticism within some Protestant circles – even to the extent of creating communities. But that attitude toward this form of spirituality which erupted in the Reformation still abides. A thorough reexamination of the historical conditions and the theological presuppositions which led Luther and Calvin to reject monasticism must still be undertaken without emotion and discussed in frank, open dialogue.

One scholar nourished from the tradition of the Reformation writes that "the sole representatives of pure Christianity in the Nicene and next following age were Jovinian, Helvidius, and Vigilantius." These three were opponents of monasticism.

JOVINIAN

Our knowledge about Jovinian primarily comes from St. Jerome. In addition, we have information on him from St. Augustine and from the councils at which his thought was condemned. The famous Jewish convert, David Mendel, who took the name of Neander (1789-1850) upon his conversion to Protestantism, compared Jovinian to Luther because both reacted to asceticism from their own experience within monasticism. St. Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* [*Against Jovinian*] is the longest of his polemical works and, in many regards, his best work, though it too contains the typical sharp tongue and vehement invective so characteristic of St. Jerome – he refers to Jovinian's work as vomit and calls Jovinian a slave of corruption, a barbaric writer, and a Christian Epicurean, who now preferred earth to heaven, vice to virtue, his belly to Christ. St. Jerome upbraids him because he began to dress more elegantly. The work also is very limited in the very handling of the subject. What makes it his best work is his use of pagan classics. St. Augustine is much more lenient – perhaps more objective – for his main criticism of Jovinian as a person is that he misled many Roman nuns into marriage. St. Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* is far from flawless. Often when he has a substantial argument from Scripture, he overplays it, exaggerates it. At other times, his exegesis is less than desirable.

It appears that Jovinian wrote a work, probably before 390, while in Rome, against monasticism. The work is no longer extant. Jovinian was a monk, and most probably remained a monk until

his death, though in a rather unorthodox and free spirit. Already in 390 he - along with eight companions - was condemned by a council in Rome under Pope Siricius, who was zealously opposed to the marriage of the clergy and also cautious about the extremes of monasticism. Jovinian then went to Milan where he confronted St. Ambrose. It may appear to have been a foolish move on the part of Jovinian because St. Ambrose was a staunch supporter of asceticism and virginity. But there were two monks in Milan, Sarmatio and Barbatian, who held views similar to those of Jovinian. There is also the possibility that Jovinian was counting on the new events surrounding Eugenius.

Eugenius had been a professor of rhetoric at Rome, and later had taken a position in the government under Valentinian. Upon the death of Valentinian, Arbogast's troops had proclaimed Eugenius as the new Augustus. Immediately Eugenius sent messengers to Theodosius informing him of his nomination or acclamation, and also to stress that Arbogast was not responsible for the death of Valentinian. Eugenius simultaneously contacted St. Ambrose, whom he knew, but St. Ambrose refused to respond. Eugenius, the "new Augustus," was a Christian, a Roman by birth. Eugenius also appealed to the bishops of Gaul for support. Although Eugenius had been proclaimed Augustus by his troops, he still needed the approval of Theodosius. But in early 393 Theodosius proclaimed his nine-year old son Honorius as Augustus of Italy. Eugenius, who claimed Italy as his own, openly broke with Emperor Theodosius. At this very time St. Ambrose was preoccupied with the Third Council of Milan.

At the end of 392 Pope Siricius had sent three Roman priests to St. Ambrose in Milan to inform him [*Patrologia Latina* 13, 1171] that Jovinian and eight companions had been condemned as heretics. Jovinian is referred to as a "pseudo-monk," who taught that the equality of baptism rendered an equality of "merit" among all the baptized, that fasting or feasting is a matter of complete indifference. Such a teaching was, of course, open warfare against all asceticism.

St. Ambrose gives some detail of the condemnation of Jovinian in Milan (*Patrologia Latina* 16, 1125). "How great is the madness of their dismal barkings, that the same persons should say that Christ could not be born of a Virgin, and yet assert that women, after having given birth to human pledges, remain virgins? Does Christ grant to others what, as they contend, he could not grant to himself? But he, although he took on him our flesh, although he was made man that he might redeem man and recall man from death, still, as being God, came upon earth in an

extraordinary way, that, as he had said, 'Behold, I make all things new', so also he might be born of an immaculate Virgin, and be believed to be, as it is written, 'God with us'. But from their perverse ways they are induced to say, 'She was a virgin when she conceived, but not a virgin when she brought forth'. Could she then conceive as a virgin, and yet not be able to bring forth as a virgin, since conception always precedes and birth follows?"

"But what is that 'gate of the sanctuary', that 'outward gate which looks towards the East, which remains shut and no man', it is said, 'shall enter in by it but the Lord, the God of Israel'? Is not Mary this gate, by whom the Savior entered into the world? This is the gate of righteousness, as he himself said, 'Suffer us to fulfill all righteousness'. Blessed Mary is the gate about which it is written that 'the Lord has entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut' after birth, for as a virgin she both conceived and brought forth."

The direct effect of Jovinian's teaching was the defection of monks and nuns in Rome who were renouncing their vows and marrying, not unlike what was to take place in Wittenberg under the influence of Carlstadt while Luther was being held under protective custody by Frederick. Luther, when he first heard of nuns and monks renouncing their vows, was distressed. He at once studied the Scriptures and came to the conclusion that such vows were not Biblical and therefore he sanctioned the renunciation of vows. His first reaction is, however, interesting. It was this renunciation of vows that distressed St. Augustine. In his *De Haeresibus* (82) St. Augustine writes: *ita ut quaedam virgines sacrae provectae iam aetatis in urbe Roma ubi haec docebat eo audito nupisse dicantur*." St. Augustine writes similarly in his *Retractationes* (2, 48): *tantum valuit in urbe Romana ut nonnullas etiam sanctimoniales de quarum impudicitia suspicio nulla praecesserat, deiecisse in nuptias diceretur, hoc maxime argumento cum eas argueret dicens: Tu ergo melior quam Sarra, melior quam Susanna sive Anna? . . . Hoc modo etiam virorum sanctorum sanctum caelibatum commemoratione patrum coniugatorum et comparatione frangebat*.

St. Ambrose was indeed deeply concerned about the views of Jovinian. Despite the fact that Pope Siricius sent notification of the excommunication of Jovinian and his eight companions, St. Ambrose thought the matter serious enough to convoke his own council. He obviously intended to stop such teachings from spreading in Milan. The bishops who attended this council were Sabinus of Piacenza, Bassianus of Lodi, Eventius of Pavia, Maximus of Aemona, Felix of Como, Theodore of Octodurum,

Constantius of Claterna, Geminian of Modena, and Eustatius of Tortona.

In Rome, however, paganism still persisted. Many influential families were hostile to Constantinople, never having forgotten Constantine the Great's defection from the city of Rome and constructing the "New Rome" on the city of Byzantium. These Romans resented laws emanating from the East. Their hostility was increased by Theodosius' edicts making Christianity the only legal religion in the empire. They were especially agitated by Theodosius' edict of November 8, 392 which prohibited any form of private pagan worship. In the name of the eternal city of Rome, the Roman senate ratified Eugenius as the Augustus. The Roman senate sent an embassy to Eugenius to inform him of their decision and to request the abrogation of the decrees of Gratian. Eugenius did not respond. A second request went forth. Still he took no action. Rather, he wrote to St. Ambrose for a second time. When finally pressed for a reason for his silence, St. Ambrose replied that he feared the pagans might win over the new Augustus. Finally Eugenius restored the confiscated assets of the pagan temples but not to the priests from whom they were taken. Rather, he gave them to the senators who had requested them, and he gave them as gifts to "deserving citizens" so that the government could not be implicated. He also conferred gifts on the bishops. In addition, Eugenius ordered the restoration of the Altar of Victory. Eugenius, along with Arbogast, crossed the Alps in the summer of 393, arriving in Milan in August. St. Ambrose had gone into voluntary exile rather than to meet these new masters, an exile which lasted more than a year. It was perhaps this that Jovinian was relying on when he left Rome for Milan. As St. Ambrose had done with Theodosius, he did with Eugenius. He sent him a letter explaining why he left the city. It was not fear. It was to manifest his utter disapproval of the "sacrilege" committed by Eugenius in granting the pagans their requests by a public act. "I do not fear to tell you emperors what I think best. Consequently, just as I have not been silent with the other emperors, so I will not be silent with you, most gracious Emperor . . . Even if the power of an emperor is great, still remember, Emperor, how great God is. He sees the hearts of all. He searches into the innermost conscience. He knows all things even before they happen: he knows the secrets of your heart." St. Ambrose's voluntary exile and his firm letter to Eugenius constituted essentially an implicit excommunication. St. Ambrose had extended no demand for repentance, as he had with Theodosius when the latter had slaughtered the citizens of Thessaloniki. The obvious reason was that St. Ambrose realized

that Eugenius had become one with the pagan party. Jovinian probably thought he could function more easily in the atmosphere created by Eugenius.

St. Ambrose was proven correct. The Church refused to accept the gifts offered Eugenius. In turn, Eugenius allowed the pagans their full restoration in Rome and throughout Italy under Nicomachus Flavianus. In 1938 an inscription was discovered at Ostia dating from 393/394 and commemorating the restoration of a temple of Hercules. Pagan temples were reopened. The offering of sacrifices began again. In the winter of 393/394 the forgotten feasts were restored. In March the procession of Isis took place. In April the Megalensian games in honor of Cybele took place. From April 28 to May 6 the flagrant shows of the *Ludi Florales* took place. And then the final reversal - all positions of honor in state were reserved only for pagans.

On the one hand there was the apostasy of the monks and nuns under the influence of Jovinian; on the other hand, there was the apostasy of many to paganism. Great sorrow was felt in the Church, both in Milan and in Rome. St. Ambrose continued to write to his clergy to urge them to remain loyal and faithful to their Lord Jesus Christ, to their Christian faith.

St. Ambrose returned to Milan only when Eugenius had left to confront the military forces of Theodosius. Before leaving for battle Nicomachus Flavianus and Arbogast vowed that upon their return they would turn the great basilica of Milan into a barn, and that they would compel the clergy to enter into the ranks of the army. As Eugenius and his pagan military leaders crossed the Alpine passes, they raised statues of Jupiter and replaced the monogram of Christ on their standards with the image of Hercules Invictus. For his part Theodosius intensified his spiritual life. Arbogast concentrated his forces, made up mainly of Franks and Alemanni, near Aquileia. Theodosius, meanwhile, was bringing up masses of Goths, Alani, Huns, and armies from the Caucusus. These forces were ironically under the command of the Goth Gainas, the Vandal Stilicho, and the Goth Alaric, who in 410 would sack Rome, an event which prompted St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. Initially the battle turned in the favor of Eugenius but it quickly turned around and Theodosius had a complete victory. Nicomachus Flavianus committed suicide when he was unable to hold the pass of the Julian Alps near Ober Laibach. Two days after the battle Arbogast committed suicide. Eugenius was slain. Theodosius promptly sent an official to St. Ambrose with a letter announcing the victory and asking the bishop to announce the victory publicly and to give thanks to God. St. Ambrose carried the

imperial letter to the altar so that the faith of Theodosius might speak forth. Incidentally, Theodosius in his letter informed St Ambrose that he was surprised that he had left the city and that he had shown obedience to the usurper Eugenius. St. Ambrose was concerned that Theodosius grant pardon to the conquered. He therefore set out to meet the emperor at Aquileia. He knelt before the emperor. Theodosius raised him to his feet and then in turn knelt before St. Ambrose - he considered his victory as the fruit of the prayers of St. Ambrose.

In his sermons during the last months of 394 St. Ambrose expresses his joy over the great and final Christian victory, a victory which once again reunited the empire in peace under a Christian emperor. But Theodosius time was coming to an end, his earthly mission had been completed and he was being called to his heavenly home. His battles were over. He had conquered the enemies of Christ. He continued to issue edicts to infuse a new life into the empire, a life structured on Christian principles. After only three months in Milan, Theodosius died on January 17, 395. On Sunday, February 25, forty days after the death of Theodosius, St. Ambrose delivered his funeral oration in the cathedral before the court, the princes, the armed forces, and the people. "Kings will walk in thy light. Gratian and Theodosius will walk before the others, not now surrounded by the weapons of their soldiers but by their own merits, not now clothed with a purple garment but with a robe of glory." Among those listening to the funeral oration was the Goth Alaric.

There seems to be an interconnection between the defeat of the pagans and the defeat of the thought of Jovinian in the sense that both were viewed as enemies of the Church, both were viewed at striking at the root of Christianity - Jovinian because not only were his positions considered wrong but also because of their practical effect: the abandonment of vows, a subject mentioned by St. Jerome in *Adversus Jovinianum* 2, 36, by Pope Siricius in his *Epistula* 7, 3, and by St. Augustine in his *De Haeresibus* 82 and *Retractationes* 2, 48. Further, in the eyes of the pagans the withdrawal of the monks from the world and their self-inflicted mortification appeared to be anti-social and unnatural. Here the interconnection between Jovinian and the pagans is on another level.

Both St. Jerome and St. Ambrose were vehemently opposed to Jovinian. However, in 393 St. Jerome put together his *De viris illustribus*, the famous source which contains biographical sketches of one hundred and thirty-five Christian writers. St. Jerome discusses himself, lists all his writings – even those he intended to

write. But in this work St. Jerome tended to damage the reputation of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Ambrose. Of the latter he wrote: "Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, is still writing today. Therefore, as he is living, I shall refrain from giving my judgment lest I expose myself to the contradictory reproach of too much flattery or too much frankness - *ne in alterutram partem aut adulatio in me reprehendatur aut veritas*. Less than a year later St. Jerome praised St. Ambrose's writings on asceticism, especially on virginity.

In his *Adversus Jovinianum* St. Jerome discusses "four propositions" of Jovinian (*Patrologia Latina* 23, 214). "[Jovinian] says that 'virgins, widows and married women, who have been once passed through the laver of Christ, if they are on a par in other respects, are of equal merit'. [Jovinian] attempts to show 'that they who, with full assurance of faith, have been born again in baptism, cannot be overthrown by the devil'. His third point is 'that there is no difference between abstinence from food and its reception with thanksgiving'. The fourth and last is 'that there is one reward in the kingdom of heaven for all who have kept their baptismal vow'." From St. Ambrose and St. Augustine it is clear that Jovinian had a *fifth* position: that Mary conceived virginally but lost virginity in giving birth [St. Ambrose, *Epistula* 42, 4-7 in *Patrologia Latina* 16, 1125); St. Augustine, *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia* 2, 15; *Contra duas Epistulas Pelagianorum* 1, 4; *Contra Julianum* 1, 4; and *De Haeresibus* 82].

Jovinian placed the greatest emphasis on his *first* position. As a result St. Jerome - his *Adversus Jovinianum* is in two parts - dedicated the entire first book to refute this position. St. Jerome, as usual, sharply criticizes the literary quality of Jovinian's work. This is to be expected from St. Jerome - but F. Valli in his work on Jovinian entitled *Gioviniano* (1953) considers Jovinian's style, based on the extant excerpts, to be quite good.

St. Jerome follows Jovinian point by point. Jovinian's *first* position was that there was no difference in spiritual value between virginity and the married state. St. Jerome points out that Adam and Eve "married" only after their sin. To Jovinian's reference to *Genesis* 1: 28, St. Jerome claims that though marriage was intended to "replenish the earth," virginity replenishes paradise. St. Jerome goes to fanciful extremes to respond to the marriage and polygamy of the patriarchs. He claims also that the persons closest to God were all virgins - for example, Elijah, Joshua, St. John the Baptist. The case of Solomon was a problem for St. Jerome but he claims that Solomon learned his lesson and refers to what Solomon said about marriage in *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* - he also considers

the *Song of Songs* to be a hymn in praise of chastity. Jovinian's reference to St. Peter's marriage is countered by St. Jerome with the assertion that his marriage occurred before he heard the Gospel, that, after becoming a disciple, he abandoned his wife. He considers St. Peter's statement in the *Gospel of St. Matthew* (19: 27) as proof - "Behold, we have left all things and followed you." St. Jerome even puts forth the argument that the reason why St. Peter was less loved by our Lord than St. John was precisely that St. Peter was married, while St. John was a virgin. So extreme is St. Jerome's position that he claims boldly that not even the blood of martyrdom could wash away St. Peter's "defilement" by having been married!

In his references to St. Paul in refuting Jovinian St. Jerome advances in extremism. Moreover, he uses extensively Tertullian's *De Monogamia* without mentioning it. He may well have had the now no longer extant work by Tertullian entitled *De Nuptiarum Angustiis*, a work in which Tertullian made use of the philosophical tradition which was opposed to marriage. In any event, St. Jerome knows this tradition well and uses it. Pagan philosophy seldom excluded the question: "should one marry?" - *εἰ γαμητέον*. Certain Stoics recommended marriage as an important political and social strength. Cicero conveys this tradition in his *De Officiis* (I, 17): *principium urbis et quasi seminarium reipublicae*. Marriage is also extolled as the fullest union of two individuals, a union of body and of soul - *μεχρὶ τῶν σωμάτων, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ψυχῶν*. The Stoics especially carried on the query *περὶ γάμου*, some taking a very positive attitude toward marriage; others considering it contemptuously. The latter view claimed that the man who marries confronts the "humiliation" of "deception" by his wife. They also thought it wearisome to live side by side with the same woman, precisely because a woman was considered to be untrustworthy, frivolous, contentious. Often they would refer to the sorrow caused with the loss of children. Such an attitude toward women, whether found in the Hebraic tradition, the pagan philosophical tradition, or the Christian tradition is lamentable and to be rejected as wholly false, especially from the depth of the Christian vision of the male and female relationship in marriage, a relationship based on the analogy of Christ and the Church. St. Jerome tends to delight in provoking women by his sharp comments - *licet enim in me saevituras sciam plurimas matronarum . . . tamen dicam quod sentio*. St. Jerome ends the first of his two books against Jovinian by listing the famous pagan women who were respected for their chastity. He then catalogues a long list of men who had been deceived by their wives. Jovinian had also

accused those who elevated or supported chastity of Manichaeism. St. Jerome brusquely replies to this - he has never condemned marriage but rather has placed it on a lower spiritual plane than virginity.

St. Jerome's response to Jovinian's *second* position is shorter and somewhat more theological. But St. Jerome encounters a problem when he begins to deal with subjects theologically because his was not a theological mind. St. Jerome's essential response is that in reality persons have fallen. He mentions Moses, Aaron, David and Solomon. He extends the fact of this reality to those who have been baptized - if this is a reality, how can Jovinian believe in the "indefectibility" of the baptized -*baptisma sicut priora peccata dimittit, sic in futurum servare non potest, nisi baptizati omni custodia servaverint cor suum.* Jovinian's second position has an affinity with the Augustinian and Calvinistic doctrine of the *perseverantia sanctorum*. But, based on what can be determined from excerpts, Jovinian never appealed to the eternal and inalterable will of God as did St. Augustine and Calvin. Rather, Jovinian seems to base his position on *I John* 3: 9 and 5: 18. He seems to limit the impossibility of falling to those who have been fully regenerated in baptism - *plena fide in baptismate renati sunt*. Jovinian distinguishes between the baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit.

The *third* position of Jovinian was that there was no difference between abstaining from food and partaking of it with thanksgiving. His point, of course, is to undermine, to diminish the spiritual value of fasting. For Jovinian, relying on *Romans* 14:20 and *I Timothy* 4:3, God has created all animals for the service of man. He calls attention to the fact that Christ attended the marriage feast at Cana, sat at table with Zacchaeus, with publicans and "sinners," and was in effect called a glutton by the Pharisees. In response, St. Jerome, utilizing extensively Tertullian's *De Jejunio* and arguments taken from Porphyry, brings forth an impressive documentation of learning, albeit from the works of others. He mentions natural scientists to substantiate that animals had been made for man but not necessarily for man's belly. He mentions medical authors and philosophers who had promoted the benefits of fasting. And, again following Tertullian, St. Jerome contends that it was as the result of eating that Adam fell and that Esau lost his birthright. And he points out that Moses, Joshua, Saul, Elijah, Daniel, St. John the Baptist, and others had fasted, while it was our Lord Jesus Christ who had "consecrated" fasting. In the fattened belly, he wrote, lies the germ of lust. For the rest, St. Jerome used the *argumentum ad hominum*, claiming that

Jovinian had developed a fine taste for good food, that Jovinian enjoyed spending time at the public baths and mixing easily with women. His attack on Jovinian's character is full of satire but much of what he writes may not be trustworthy. St. Jerome had a penchant for character assassination.

Jovinian went further. In his *fourth* position he denied all gradations of moral development. For Jovinian there are only two categories of persons - the righteous and the unrighteous, the sheep and the goats, the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins. He also appeals to the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, all of whom received equal wages. In response, St. Jerome refers to the parable of the sower, the parable of the talents, the many mansions in the Father's house, the comparison of the resurrected bodies with stars which differ in glory, and the text of *II Corinthians* 9:6: "He who is sowing sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who is sowing for blessings, shall also reap blessings." In his conclusion St. Jerome writes: "And now for a last word to our Epicurus who is sweating out passion in the midst of his gardens among young men and young women. For your followers you have the corpulent, the well-fed, the well-washed. All the handsome boys, all the youth with curled hair that I see, and their well kept locks and cheeks painted with vermilion, form your flock, or rather all that trash grunts among your pigs . . ."

It has remained a mystery why St. Jerome does not discuss the *fifth* position of Jovinian - that Mary's virginity was lost by bearing Jesus. If it had been in the *Commentarii* or *Commentarioli* by Jovinian given to St. Jerome by Pammachius, the son-in-law of St. Paula, it is certain that St. Jerome would not have missed the opportunity to attack this position. Conjecture is that Jovinian promoted this view after being condemned in Rome or that it was verbally promoted.

After St. Ambrose's council which condemned the views of Jovinian, nothing more is heard of him. St. Augustine writes in *De Haeresibus* that his heresy became extinct - *cito ista haeresis oppressa et extincta est*. It is thought that he died in exile before the year 406, for St. Jerome writes in his *Adversus Vigilantium* in 406 that Jovinian dissipated his mind in the enjoyment of his lusts, that he "belched out his spirit."

It should be mentioned that St. Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* did not meet with great success. He was compelled to defend himself in a letter (*Epistula* 49) to his friend Pammachius, claiming that he had not intended to condemn marriage nor to fall into a type of Manichaeism. His very friends who encouraged him to write against Jovinian were stunned by the vehement and hysterical

crudity of his language. St. Jerome had created an opposition because of his extremist position on marriage - he claimed that sexual relations in marriage were an obstacle to prayer and hindered the reception of the eucharist, an evil tolerated only because fornication was worse. His friend Domnio insisted on his clarification of a list of offensive remarks. In St. Jerome's letter to Domnio (*Epistula 50*) we learn that a former lawyer turned monk was lecturing to Roman ladies on morality and the Scriptures. This person denounced both Jovinian and St. Jerome, the latter because of his negative view of marriage. This person is unnamed in the letter but some have speculated that it was none other than Pelagius. St. Jerome's friends in Rome were so compromised by his *Adversus Jovinianum* that Pammachius tried to track down all copies of the work that had been distributed. Pammachius suggested that St. Jerome write another work based on reason, not passion and emotion.

Harnack refers to Jovinian's view as "the sacramental view." He sees in Jovinian a precursor of the "*sola fide*" of the Reformation. "There existed in the Gentile Church movements which deliberately defended reliance on faith alone (the '*sola fide*') and 'the most assured salvation through grace granted in baptism' (*salus per gratiam in baptismo donatam certissima*) . . . accordingly the 'sola fide' . . . was not conceived evangelically, but really meant '*solo sacramento*' - i.e., even if the life did not correspond to the Christian demand for holiness. But there were Christian teachers who had really grasped the evangelical thesis, and Jovinian is to be counted one of them, even if his opponents be correct (and I am doubtful of this) in taking offence at his conduct; and even if it be certain that his doctrine, in the circumstances of the time, could and did promote laxity. His main positions were as follows: - 1. The natural man is in the state of sin. Even the slightest sin separates from God and exposes to damnation. 2. The state of the Christian rests on baptism and faith; these produce regeneration. 3. Regeneration is the state in which Christ is in us, and we are in Christ; there are no degrees in it, for this personal relationship either does or does not exist. Where it does, there is righteousness. 4. It is a relation formed by love that is in question: Father and Son dwell in believers; but where there is such an indweller, the possessor can want for nothing. 5. Accordingly all blessings are bestowed with and in this relationship; nothing can be thought of as capable of being added. 6. Since all blessings issue from this relationship, there can be no special meritorious works; for at bottom there is only one good, and that we possess as the best beloved children of God, who now participate in the divine

nature, and that good will be fully revealed in Heaven. 7. In him who occupies this relationship of faith and love there is nothing to be condemned; he can commit no sin which would separate him from God; the devil cannot make him fall, for he ever recovers himself as a child of God by faith and penitence. The relationship fixed in baptism through faith is something lasting and indissoluble. 8. But such an one must not only be baptised; he must have received baptism with perfect faith, and by faith evince baptismal grace. He must labour and wrestle earnestly - though not in monkish efforts, for they are valueless - not in order to deserve something further, but that he may not lose what he has received. To him, too, the truth applies that there are no small and great sins, but that the heart is either with God or the devil. 9. Those who are baptised in Christ, and cling to him with confident faith, form the one, true Church. To her belong all the glorious promises: she is bride, sister, mother, and is never without her bridegroom. She lives in one faith, and is never violated or divided, but is a pure virgin. We may call Jovinian actually a 'witness of antiquity to the truth', and a 'Protestant of his time', though we must not mistake a point of difference: the indwelling of God and Christ in the baptised is more strongly emphasised than the power of faith." For Harnack's fullest exposition on Jovinian, see his article in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* I (1891), pp. 82-178.

VIGILANTIUS

Vigilantius, originally from Gaul - from Calagurris in Aquitaine - later became a priest in Barcelona. In 404 St. Jerome received a letter from Gaul (*Epistula 109* contains his reply), a letter which deeply disturbed him. It came from Riparius, an educated priest of Aquitaine. Riparius had written to inform St. Jerome that a person whom he (Jerome) knew was attacking the custom of keeping vigils and the respect for relics. The person was none other than the same Vigilantius who had visited St. Jerome in Bethlehem in 395 and who had been introduced by letters of recommendation by Paulinus of Nola. The stay was brief, ended in a quarrel, and Vigilantius spread the word on his return that St. Jerome was sympathetic with the Origenists. Jerome's natural character coupled by his dislike for Vigilantius resulted in his writing a brief but scandalous and undignified response. In this letter to Riparius St. Jerome calls Vigilantius "Dormitianus," the dormant or sleeping one, in contrast to his name which meant "the vigilant one." He refers to his lips as "stinking lips" spewing forth slime. He suggests that his tongue be cut out - failing that, he should be

treated as insane. St. Jerome also attacked his bishop for not silencing him. He does, however, include some relevant response to the issue. He pointed out that rather than worshipping relics, Christians "honored" relics for the purpose of respect. He assembled a list of texts in support of vigils. He requested that Riparius send him a copy of what Vigilantius had written. He waited two years before receiving this.

During these two years of waiting St. Jerome was deeply involved in controversy. He was in the last round of his controversy with St. Augustine and he was conspiring with Theophilus of Alexandria to injure the reputation of St. John Chrysostom. It was during this time that the Isaurians devastated the coast of Phoenicia and Galilee (see Theodoret, *Religious History* - his biography of monks, not his *Church History*, 10). In 406 St. Jerome became dangerously ill during Lent - "I reached the door of death." In the autumn of 406 the monk Sisinnius came from Aquitaine with copies of Vigilantius' writings sent from Riparius.

The writings of Vigilantius have disappeared. All our knowledge derives from St. Jerome's brief and abusive work, a work intended to devastate Vigilantius. Nevertheless, St. Jerome's work gives us not only some excerpts from the original but also a clear idea of what Vigilantius taught. In its personal vindictiveness and its general abusiveness the work is very characteristic of St. Jerome's personality. "There have been monsters on earth, centaurs, syrens, leviathans, behemoths . . . Gaul alone has bred no monsters, but has ever abounded in brave and noble men - when, suddenly, there has arisen one Vigilantius, who should rather be called Dormitantius, contending in an impure spirit against the Spirit of Christ, and forbidding to honor the graves of the martyrs. He rejects the Vigils - only at Easter should we sing hallelujah. He declares abstemiousness to be heresy, and chastity a nursery of licentiousness - *pudicitiam, libidinis seminarium.* . . This innkeeper of Calagurris mingles water with wine, and would, according to the old art, combine his poison with the authentic faith. He opposes virginity, hates chastity, protests against the fastings of the saints, and would amuse himself with the Psalms of David only during jovial feastings. It is horrendous to hear that even bishops are involved with his wantonness, if those deserve the name of bishop, who ordain only married persons deacons, and trust not the chastity of the celibate."

There are two lines of response in St. Jerome's *Adversus Vigilantium*. One is caricature and verbal assault, reducing all of Vigilantius' position to ridicule. The other is an answer, however

brief, based on some type of reasoning. It is possible to reconstruct Vigilantius' views from St. Jerome's work. There are in general five essential positions. *First*, he attacks the devotional life of the Church. The devotion to the relics of martyrs was sheer superstition. He called the Christians who "worshipped" "wretched bones" of the dead "suppliants to refuse" and "idolaters." To carry these "remnants of dust" in processions was offensive. To offer prayers to saints was of no value, for they are at rest with God - it was no more than a useless practice. To light candles by the graves or shrines of martyrs and saints was a pagan practice. His *second* position is that night vigils were merely an extension of the original practice of the Easter Vigil and they should be stopped. He adds to this the notion that "misconduct" can take place in the darkness. His *third* position is a rejection of the ascetic ideals of fasting, monasticism, and virginity. He believed that the clergy should be married. His argument in essence is that if all were to be virgins, it would result in the end of humanity. If all were to become monks, it would result in no one to bring the Gospel to the world. His *fourth* position was that the sending of alms to Jerusalem to support an idle, lazy group of monks should be stopped. His *fifth* position was that it was unwise to give away all one's property at one time. It was wiser to distribute it gradually and only to those in real need.

Leaving aside the uncouth caricatures in St. Jerome's response, certain counter-arguments are made. St. Jerome repeats the distinction he made in his letter to Riparius: there is a difference between the respect Christians give to martyrs and the worship reserved for God alone. It is proper to call upon the saints because they are in fact alive with Christ and therefore their prayers are as effective now as when they walked on earth. To light candles is a reasonable and understandable form of piety. Vigilantius' criticism of this practice is, writes St. Jerome, indicative of the very same misunderstanding and insensitivity shown by the disciples when the woman used her expensive ointment on Jesus (*Matthew* 26: 6-13). The sending of alms to Jerusalem is admonished by St. Paul in all his writings, though St. Jerome admits that all the poor everywhere should be helped. He also agrees that not everyone is called to abandon all worldly goods. But he clearly points out that this was the ideal held up by Jesus for anyone desiring perfection. There was no argument on the subject of virginity, for St. Jerome admitted that few aspire to it. What is curious is that St. Jerome's only defense for monasticism is based on a negative reality - monastic withdrawal is necessary for those who are weak and can only be safe if removed from the temptations of the world.

St. Jerome's *Adversus Vigilantium* did not destroy Vigilantius. It appears that some bishops did in fact sympathize with his views. He was given a priestly position in Barcelona. Vigilantius' influence, especially in Gaul, was not extinguished. Evidence of this is found in the work of Faustus of Rhegium: *Ut transeamus ad sanctorum communionem. Illos hic sententia ista confundit, qui sanctorum et amicorum dei cineres non in honore debere esse blasphemant, qui beatorum martyrum gloriosam memoriam sacrorum reverentia monumentorum colendam esse non credunt. In symbolum praevaricati sunt, et Christo in fonte mentiti sunt, et per hanc infidelitatem in medio sinu vitae locum morti aperuerunt.* Faustus claims that the words "*communio sanctorum*" were directed at the "followers" of Vigilantius who rejected the veneration of the saints.

Harnack's brief words about Vigilantius again reveal how close he feels to personalities such as Marcion, Jovinian, and Vigilantius. "The Spaniard, Vigilantius, even surpassed Jovinian, both in range and intensity, in the energy with which he attacked the excrescences of monkery, relic-worship, virginity, etc."

HELVIDIUS

Helvidius was a layman in Rome who was provoked into writing against asceticism by a work circulated by a monk named Carterius and by St. Jerome's zeal for and promotion of the ascetical life while he was in Rome. In general, Roman Christians were not overly prone towards monasticism and extreme asceticism. St. Jerome was a newcomer to Rome in 382 and 383. He won the confidence of Pope Damasus. But his advocacy for a new, more extreme form of asceticism did not meet with general approval. Before his influence began to be felt there were ascetics in Rome, including women. A woman influenced by Egyptian monastic ideals was still able to manage her home, enjoy the visit of friends, and pray at the graves of martyrs. St. Jerome had a different program. The famous case of Blesilla caused much trouble for St. Jerome. Details are found in *Epistula* 39,6. Blesilla had embraced extreme asceticism, as had Eustochium. Blesilla died, and at her funeral her mother collapsed. Those present were indignant. "Is this not precisely what we have often said? She is weeping for her daughter, taken by death by her fastings . . . How long must we refrain from driving the reprehensible group of monks from our city? Why are they not stoned or thrown into the Tiber? Unhappy Paula. It is the monks who have led her astray." St. Jerome was the leader of the "reprehensible group of monks."

All this provoked Helvidius. He decided to strike at the core of St. Jerome's belief that celibacy was a superior form of life. He decided that there was no better way to attack this contention of St Jerome than by attacking the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. We have no reliable information on who Helvidius actually was. Gennadius of Marseilles (fl. 470) claims in his *De viris illustribus* (32), a continuation of St. Jerome's work by the same name, that he was a pupil of Auxentius, the Arian bishop of Milan. If Gennadius is correct, then it is interesting historically, for Auxentius was a Cappadocian by birth, ignorant of Latin, ordained about 343 by Gregory, the Arian intruder of Alexandria. Despite Auxentius' ignorance of Latin, he became the most influential supporter of Arianism in the West. He was appointed to the see of Milan by Constantius in 355. Auxentius was condemned for heresy at the Council of Ariminum (359), at the Council of Paris (360), and at the Council of Rome in 372. Despite these condemnations and despite attacks on him by St. Hilary of Poitiers and St. Athanasius, Auxentius held his position as bishop of Milan until his death in 373 or 374. He was succeeded by St. Ambrose. Some scholars think that the Eastern characteristics of the Ambrosian Liturgy are the result of Auxentius' practice.

The entire controversy with Helvidius is historically significant. Its essence was over asceticism. The five main arguments advanced by Helvidius would be reasserted during the Reformation. And St. Jerome's response to these positions will form in essence the views of the Latin Church. To strike at the heart of asceticism Helvidius asserts one basic principle which he supports with five arguments. The basic assertion was that Mary, although a virgin in conceiving Jesus, lived thereafter a thoroughly normal married life with Joseph and bore him several other children. The *first* basis of support he derived from *Matthew* 1:18 and 1:25. The *second* basis of support he derives from *Luke* 2:7. The *third* comes from the mention of the "brothers and sisters" of Jesus. The *fourth* is an appeal to older Latin writers, specifically to Tertullian and Victorinus of Pettau. His *fifth* support is the general notion that to recognize that Mary had been a real wife to Joseph does her no dishonor.

St. Jerome's response will shape the future Mariology of the Latin Church and also the future teaching on sexuality in the Latin Church. His basic response - excluding all the caricatures - is to utilize Scriptural texts in such a way to reveal that Helvidius' interpretation is not the only one. Moreover, it is an incorrect one. He analyzes the Scriptural texts put forth by Helvidius and points out, for example, that the "until" in no way implies that thereafter

the situation was altered, for "until" simply asserts a reality up to a certain point without in any way implying a change of that reality thereafter. The "first-born" means precisely that - Jesus was the "first-born." It in no way implies a "second-born." Rather, it intensifies the fact that she had no children prior to Jesus.

St. Jerome rejects Helvidius' appeal to Victorinus and to Tertullian. He claims that Helvidius has misunderstood Victorinus and that Tertullian was a schismatic - *de Tertulliano quidem nihil amplius dico, quam Ecclesiae hominem non fuisse*. Since Tertullian was a schismatic, his testimony is not trustworthy. St. Jerome points out that the orthodox fathers all held to the perpetual virginity of Mary.

The superiority of celibacy, writes St. Jerome, is proven not only by Mary but also by Joseph, whom St. Jerome considers a life-long virgin! The superiority of celibacy is also confirmed in the writings of St. Paul. Evidence from daily life also confirms this, for the married life is one of distraction and tribulation. His invective is continued in his concluding words to Helvidius: "O you most ignorant of men. Without taking the trouble of consulting the Scriptures, you have soiled with your slime the Virgin. Legend speaks of the fool who, in order to be talked about, found nothing better to do than to set fire to the temple of Diana . . . Following the example of this monstrosity, you also have fouled the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit by presuming to make issue therefrom a whole cartload of brothers and sisters. Behold, you have arrived at your goal. Your crime has rendered you famous!"

At this time in his life St. Jerome did not adhere to the doctrine of the virginity of Mary *in partu*. Years later he will accept this view also. He was obviously influenced by St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, as well as by others on this point.

St. Jerome was successful. Helvidius disappears from history and his teaching was discredited, to be revived only during the Reformation. But even among Reformation theologians *the rejection of the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary* was not shared by everyone. Luther, for example, thought that it was incompatible with the dignity of Mary that, after giving birth to the Son of God and the Savior of the world, she should have borne ordinary children of men. Luther referred to Helvidius as a "gross fool." Other theologians in the Reformation tradition share Luther's view.

The views of St. Jerome prevailed as the accepted views of the Latin Church. Celibacy extended to the clergy; in the Eastern Church it did not. Marriage came to be considered "a remedy against sin"; in the Eastern Church it did not. Marriage was to be

used exclusively for the propagation of children without enjoyment; such a view did not prevail in the Eastern Church. To quote a Roman Catholic scholar, "the *Adversus Helvidium* is the first treatise by a Latin specially devoted to Mariology, and this realm of ecclesiastical knowledge is largely due to Jerome."

AERIUS OF SEBASTE

Aerius of Sebaste, a priest of Pontus, was initially an associate of Eustathius, bishop of Sebaste, who also ordained him. He was a part of the ascetical movement of Eustathius but about 360 the two quarrelled and Aerius separated from the movement. He was himself an ascetic. Yet he opposed fasting and the establishment of prescribed times of fasting throughout the year. He and his followers refused to fast during Holy Week. They did, however, keep a voluntary fast on Sundays. St. Epiphanius in his *Refutation of all Heresies* (75) ascribes other heretical views to Aerius of Sebaste. According to St. Epiphanius, Aerius denied any distinction between bishops and priests, any "superiority" of bishops to priests. He was also opposed to the celebration of Easter, referring to it as a "Jewish" superstition. He based his opposition to the celebration of Easter on*I Corinthians* 5: 7: "Purge out the old leaven in order that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For indeed our Passover was Christ sacrificed." St. Epiphanius also accuses him of being an Arian. And he opposed prayers for the dead. He was persecuted by the hierarchy and forced to live in caves and open fields with his followers. His followers, called Aerians, are mentioned by St. Philaster (d.c. 397), bishop of Brescia. St. Philaster wrote a work about 385 which attempted to refute twenty-eight Jewish heresies and one hundred and twenty-eight Christian heresies. This work is in general very poorly put together. Despite its flaws, it appears to have served a need in the Latin West where St. Augustine drew heavily from it. The "Aerians" are mentioned in heresy number seventy-two. They are also mentioned by St. Augustine in his *De haeresibus* (53). It would appear, however, that his followers died out not too long after his death.

MARTIN LUTHER

Luther's final rejection of monasticism derives from both his personal experience as an Augustinian monk and from his - to use his own words - new interpretation of Scripture which led to his theological positions. To understand the Reformation it is essential

to understand Luther. To understand Luther it is essential to understand the totality of the situation in which he lived and his own personality. To be fair and to do justice to Luther and his thought would require one or two substantial volumes. Here, however, it is necessary to mention only certain highlights - and indeed this involves the risk of diminishing the fulness of Luther's total thought. The other alternative is to say nothing. But Luther's influence on the Reformation, his influence on Protestantism in general, his influence on the Roman Catholic Church, his influence on the social, political, and economic structure of his epoch, and his continuing influence on history and thought, in addition to his eradication of monasticism, is so strong that it cannot go neglected.

Luther's experience of fear in his encounter with the thunderstorm is well-known. It was July 2, 1505. Luther had already received his *magister artium* in February of 1505. He had visited his family in Mansfeld. Returning to the University at Erfurt, Luther encountered a storm near the city of Stotternheim. A thunderbolt struck directly in front of him. Overcome by fear, Luther cried out to St. Anna and vowed to become a monk if protected from the storm. Such was not an unusual occurrence in mediaeval Christianity. But Luther has admitted to acute depression for as long as six months prior to his entry into a monastery. Luther suffered from such attacks of depression throughout his life. Of at least five monasteries in Erfurt Luther selected the Black Cloister monastery of the Augustinian Hermits. This monastery had an excellent reputation precisely for the cultivation of the ascetical ideal.

Luther has made the comment that the Devil is very inactive during the first year of one's entry into monasticism. True, he was adjusting to a new, highly regulated life, a life in which all his time was governed and regulated. Despite that, it could very well be that his first year of monastic life passed without the tormenting attacks he later ascribed to the devil. His time was spent in confession, in reading the Latin Bible, in prayer, in meditation, in companionship, and in song. Luther loved singing. It had been a part of his early life and it was a source of joy that never left him.

This quiet life was soon to be radically altered. The next thunderbolt struck when he celebrated his first mass. When he came to the words "We offer unto Thee, the living, the true , the eternal God," Luther was seized by deep terror. He later wrote upon reflection that these words frightened him, terrorized him, for how could he, a miserable man full of sin and composed of dust and ashes, speak to the living, eternal and true God? It was, he writes, the "majesty" of God which filled him not only with awe

but also with terror. Here is the beginning of his spiritual path, for he was always to be preoccupied with the reality of Divine Majesty. It filled him with terror, it repelled him. Yet he knew that somehow he must be reconciled with this Divine Majesty. And herein we find already the germ of the central doctrine of the Reformation - how is man reconciled with, how is man "justified" by God? There was nothing within him that could provide such a reconciliation with Divine Majesty. But the Church had a "way," the Church had a "system."

The Latin Church at that time had a developed doctrine of the "treasury of merits." The development of this system in the Latin West is interesting in itself, and it is something unique to the Latin Church. Such a doctrine was never developed in the Eastern Church. Our Lord provided the Church with an unlimited supply of "merits," precisely because he was also God. In addition, the Virgin Mary had more "merits" than anyone could need for salvation. And further, the "merits" from the entirety of the saints added to this boundless "treasury of merits." The Roman Church, always inclined to a more juridical and legalistic tendency than that of the Eastern Church, had developed a doctrine of the "right of transfer" of these "merits" from the "treasury of merits" to those persons in need of spiritual help on the road to salvation. The theory is deeper than many often portray it - rather, make a caricature of it. But in practice it was a theory which could easily be abused, as with most aspects of religious life. In the mind of the Roman Church the Pope was the "vicar" of Christ on earth by virtue of his succession from St. Peter. Since the keys to the kingdom and the power to "bind and loose" on earth was give to St. Peter, the Pope, as his successor, possessed the right and the efficacy to transfer these "merits." The process of transferring these merits to someone in need was an "indulgence." Luther accepted this system without question.

His first shock appears to have come when he was visiting Rome in 1510. The Augustinian Order was required to send two persons to Rome because of a dispute. Luther was one of those who was sent. In Rome Luther cared little about anything historical, cared little about the "eternal city." He used this opportunity to consider himself a pilgrim and to receive as many indulgences as he could for himself and for his family. The business of his order and his daily devotions took up time, but the remaining time was spent in the quest for indulgences. Rome offered more possibilities for indulgences than any other city in the world. For the first time it appears that a sense of some doubt about the efficacy of indulgences entered Luther's being from an

experiential perspective. Still, he held to his faith. Luther was a serious man in quest of reconciliation with the Divine Majesty of God. The Italian clergy shocked him. He found them to be frivolous, lax, and ignorant. They could go through six or seven masses before Luther completed one. Their flippancy and blasphemy disturbed Luther but did not shake his faith in the Church. Luther later speaks of Italian clergy addressing the sacrament of the Eucharist in total unbelief and blasphemy - "Bread you are and bread you will remain, wine you are and wine you will remain."

Upon his return from Rome Luther was sent to the Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg, a town in which he would spend the rest of his life. There the head of the order was Dr. Johann von Staupitz, a man who was to be Luther's spiritual father. Luther later wrote that had it not been for Dr. Staupitz he would have sunk into hell. In addition to the system of indulgences, Luther used the sacrament of confession as a means to be "reconciled" with the Divine Majesty. Luther approached confession with the same seriousness with which he approached life in general. He confessed daily, often for six hours. He continued to search and research his memory to be certain that no sin had been forgotten. At times Staupitz became frustrated with Luther. At one point he told Luther that it was not God who was angry at him but Luther who was angry at God. Staupitz appears to have put his finger on a central problem in Luther's psychological make-up - he thought that Luther's preoccupation with sin was the indication of a "sick soul." Luther fell into spiritual despair. He had nightmares. He trembled at the sound of the wind. His fear of death increased. Staupitz attempted to redirect Luther's attention away from every petty sin to the general condition of man. Staupitz in no sense rejected the penitential and confessional sacrament but he was a mystic and believed that one had to surrender oneself wholly to the love of God. Staupitz thought that Luther's over concentration, his obsession "to achieve merit" was somewhat arrogant, a form of self-assertion. Indeed, it was Staupitz who insisted that Luther "yield" to God rather than to "strive." Luther did, in fact, attempt to implement this suggestion. But, as always, Luther fell again into despair - he felt alienated from God. As Luther later relates, he in fact did not really accept the mystical approach of Staupitz, though he did try to implement it. He did not accept it because he could not believe that Almighty God, the Divine Majesty, could in any way welcome the filth of impure man. Staupitz gave good advice to Luther. He continued to tell him that he was overcomplicating spiritual life and that the one needful thing was to love God. But

Luther also tells us in his *Commentary on Galatians* - the text based on his lectures from 1531- that Staupitz "was wont to say": "I have vowed unto God above a thousand times that I would become a better man. But I never performed that which I vowed. Hereafter I will make no such vow: for I have now learned by experience that I am not able to perform it. Unless therefore God be favorable and merciful unto me for Christ's sake, and grant unto me a blessed and a happy hour when I shall depart out of this miserable life, I shall not be able with all my vows and all my good deeds to stand before him."

Moreover, Luther had a second problem. Not only could he not understand that Almighty God could love impure man but he also could not understand how impure man could love God, a God who is a consuming fire, a God who is angry, a God who judges and damns.

His despair then brings him to the most frightening thought of all - what if God is not just? Luther spent much time reading St. Augustine and was influenced greatly by St. Augustine's doctrine of predestination and original sin. The thought of the possibility that God is not just is interconnected with his reading of St. Augustine, despite the fact that St. Augustine claims that the "justice of God" is preserved in predestination. St. Augustine did not teach the same doctrine of redemption that Luther would develop. Therefore, it was difficult for Luther to see any justice in predestination on the one hand and the Church's system of merit on the other. There was a gulf, an abyss, and it led Luther to despair upon despair. Staupitz had both helped Luther momentarily and also harmed him, for Staupitz was not only a mystic. He was also an Augustinian monk. To be an Augustinian monk did not necessarily mean that one accepted all aspects of St. Augustine's theology - especially not necessarily St. Augustine's doctrine of predestination. But this was not the case with Staupitz. Nor was it the case of the Augustinian order at Wittenberg. There was a strong Augustinian emphasis at the University of Wittenberg. In 1517 Staupitz released for publication a book on predestination - *Libellus de executione aeternae praedestinationis*. In the same year Staupitz published his book entitled *Von der Liebe Gottes* [*On the Love of God*], a book which emphasized election and "pure, unmixed grace." Luther began to struggle with the doctrine of predestination as early as 1509 or 1510. At that time, however, he would have been inclined initially to interpret it as the Occamists did - that predestination is based on God's foreknowledge of man's conduct. But notes found in books which Luther was reading at that time reveal that he was already leaning toward St. Augustine's full

doctrine of predestination. In brief, St. Augustine's doctrine of predestination was that man was eternally predestined to either paradise or hell, either eternally willed by God to be saved or to be damned - "predestined unto eternal death, predestined unto everlasting destruction." The elect are not elected because of conduct or because they have believed but they are elected that they will believe and walk in proper conduct. It appears that in these early stages of grappling with St. Augustine's doctrine of predestination Luther held back at first only on the doctrine of irresistible grace. Luther's fear that he was predestined to damnation was the result of the influence of Staupitz and St. Augustine.

Luther began to read St. Augustine and the Bible quite simultaneously from 1510 on. Luther's *Commentary of Romans* reveals that he had accepted the full teaching of St. Augustine on this subject. He was lecturing on *Romans* from November 3, 1515 through September 7, 1516. In 1515 Luther was also reading St. Augustine's *De Spiritu et Littera* [*On the Spirit and the Letter*], a work in which St. Augustine's view of grace, original sin, and predestination are taught in their fullest sense. Luther, like St. Augustine, believed that the human race was a *massa perditionis*. This is two years before the posting of his famous *Ninety-Five Theses*. Luther's *Commentary on Romans* consists of notes from his lectures and these very notes remained in manuscript form and unpublished until 1908. In these notes Luther clearly believes in the complete doctrine of predestination as early as 1515: "Here [St. Paul] takes up the doctrine of predestination or election . . . the doctrine . . . is full of sweet comfort for the elect and for all who have the Holy Spirit. But it is most bitter and hard for the wisdom of the flesh. . . If there would not be this divine purpose, but our salvation would rest upon our will or work, it would be based upon chance. How easy in that case could one single evil hinder or destroy it! . . . God allows the elect to encounter so many evil things as are here named, precisely to underscore that they are saved not by their merit, but by God's election, God's unchangeable and firm purpose." These notes by Luther are extensive and cover the subject of predestination in a rather complete sense. It has nothing to do with good works, with the freedom of the will, for the free will is in utter bondage, is totally corrupted by sin. Luther's view on the subject never changed.

In 1545 Luther wrote an *Introduction* to his Latin writings. Luther writes that it was while lecturing on *Romans* and *Galatians* that a new understanding came to him: "I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners . . . as if indeed it is not

enough that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the Gospel and also by the Gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath! . . . At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, He who through faith is righteous shall live'. There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the Gospel; that is, *the passive righteousness* with which merciful God justifies us by faith . . . Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. *There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me.*" In this same paragraph Luther writes that he had read St. Augustine's *De Spiritu et Littera* [*On the Spirit and the Letter*]. St. Augustine, writes Luther, had a similar understanding but he "did not explain all things concerning imputation clearly." Here it is clear that Luther combines St. Augustine's teaching on predestination, original sin, and grace with an Anselmian understanding of the "transaction" of the Incarnation and the Cross, with St. Anselm's doctrine of the atonement. To all this, Luther now adds a new dimension. This, indeed, is a radical revolution from the thought of early Christianity.

After interpreting St. Paul with his "new" understanding, Luther writes: "Unless you give these terms this connotation, you will never comprehend Paul's epistle to the *Romans*, nor any other book of Holy Scripture. Beware, then, of all teachers who use these terms differently, no matter who they may, whether Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Origen, or their like; or even persons more eminent than they." He writes further: "But this most excellent righteousness, of faith I mean (which God through Christ, without works, imputes to us) . . . consists not in our works, but is clean contrary: that is to say, a mere passive righteousness. For in this we work nothing, we render nothing unto God, but only we receive and suffer another to work in us, that is to say, God. Therefore it seems good to me to call this righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness, passive righteousness . . . For there is no comfort of conscience so firm and so sure, as this passive righteousness is . . . Why, do we then nothing? Do we work nothing for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer: Nothing at all. For the nature of this righteousness is to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing whatsoever of the law or of works."

Luther had developed and formed his basic theology before posting his *Ninety-Five Theses*. He certainly understood that his "new understanding" was in great contradiction not only with tradition but with Roman Catholic doctrine. Why does he wait before his proclamation of his new understanding? The answer is both simple and complex. One cannot but think that Luther waited for the correct opportunities rather than to risk a speedy excommunication.

In 1521, after Luther had set the Reformation in progress, he appeared before the Diet of Worms. It would appear that between 1517 and 1521 Luther was hoping that the new movement would also help to unify Germany. The Diet of Worms was both the beginning and the end, as it were, of Luther's hope of a unified Reformation. The Edict issued by the Diet of Worms called for the arrest of Lutheran ministers. Luther's life seemed to be in danger. It was at this time that Frederick the Wise staged a mock arrest and put Luther in the Wartburg Castle under the disguise of "Junker George." Until this time the Reformation had not really been brought home to the common man. That was about to change, for things were beginning to happen back in Wittenberg, and they happened with a quickness that not even Luther had expected.

In 1520 Luther wrote *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* and *An Address to the German Nobility*. In both works Luther had asserted that priests should be married - God had ordained marriage and it was Scriptural. In his typically ranging language Luther had said that it was better for a priest to have a wife even if it meant throwing out the entirety of canon law. While Luther was in protective custody in the Wartburg Castle, priests in Wittenberg began to marry. Then monks and nuns. Luther was astonished that monks and nuns were marrying because he considered this different than the marriage of a priest, a difference constituted by the fact that a monk and a nun had taken a voluntary vow. Yet he had already spoken out sharply against "vows" in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. His language in that book certainly created the impression that he would support the renunciation of monastic vows. But he was deeply concerned, still not ready for this step - that is, for a monk or nun to renounce the vow and then marry. Perhaps things were getting out of hand? Perhaps things were going too rapidly? Perhaps this time the very action was wrong? Luther immediately immersed himself in the study of Scripture specifically to study the question of whether a monk or nun could break a vow and marry. His response came with the publication of his *On Monastic Vows*. His conclusion was that there was no Scriptural support for a monastic vow. The very notion created a

distinction among Christians, a distinction which Luther considered to be thoroughly opposed to Scripture. There were no "higher orders" of Christians in the Scripture. The vow was therefore invalid. Luther commented that he now understood why God had allowed him to become a monk - so that he could testify against monasticism from his very own experience. The monasteries in Wittenberg now began to empty.

Other changes quickly took place in Wittenberg. The Reformation was now involving the common man. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* Luther had attacked the Roman Church's teaching that the mass was a sacrifice. It was not. Rather, it was a thanksgiving service. At this point Luther still permitted masses for the dead but only on very specific conditions. In Wittenberg, however, his friends and associates stopped saying masses for the dead. This led Luther to reconsider. His response was that no mass for the dead could be said, that the practice was wholly opposed to Scripture. Years later in one of his sermons - the one commenting on the text of the Gospel for the First Sunday after Trinity - Luther speaks his mind on this subject. "Shall we pray for the dead? . . . Now since it is uncertain and no one knows whether final judgment has been passed upon these sins, it is not sin if you pray for them. But in this way, that you let it rest in uncertainty and speak thus: Dear God, if the departed souls be in a state that they may yet be helped, then I pray that you would be gracious. And when you have thus prayed once or twice, then let it be sufficient and commend them unto God. . . But that we should institute masses, vigils, and prayers to be repeated forever for the dead every year, as if God had not heard us the year before, is the work of Satan and is death itself, where God is mocked by unbelief, and such prayers are nothing but blasphemy of God. Therefore take warning and turn from these practices. God is not moved by these anniversary ceremonies, but by the prayer of the heart, of devotion and of faith - that will help the departed souls if anything will. Vigils, masses, indeed help the bellies of the priests, monks and nuns, but departed souls are not helped by them and God is thus mocked." These changes did not escaped the common man. Indeed, the entire social life at Wittenberg was involved, including that of Frederick the Wise. Frederick had a staff of twenty-five priests expressly for the purpose of saying masses for the dead. Serious changes were now taking place that would not only change the theology of the Church but would also alter the very fabric of the spiritual life of the common man. Violence broke out in Wittenberg.

Luther was simultaneously ecstatic and depressed. Ecstatic because he now wanted to expedite the Reformation. Depressed because he was opposed to violence and civil disobedience, as he revealed by his actions during the Peasants' War in 1524-1525. But the essential break in theology had been made. And with it a great change in the form of spirituality. Asceticism and monasticism were rejected. Harnack, who is certainly not anti-Luther, has written accurately: "Luther demolished monachism, asceticism, and everything in the shape of merit." "From [Luther's] attacks on the [Roman Catholic] doctrine of salvation and on monastic perfection there necessarily followed, for him, his attacks on the sacraments, on priestism and churchism and the ecclesiastical worship of God." Another Protestant scholar has correctly described Luther's effect as that of a "demolition" of the monastic ideal of a "state of perfection."

What Luther himself has written on monasticism and asceticism would fill volumes. A sampling of his attitude is sufficient here. In his *Brief Answer to Duke George's Latest Book* Luther writes that "if ever a monk got into heaven by monkery, I too would have found my way there; all my convent comrades will bear me out in that." And "God be praised that I did not sweat myself to death, otherwise I should have been long ago in the depths of hell with my monk's baptism. For what I knew of Christ was nothing more than that he was a stern judge, from whom I would have fled, and yet could not escape."

Luther's *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* was the result not of his early lectures on *Galatians* but of his lectures given in 1531. Luther himself considered it one of his most important books. "Of this difference between the law and the Gospel there is nothing to be found in the books of the monks, canonists, school-divines; no, nor in the books of the ancient fathers. Augustine did somewhat understand this difference. Jerome and others knew it not." "The schoolmen, the monks, and such others, never felt any spiritual temptations, and therefore they fought only for the repressing and overcoming of fleshly lust and lechery, and being proud of that victory which they never yet obtained, they thought themselves far better and more holy than married men. . . they put righteousness in the keeping of their foolish and wicked vows."

"When I was a monk I thought by and by that I was utterly cast away, if at any time I felt the concupiscence of the flesh: that is to say, if I felt any evil motion, fleshly lust, wrath, hatred, or envy against any brother. I tried many ways. I went to confession daily, but it profited me not; for the concupiscence of my flesh did always

return, so that I could not rest, but was continually vexed with these thoughts: This or that sin you have committed; you are infected with envy, with impatience, and such other sins; therefore you are entered into this holy order in vain, and all your good works are unprofitable. . . When I was a monk I did oftentimes most heartily wish that I might once be so happy as to see the conversation and life of some saint or holy man. But in the meantime I imagined such a saint as lived in the wilderness abstaining from meat and drink and living only with roots of herbs and cold water: and this opinion of those monstrous saints, I had learned not only out of the books of the sophisters, but also out of the books of the Fathers. For thus writes St. Jerome in a certain place: 'As touching meats and drinks I say nothing, forasmuch as it is excess, that even such as are weak and feeble should use cold water, or eat any sodden thing'. But now in the light of the Gospel we plainly see who they are whom Christ and his Apostles call saints: not they which live a single life, or [straitly observe days, meats, apparel, and such other things], or in outward appearance do other great and monstrous works (as we read of many in the Lives of the Fathers); but they which being called by the sound of the Gospel and baptized, do believe that they be sanctified and cleansed by the death and blood of Christ. . . Whoever then believes in Christ, whether they be men or women, bond or free, are all saints: not by their own works, but by the works of God, which they receive by faith . . . To conclude, they are saints through a passive, not an active holiness."

"Jerome, Gregory, Benedict, Bernard, and others (whom monks set before them as a perfect example of chastity and of all Christian virtues) could never come so far as to feel no concupiscence of the flesh. Yea, they felt it, and that very strongly. Which thing they acknowledge and plainly confess in many places of their books. Therefore God did not only not impute unto them these light faults, but even those pernicious errors which some of them brought into the Church. Gregory was the author of the private mass, than which there never was any greater abomination in the Church of the New Testament. Others devised monkery. . . The monks, being puffed up with this opinion of righteousness, thought themselves to be so holy because of their holy kind of life that they sold their righteousness and holiness to others, although they were convinced by the testimony of their own hearts that they were unclean. So pernicious and pestilent a poison it is for a man to trust in his own righteousness, and to think himself to be clean."

The attack on asceticism and monasticism is found throughout the writings of Luther. He considered this form of spirituality to be

a monstrous perversion, an evil distortion of the essence of Christianity. It must not only be opposed but also eradicated. Therefore he freely brings up the subject whenever possible. His sermons seldom miss the opportunity to refer to this perverted corruption of Christianity. In 1528 Luther preached a series of sermons on the *Catechism*. In discussing the fact that God has given us everything, even our possessions, he asks: "But why has he given them to you and what do you think he gave them to you for? In order to found monasteries?" In another sermon given on the Gospel texts - the "Sixth Sunday after Trinity - Luther continues this line of thought. This time it is in connection with his commentary on *Matthew* 5: 20-26, and in the context of behavior towards one's neighbor. "Now look at the kind of life we have led hitherto. We have been going to St. James, to Aix-la-Chapelle, to Rome, to Jerusalem, have built churches, paid for masses, and withal have forgotten our neighbor. This now is the wrong side up. The Lord, however, here says, Go and take the money with which you were to build a church and give it to your neighbor. . . It is not a matter of moment to God if you never build him a church, as long as you are of service to your neighbor. But all this is now being neglected, and only the contrary is observed. Oh, the miserable, perverted life that we have learned from the Papists! This is why no one wants to enter the married state, for nobody lends him a helping hand, nobody offers him any aid, so that he might support himself and get along. *Hence it comes to pass that the one turns monk, the other nun, the third a priest*, a thing we could indeed obviate . . . Thus they go along, forgetful of maidservants and manservants, and finally bequeath a legacy and go to perdition with their legacy."

Again in a sermon on the *Catechism* Luther says: "God has commanded you to pray. . . But do not pray the Lord's Prayer as the vulgar people do, as the vigils, the seven canonical hours, the *Deus in adjutorium* are prayed. This is nothing, and if all the monasteries and foundations were put together in one heap, they still would not pray for so much as a drop of wine." And, "You simple people, note these three points! The little word 'believe' leaves no room for either works or monks' cowls."

In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* Luther writes: "Nor let any one face me with St. Bernard, St. Francis, St. Dominic, and others who founded orders, or augmented them. . . It is certain that not one of them was saved by his vows and his religiosity, but only by faith, through indeed all are saved. Pretentious lives, lived under vows, are more hostile to faith than anything else can be. . . I would suggest to those in high places in the church, firstly, that

they should do away with all vows and religious orders; or at least not speak of them with approval or praise. . . This kind of life finds no testimony or support in Scripture, but has been made to look imposing solely by the works of monks and priests. However numerous, sacred, and arduous they may be, these works, in God's sight, are in no way whatever superior to the works of a farmer laboring in the field, or of a woman looking after her home. . . Vows only tend to the increase of pride and presumption."

In his *Appeal to the Ruling Class* Luther writes that "the pope must be forbidden to institute, or set his seal on, any more these Orders. Indeed, he must be ordered to dissolve some, or force them to reduce their number. . . The many different works and customs may easily lead men rather to rely on these works and customs than to care for faith. . . at the present time unhappily, the Orders . . . only torment themselves pitiably, worrying and laboring about their own rules, laws, and customs, without ever reaching a true understanding of what constitutes a religious and virtuous life."

That Luther identifies the "works" of Christian asceticism and monasticism with the "works of the law" addressed by Christ and St. Paul is clear from all his writings. In his sermon commenting on the Gospel text of *Luke* 15: 1-10 - the Third Sunday after Trinity - Luther makes this identification. "This is what our monks do. They have gone about making faces at all who lie in their sins, and have thought: 'Oh, but this is a worldly fellow! He does not concern us. If, now, he really would be pious, let him put on the monk's cowl!' Hence it is for that reason that such hypocrites cannot refrain from despising those who are not like them. They are puffed up over their own life and conduct, and cannot advance far enough to be merciful to sinners. This much they do not know, that they are to be servants, and that their piety is to be of service to others. Moreover, they become so proud and harsh that they are unable to manifest any love. They think: 'This peasant is not worthy to unloose the latchet of my shoes; therefore do not say that I am to show him any affection'. But at this point God intervenes, permitting the proud one to receive a severe fall and shock that he often becomes guilty of such sins as adultery, and at times does things even worse, and must afterwards smite himself, saying: 'Keep still, brother, and restrain yourself, you are of precisely the same stuff as yonder peasant'. He thereby acknowledges that we are all chips of the same block."

In his sermon on the Fourth Sunday after Trinity Luther says, in commenting on *Luke* 6: 36-42: "Consequently those wishing to live thus have retired into monasteries and have desired to become

perfect. Hence all monasteries are founded upon the filth of the devil. For there are no people more avaricious and less benevolent than just those in the monasteries. . . the monks and priests have entirely and completely twisted these works . . . having done no Christian work during their whole lives except the saying of masses . . . This text does not at all permit us to conclude from it that forgiveness of sins is obtained by works, for Christ here speaks to those who are already children of grace, and does not instruct them how to obtain by works, as the Papists dream, the forgiveness of sins, which they already had by race."

In his sermon on the text of the Gospel for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity Luther preaches: "What then must we do? You must do as follows: You must acknowledge that you are condemned by the law, and the devil's own property and that you are unable to rescue yourself by any power of your own. Therefore you must flee to God, pray him to change you, or all is lost and ruined.This was well understood and observed by those highly learned, but they argued thus: If we preach that the whole world is condemned and the devil's own, what is to become of the sanctimonious priests and monks, for then they too would be condemned? God forbid! Wait, wait, we will sharpen our tongues, bore a hole into the paper for our God, make a comment and say thus: Why, God never meant it in that sense, for who could keep it? He did not command it, but merely suggested it to such as wished to be perfect. Again, the perfect are not under obligations to be so. It suffices if they strive after perfection. Many large books, called *Formas conscientiarum*, treatises to comfort and acquit the consciences, have been written on this subject. Thomas Aquinas was about the leading heretic in this line. Later the same doctrine was confirmed by the Pope, and diffused throughout the world; this explains the later origin of Orders, which aimed at perfection. Well, God be praised that we have understood the error, so that we can avoid it." When Luther says that one must "flee to God, pray him to change you," it is an impossibility within his very own structure of thought. His very theological principle prohibits any "fleeing to God." It is ironic that Luther, when he must "exhort" his flock, must fall back to human realism, to human ontology, and use language which the Christian Church has used from its inception, language used by our Lord, the Apostles, and those who followed.

Luther's knowledge of early Church history and doctrinal tradition is sadly limited. During the Leipzig Debate in 1519 Luther met a formidable opponent in Eck, whose aim was to link Luther with John Hus who had been condemned by a general council of

the Church, the Council of Constance. To link Luther with Hus was to force the admission from Luther that he not only did not accept the authority of the Pope but also rejected the authority of councils. Luther had prepared for this debate. Luther's main area of preparation was to prove that submission to the bishop of Rome was not a part of early Christian history. He found his "convincing material" by studying the Greek Church - but only in this one aspect. Luther was able to show that Greek bishops in the early centuries were not confirmed by the Pope and were not subject to the Pope. Eck continued to bring the debate to the issue of Hus. Luther attempted to continue to bring up his evidence from the Greek Church: "As for the article of Hus that 'it is not necessary for salvation to believe the Roman Church superior to all others,' I do not care whether this comes from Wyclif or from Hus. I know that innumerable Greeks have been saved though they never heard this article."

But that was in essence the deepest that Luther penetrated into the history and thought of the Eastern Church. Luther's attitude towards tradition was unpredictable. On the one hand he cares little about tradition, considering it to be the vehicle through which poisonous errors had entered the Church. On the other hand, when it suited his purpose, he upheld tradition - as evidenced in his debate with Zwingli on the Eucharist. His letter (April, 1532) to Albrecht, the Margrave of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia contains an astonishing statement. "The testimony of the entire holy Christian church (even without any other proof) should be sufficient for us to abide by this article, and to listen to no sectarians against it. For it is dangerous and terrible to hear or believe any thing against the unanimous testimony, faith, and doctrine of the entire holy Christian church as held from the beginning for now over fifteen hundred years in all the world . . . To deny such testimony is virtually to condemn not only the holy Christian church as a damned heretic, but even Christ himself, with all his apostles and prophets, who have founded this article, 'I believe a holy Christian Church,' as solemnly affirmed by Christ when he promised, 'Behold, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the world' (*Matthew* 18: 20), and by St. Paul when he says, 'The church of God is the pillar and ground of the truth' (*I Timothy* 3: 15)." By this very statement Luther's doctrine of salvation does not meet the test. He himself realized he was the one who "discovered" the "new understanding" of passive righteousness, of the doctrine of "by faith alone," with all his own connotations. He was completely aware that not even St. Augustine

supported him on his doctrine of "justification." His entire attack on asceticism - in its proper spiritual form - collapses.

Luther has said much about the "Fathers" of the Church, though he knew only a limited number of works from a small number of the Fathers. "The Fathers have written many things that are pious and useful, but they must be read with discrimination, and must be judged by the Scriptures." Jacobus Latomus published one of his works against Luther in 1521. Luther received a copy of the work on May 26, 1521. He completed his *Contra Latomum* while at Wartburg Castle within a month's time. Luther speaks out on the subject of the "Fathers of the Church." "Now you will say, 'Do you not believe then what the Fathers have said?' My answer is, 'Ought I to believe? Who has decreed that they must be believed? Where is the command of God in respect of that article of faith? Why do they themselves not believe their Fathers? Especially Augustine who wanted to be free himself and ordered all men to be free in the matter of all human writings. Or is it because these sophists have forced upon us this tyranny and deprived us of our liberty to such an extent that they have forced us into the position where we dare not oppose Aristotle (curse him!) but must submit to him. Shall we therefore be kept in this bondage for ever and never breathe in Christian liberty the right to return home again?' 'But,' you say, 'they were holy men and elucidated the Scriptures.' But who has ever proved that the Scriptures have been elucidated by them? Suppose they obscured them? . . . I am not commanded to believe their fancies but the Word of God. One is our Master, Christ, and the Fathers are to be estimated in the light of the divine Scriptures to know who has elucidated them and who obscured them. . . 'But Scripture that is obscure needs clarification?' Put it on one side where it is obscure, hold fast to it where it is clear. And who has proved that the Fathers are not obscure? We are going to be brought back to the position of having your opinion in the form 'it seems to me . . . ' or their opinion in the form 'the Fathers say . . .' But what did even the Fathers do except seek out the clearest and simplest testimonies of Scripture and offer them to men. O wretched Christians, whose Scripture and faith still depend on the glosses of men, and await their clarification! These things are worthless and blasphemous."

It was, of course, St. Augustine whom Luther read most. "Augustine pleased and pleases me better than all other doctors. He was a great teacher and worthy of all praise." "*Latina nostra ecclesia nullum habuit praestantiorum doctorem quam Augustinum*." He claimed that if St. Augustine were living during the Reformation that St. Augustine would support him, whereas

Jerome would condemn him. "Although [St. Augustine] was good and holy, he was yet lacking in the true faith, as well as the other fathers." "When the door was opened to me for the understanding of Paul, I was done with Augustine." After St. Augustine Luther favors St. Hilary of Poitiers, basically for his work *De Trinitate*. "*Hilarius inter omnes patres luctator fuit strenuissimus adversus haereticos, cui neque Augustinus conferri potest.*" Luther respected St. Ambrose mainly for his stand against Theodosius. But he found St. Ambrose's hymns, with the exception of *Rex Christe, factor omnium* - which he ascribed to Ambrose - of little value and his works lacking in substance. Prudentius is praised by Luther but only for his poetry. Tertullian he called "*durus et superstitiosus*" and oddly refers to him as the "oldest of the fathers." Luther respected St. Jerome's work as a translator but despised him "because of his monkery": "He ought not to be counted among the doctors of the church, for he was a heretic, although I believe that he was saved by faith in Christ. I know no one of the fathers, to whom I am so hostile as to him. He writes only about fasting, virginity, and such things." Luther considered St. Jerome's commentaries of little value and asserts that St. Jerome loved Eustochium, that it was this that really created the scandal. Luther had no respect for Pope Gregory I, who was the author of the nonsense of purgatory and masses for the dead, who knew little of Christ and the Gospel, and who was altogether too superstitious. "His sermons are not worth a penny."

Luther's knowledge of the Greek Fathers was sorely inadequate, almost non-existent. In essence he knows nothing of any substance about St. Ignatius, St. Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, and St. Epiphanius. He does praise St. Athanasius as the greatest teacher of the Greek Church but adds that he was nothing special - "*obwohl er nichts sonderliches war.*" He disagreed outright with Melanchthon's positive evaluation of St. Basil. Luther consider St. Gregory of Nazianzus to be "nothing" - "*Nazianzenus est nihil.*" He has little regard for St. John Chrysostom and seldom misses an opportunity to caricature him. Chrysostom "is garrulous, and therefore pleases Erasmus, who neglects faith, and treats only of morals. I consulted Chrysostom on the beautiful passage on the highpriest in *Hebrews*, but he twaddled about the dignity of priests, and let me stick in the mud."

JOHN CALVIN

In one of the more interesting documents of the Reformation, Calvin's *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, Calvin speaks of

his debt to Luther. Calvin wrote this work in 1543. It was, as its subtitle indicates, "A Humble Exhortation to the Most Invincible Emperor Charles V, and the Most Illustrious Princes and other Orders, Now Holding a Diet of the Empire at Spires." The Diet was to take place in 1544. Calvin completed the work at the end of 1523 so that it would be read at the Diet of Spires. In the very introduction Calvin writes: "We maintain to start with that, when God raised up Luther and others, who held forth a torch to light us into the way of salvation, and on whose ministry our churches are founded and built . . ."

In the fourth book of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (chapters 12 and thirteen) Calvin systematically discusses the subject of asceticism and monasticism. Calvin, though an opponent of monasticism, does not reject, as did Luther, ascetical forms of spirituality - such as fasting - that were always a part of Christianity. Calvin has a better grasp of history than did Luther. Calvin, though a firm believer in predestination, original sin as interpreted by St. Augustine, and irresistible grace, never quite explicitly taught that *certitudo salutis* - the "certainty of salvation" - of which Luther was so fond. These two factors contributed in some degree to his less radical approach to some ascetical forms of Christian spirituality.

Calvin is far more judicious in his treatment of ascetical elements in the New Testament than was Luther. Calvin does not reject, for example, fasting. But he defines what he considers to be the "proper nature of fasting." For Calvin there are "three objectives" to "holy and lawful fasting." Fasting is to "weaken and subdue the flesh that it may not act wantonly, or that we may be better prepared for prayers and holy meditations, or that it may be a testimony of our self-abasement before God when we wish to confess our guilt before him." Such as statement would not have been written by Luther. In times of calamity "it is the duty of the pastors to urge the church to fasting, in order that by supplication the Lord's wrath may be averted." And Calvin anticipates an objection. "But, you object, this is an external ceremony which, together with others, ended in Christ. No, it is an excellent aid for believers today (as it always was) and a profitable admonition to arouse them in order that they may not provoke God more and more by their excessive confidence and negligence, when they are chastised by his lashes. Accordingly, Christ, when he excuses his apostles for not fasting, does not say that fasting is abolished, but appoints it for times of calamity and joins it with mourning."

Calvin then warns against the dangers of fasting. "But we must always take especial precaution lest any superstition creep in,

as has previously happened to the great harm of the church. For it would be much more satisfactory if fasting were not practiced at all, than diligently observed and at the same time corrupted with false and pernicious opinions, into which the world repeatedly falls, unless the pastors meet it with the highest faithfulness and prudence. . . God does not greatly esteem fasting of itself, unless an inner emotion of the heart is present, and true displeasure at one's sin, true humility, and true sorrowing arising from the fear of God. Indeed, fasting is not otherwise useful than when it is joined as a lesser help to these. For God abominates nothing more than when men try to disguise themselves by displaying signs and outward appearances in place of innocence of heart. . . Another evil akin to this, and to be utterly avoided, is to regard fasting as a work of merit or a form of divine worship. For since fasting is in itself a thing indifferent, and should have no importance except for the sake of those ends to which it ought to be directed, a most dangerous superstition is involved in confusing it with works commanded by God and necessary of themselves without any other consideration. . . There is a third error, not indeed so impious, but still dangerous: to require it to be kept too strictly and rigidly as if it were one of the chief duties, and to extol it with such immoderate praises that men think they have done something noble when they have fasted."

It is of interest that Calvin rejects the idea that Christ's fasting set an example. "It is plain that Christ did not fast to set an example for others, but to prove, in so beginning to proclaim the gospel, that it was no human doctrine but actually one sent from heaven." Even if one accepts Calvin's second premise, the first is not necessarily excluded, for in the very act of "going into the desert" an example is necessarily created, regardless of the other theological reasons one may attach to our Lord's forty day withdrawal and his "ordeal."

Calvin divides his treatment of "vows" into several categories. "It is clear what great superstition over vows plagued the world for centuries. One person vowed that he would be abstemious, as if abstinence from wine were of itself worship pleasing to God. Another bound himself to fasting; a third, to abstinence from meat on certain days, in which he had vainly imagined there was a singular holiness above other days. And some things far more childish were vowed, but not by children. For men esteemed it great wisdom to undertake votive pilgrimages to holier places, and sometimes to make their journey either on foot or half naked, in order to obtain more merit through their weariness . . . [these] will be deemed not only empty and fleeting but full of manifest impiety.

For, however the flesh may judge it, God hates nothing more than counterfeit worship. Besides, there are these pernicious and damned opinions: hypocrites, when they have performed such follies, believe that they have procured for themselves exceptional righteousness; they place the whole of piety in external observance; and they despise all others who appear less careful of such things."

"Since monastic vows are held in greater veneration because they seem to be approved by public judgment of the church, we must speak of them briefly." Calvin then distinguishes the monasticism of his day with that of antiquity. He is under the impression that the *main* purpose of the monastery was to train persons for the office of bishop, that they were "monastic colleges." "Pious men customarily prepared themselves by monastic discipline to govern the church, that thus they might be fitter and better trained to undertake so great an office." Calvin does recognize that the majority of monks were "unlettered" and hence were not suitable candidates. But the central mission and purpose of a monastery was to school those capable to become leaders of the church. Although numerous bishops came from the early monastic movement, it was not the main purpose of the monastic life. Here Calvin is historically inaccurate, though only in part.

Calvin devotes time to summarizing two works by St. Augustine - *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* and *On the Work of Monks*. Based on St. Augustine's presentation of monasticism, Calvin points out that it deteriorated radically since that time. "I merely wish to indicate in passing not only what sort of monks the ancient church had but what sort of monastic profession then existed. Thus intelligent readers may judge by comparison the shamelessness of those who claim antiquity to support present monasticism." Calvin then depicts what he considers to be the monasticism of his time. "Today . . . they count it an unforgivable crime for anyone to depart even in the slightest degree from what is prescribed in color or appearance of clothing, in kind of food, or in other trifling and cold ceremonies. Augustine stoutly contends that it is not lawful for monks to live upon others in idleness. . . Our present-day monks find in idleness the chief part of their sanctity. For if you take idleness away from them, where will that contemplative life be, in which they boast they excel all others and draw nigh to the angels? . . . Our monks are not content with that piety to which Christ enjoins his followers to attend with unremitting zeal. Instead, they dream up some new sort of piety to meditate upon in order to become more perfect than all other people. . . Am I not ignorant of their sophistical solution: that monasticism is not to be called perfect because it contains

perfection within itself, but because it is the best way of all to attain perfection." Here Calvin has specifically a text from Thomas Aquinas in mind. "When they would hawk themselves among the common people, when they would lay a snare for untutored and ignorant youths, when they would assert their own privileges, and when they would enhance their own dignity to the reproach of others - they boast that they are in the state of perfection. When they are so closely pressed that they cannot maintain such empty arrogance, they fall back on this dodge - that they have not yet attained perfection, but that they are in such a state that they aspire to it more than all other men. Meanwhile, such admiration of monasticism remains among the people that they think the monastic life alone angelic, perfect, and purged of all fault. On this pretext they engage in the most profitable commerce. . . But let us deal with them on the assumption that they attribute nothing more to their profession than to call it a state of acquiring perfection. Indeed, in giving it this name they distinguish it from other ways of life as by a special mark. And who can bear such a great honor being given to an institution nowhere approved by even one syllable; and that all other callings of God are regarded as unworthy by comparison, though they have not only been commanded by his own sacred lips, but adorned with noble titles? And how great an injury, I beg of you, is done to God when some such forgery is preferred to all the kinds of life ordained by him and praised by his own testimony?"

In his analysis of *Matthew* 19:21 ["If you wish to be perfect, sell all that you have and give to the poor"] Calvin writes: "I admit that this passage was misunderstood by some of the fathers, and hence arose the affectation of voluntary poverty, by which only those who abandoned all earthly things and devoted themselves naked to Christ were accounted blessed. . . Yet nothing was more remote from the thought of the fathers than to establish the kind of perfection afterward fabricated by these hooded Sophists so as to set up a double Christianity. For that sacrilegious doctrine had not yet arisen which compares the profession of monasticism to baptism, and even openly declares it a form of second baptism. Who can doubt that the fathers would have abhorred this blasphemy with all their heart? . . . For every monastery existing today, I say, is a conventicle of schismatics, disturbing the order of the church and cut off from the lawful society of believers. . . And that it is not an injustice to Christ when some call themselves Benedictines instead of Christians, some Franciscans, some Dominicans; and when they haughtily take to themselves these titles

as their profession of religion, while affecting to be different from ordinary Christians!"

"These differences which I have so far recounted between the ancient monks and the monks of our time are not in morals but in the profession itself. Let my readers accordingly remember that I have spoken rather of monasticism than of monks, and noted not those faults which inhere in the life of a few, but those which cannot be separated from the order of living itself. But what use would it be to explain in detail what a great discrepancy there is in their morals? This is clear: that no order of men is more polluted by all sorts of foul vices; nowhere do factions, hatreds, party zeal, and intrigue burn more fiercely. Indeed, in a few monasteries men live chastely, if one must call it chastity where lust is suppressed to the point of not being openly infamous. Yet you will scarcely find one in ten which is not a brothel rather than a sanctuary of chastity. But what sort of frugality is there in their diet? They are fattened just like pigs in a sty. But that they may not complain of my treating them too unkindly, I go no farther."

Calvin then summarizes his "comparison of ancient and present-day monasticism," a comparison based not wholly on the totality of monastic life in the ancient Church but based on St. Augustine's two works. It should be pointed out that St. Augustine himself wrote that he saw no better men than those who improved in monasteries and also that he saw no worse men than those who deteriorated in monasteries. This is quoted by Calvin. Yet, Calvin seems to miss the fact that there have always been both types of monks, and that in that regard ancient monasticism was not really essentially different from the monasticism of his day. But Calvin concludes: "I trust I have accomplished my purpose: to show that our hooded friends falsely claim the example of the first church in defense of their profession - since they differ from them as much as apes from men."

Calvin's most serious position, however, is that he is essentially opposed to monasticism in general. "I frankly admit that even in that ancient form which Augustine commends there is something that I do not like very much. . . they were not without immoderate affectation and perverse zeal." He continues: "It is a beautiful thing to philosophize in retirement, far from intercourse with men. But it is not the part of Christian meekness, as if in hatred of the human race, to flee to the desert and the wilderness and at the same time to forsake those duties which the Lord has especially commanded . . . it was surely no slight evil that it brought a useless and dangerous example into the church."

In his consideration of the monastic vows Calvin becomes more negative. "Because it is their intention to establish a new and forged worship to merit God's favor, I conclude from the above evidence that whatever they vow is abominable in God's sight. . . because they invent any mode of life they please without regard for God's call, and without God's approval, I say that this is a rash and therefore unlawful enterprise. For their conscience has nothing to sustain it before God and 'whatever is not of faith is sin'. Moreover, when they bind themselves to many acts of worship at once perverted and impious, which present-day monasticism includes within itself, I contend that they are consecrated not to God but to an evil spirit . . . [the monks] wrap themselves in a cowl and a thousand impious superstitions."

Calvin is opposed to the vow of "perpetual virginity to God" because God does not require this of everyone, for it is only "given" to some people. His point is that it is arrogance for someone to think he or she has been given the gift - since not all who enter a monastery have been "given" the gift, it is blatant pride and arrogance on the part of those who do not have the gift to enter a monastery. He further is opposed to the fact that the vow could not be broken. "This practice, they say, was observed from time immemorial: that those who wished to dedicate themselves completely to the Lord should bind themselves by a vow of continence. I admit, of course, that this custom was allowed in ancient times, but I do not grant that that age was so free of all defect that whatever was done then must be taken as the rule. Then there gradually crept in that inexorable severity by which, after the vow was made, no place was left for repentance." Calvin's point is that there should have been some means for releasing someone from a vow if that person found he could not bear the celibate life. The cure would be to marry. But it is precisely that cure, exclaims Calvin, that was denied.

Calvin's main point is this: "But to remove every misgiving at once, I say that all unlawful or improperly conceived vows, as they are of no value before God, should be invalid for us . . . It is absurd to hold us to fulfill what God does not require of us; especially since our works are right only when they please God and have the testimony of conscience that they please him. For this principle remains: 'Whatever is not of faith is sin'. . . Since rashly made vows are of this sort, they not only bind nothing but must of necessity be rescinded. But what of the fact that they are accounted not only worthless in God's sight but also an abomination to him? . . . all works that do not flow from a pure fountain and are not directed to a lawful end are repudiated by God, and so repudiated

that he forbids us not less to continue in them than to begin them. From this it follows that those vows which arise from error and superstition are of no value before God and must also be abandoned by us."

"And though I should remain silent, experience speaks. For it is not unknown with what great impurity almost all monasteries swarm. And if any seem more decent and more modest than the rest, they are not for this reason chaste, for the evil of unchastity, though repressed and confined, remains within."

Calvin's theological emphasis is different than Luther's. This is not the place to examine exhaustively the theology of Calvin and Luther. It is sufficient to call attention to Luther's emphasis on the *certitudo salutis* and Calvin's emphasis on the fear of God. Both, however, believe in predestination to salvation and damnation, in irresistible grace, and in the total depravity of man - in St. Augustine's interpretation of original sin. Both in essence oppose ascetical and monastic forms of spirituality. Luther rejects them totally; Calvin is more judicious. Yet, in Calvin's total theological vision his allowance for certain "proper forms" of fasting and his distinction of lawful and unlawful vows is theologically and ultimately meaningless. He is simply forced to deal with the real spiritual life of persons and hence he realizes that in human ontology certain ascetical practices can be of value. But if this is transferred to the theological vision of Calvin it is without meaning, for man is predestined by the arbitrary and eternal will of God.

Calvin's knowledge of the history of the early Church was better than Luther's. Calvin has some regard for the Church Fathers, although his knowledge is also sorely limited, as evidenced in his debate with Sadoleto. And as it was with Luther, so also is it with Calvin - it is St. Augustine who is the central authority from the Church Fathers. One scholar has actually counted the number of times Calvin quotes St. Augustine, a number which is staggering.

Without Luther there would not have been a Calvin, as Calvin himself acknowledges. Both share the doctrine of justification by faith "alone." Both share the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, as specifically defined by them - that God alone operates a system of salvation that is mono-energism, not synergism. Both firmly believe that man in himself has no value to God. Any value of man is "imputed" to man by God by a type of divine fiction whereby God looks at man through Jesus Christ and, instead of seeing the real human person, sees Jesus Christ, whom that man has acknowledged as his vehicle of salvation by faith, by believing in Christ. The "new understanding" of Luther, transmitted to Calvin

and other Reformers, was one which in the deepest theological sense created a fiction of the entire redemptive process. [See Fr. Florovsky's article on the "Ecumenical Problem of the Theology of the Reformation" which treats the subject in some detail; it remained unpublished but is to be contained in his *Collected Works*].

From its theological presuppositions ascetical and monastic forms of spirituality simply had to be rejected. They did not fit into their understanding of an authentic synergistic process of redemption, a process that is New Testamental, a process upheld by the Church from the beginning. In rejecting monasticism Luther was rejecting the entire system of Roman Catholic theology which existed in his time. Neither Luther nor Calvin had any knowledge of that Christianity which had existed in the Greek East and had developed on a quite different course than the theology of the West. That Greek Patristic and Byzantine theology unknown to Luther and Calvin could have informed the great debate in the early stages of the Reformation. Perhaps the outcome would have been different. But that was not the case. Reformation theology was already "carved out" by the time of the discussions between Patriarch Jeremias and the Lutheran Divines. And this discussion bears witness that there was not only a different language of theology spoken by each side but a fundamentally different theology of God, man, and salvation.

In the following presentation of the development of ascetical and monastic forms of spirituality there is no pretense that all was purity, that the Byzantine East did not have problems of its own, that excesses did not exist, that often language may come across as sounding as though the ascetics and monks are attempting to "win" the favor of God. But this "winning" of the favor of God is no different from the language used by our Lord, by the Apostles, by the early Church, and by Luther and Calvin when they are forced to deal with man realistically. In the totality of the theology of Eastern and Byzantine monasticism it was a presupposition that everything was a gift of God.

CHAPTER THREE

ST. ANTONY AND ANCHORITIC MONASTICISM

The monastic movement *developed* in the early fourth century, although the essential components of monasticism are found in the earliest life of the Church. Individual anchorites were leaving the cities even earlier than the fourth century. During the time of emperor Decius (emperor from 249 to 251), they were hiding from persecution and turned their forced flight into a voluntary "ordeal," a spiritual struggle. They wandered in the wilderness and lived in caves and on precipices. *Even in the cities themselves* many led a reserved and aloof life – such was the "gnostic" ideal of Clement of Alexandria. In any event, communes of virgins arose quite early, as evidenced in St. Methodius' *Symposium* or *Banquet of the Ten Virgins* – *Συμπόσιον ἢ Περὶ ἁγνείας* – although these were only isolated cases. "The monk did not yet know the great desert," says St. Athanasius, if he is the author of the *Vita Antonii*. One must distinguish, however, between the development of monasticism proper in the fourth century and the features or essential characteristics of that later monastic life which was found in the early life of the Church.

Attraction to the desert – a virtual migration – begins under Constantine. The empire is becoming Christian. The Church is becoming established throughout the world. But it is from this Christian Empire, this Churchified world that the flight begins. One should not think that these people left for the desert because they were finding it harder to live in the world – a life was hardly any easier in the desert, except for the excessive tax collections - see the complaints of Lactantius on taxes. What is more, the best ones were withdrawing from the world not so much from everyday misfortunes as from everyday "well-being." It is sufficient to recall how harshly St. John Chrysostom spoke of the danger of this well-being which is worse than any persecution.

THE SPIRITUAL ESSENCE OF THE MONASTIC IDEAL

Monasticism in its developed form from the fourth century on is more than strict vows. And spiritual perfection is no less obligatory in this world for every believer from the power and significance of his baptismal renunciations and promises. Herein lies a sorely troublesome controversy in the history of Christianity,

a controversy that still is not addressed adequately in the present Ecumenical Movement. It is a problem that involves the very essence of Christianity, of a Christian vision of God, the world, and redemption, a problem that exploded before the very eyes of Martin Luther who at first was not overly certain about the rejection of monasticism but he quickly became irrevocably convinced that monasticism was anti-Biblical. Herein lies a great controversy, a dispute which still divides Christianity and carries with it two completely different visions of the very nature of spiritual life.

Monasticism in its developed form from the fourth century is primarily a social movement, an experimental answer to a social question. Ascetic renunciation is not only "abstention" or a refusal of everyday advantages or excesses; it is not some ordeal undertaken above and beyond the call of duty. It is a renunciation of the world in general and of everything in it, and *first of all a renunciation of the world system*, of social contacts – not so much a renunciation of the Cosmos as a renunciation of the Empire or of any political system, *a renunciation not of God's creation but of man's worldly city*. This is precisely what both Luther and Calvin failed to understand in their evaluation of the essence of monasticism. True, later monasticism, especially in the Latin West, was defined by vows and considered "a state of life." But even within that structure there was certainly the ideal of monasticism as a renunciation of the worldly city. The most harmful influence on Latin monasticism, as known by Luther and Calvin, was the rise of the "merit system" in the Latin West. A monasticism without the "merit system" and the "system of indulgences" would have presented a different face. And, to be sure, not all monasticism in the Latin West had a negative visage!

Origen himself once observed that Christians live "contrary to the laws of the worldly city" – *ἀντιπολιτευόμεθα* This is most especially true of monks. Monasticism is a "different residence" outside of the "present worldly city" and a kind of new and special "city" – *πολίτεία* The worldly city became Christian but the antithesis was not eliminated. In the Christian world monasticism is a "different" city, a kind of "anti-city" because it is *different*. Monasticism is always a withdrawal from the world, an exit from the natural social structure, a rejection and renunciation of all civil ties, of family and relations, of the fatherland and all its political associations. A monk must be completely "homeless" in the world – *ἄοικος*; as St. Basil the Great put it.

However, this is not a withdrawal to anarchic freedom. Ancient monasticism is very social. Even the hermits usually live together in special colonies or settlements. But the adequate

incarnation of the monastic idea was precisely the *community*, the *coenobium*. The *coenobium* is first of all a social organism, a fraternity, a *sobornost*, as the Russians would say. The monks left for the desert in order to build a new society there – and a new and autonomous society arose in the outlying districts of the empire. When reading ancient descriptions of monastic life, one receives the impression that one is crossing a border and entering some new and special land.

All of the originality of monasticism and its historical significance lie in this social "*other-existence*." Monasticism is the Church appearing in its social "other-existence" as a "new residence, not of this world." The Christian world is polarized and Christian history unfolds in an antinomic tension between the *Empire* and the *Desert*, between all forms of earthly social life and that new, other-worldly form of social and spiritual existence impregnated by the essence of the Christian vision of unceasing prayer, of the struggle to follow the command of Christ to "be perfect," regardless of how distant that goal may be, regardless of how far from that target and goal one may be, and no matter how often one falls from that goal. It is the goal and it is the vision that stands before us in the monastic ideal – indeed, in the very essence of the Christian goal for all believers enunciated by Christ in the Gospels, by the epistles in the New Testament, by the early Church Fathers, and by the Christian liturgy – *πᾶσαν τὴν βιωτικὴν ἀποθώμεθαμέριμναν* ["Let us put away all worldly care"]. Indeed, the liturgical life of the Church boldly proclaims the warning: "Put not your trust in princes, in sons of men, in whom there is no salvation."

The monastic movement began in Egypt and the monastic path immediately forked. St. Antony was the first to go out into the "great desert" – the word *hermit* comes from the Greek word meaning desert, *ἐρημίτης ἐρημία*. For many long years he worked in strict seclusion. Admirers came to him to learn from him. He finally gave in to their insistence – after they even broke the door of his shelter. The great anchorite allowed them to settle nearby and to build a "monastery"; that is, individual cells "similar to the tents of nomadic tribes." Thus arose the first colony of *anchorites* – the word derives from the Greek word for "to withdraw," *ἀναχωρέω*.

They lived separately without communicating with each other and without violating their seclusion and solitude in vain. All the same, they formed a certain united "fraternity" joined by the spiritual leadership of a single teacher and father. Similar settlements begin to arise in other places as well – around the famous hermit St. Ammon (d. c. 350) in the Nitrian desert, that

region in Libya lying to the west of the mouths of the Nile. In its strict etymological meaning the words "monasticism" and "monastery" denoted a hermit's cell or a group of cells – from *μόνος* or *μοναχός*. Not far from this were the so-called "cells" - and even deeper into the desert was the *skete* - from the Coptic *shiit* which means "great plain." Here the organization of joint life becomes more definite.

But the struggle remains and there develops different attitudes within the monastic life toward that life. Those living in "cells" were also hermits. The hermit lives alone and works in a secluded cell. He avoids people, abides in his cell, and bemoans his sins. "The man who has known the sweetness of the cell avoids his neighbor," says abbot Theodore. Yet there is another attitude. "If a man will say in his heart – 'I am alone with God in this world' – he will find no peace," a "saying" of abbot Alonius.

ST. ANTONY AND THE ANCHORITIC LIFE

The *Vita Antonii* [*The Life of Antony*] is not only a rich source for the life of St. Antony, not only a rich source for the beginning of monasticism, but also the oldest monastic biography we possess. Traditionally the authorship has been ascribed to St. Athanasius. That is a debated subject. However, there is still no serious evidence to preclude St. Athanasius from having written an original, or a part of an original, to which others may later have added. In any event, it is not the authorship which is of importance but the content. It was St. Gregory of Nazianzus who wrote that the *Vita Antonii* gives us the image, the form, the mould of early monastic life. The *Vita* reveals a dynamism in the spiritual life of monasticism, a process that gives deeper and deeper birth to spiritual growth which ultimately gives birth in a form of spiritual "paternity."

The author writes that he has received a request "to give you an account of the blessed Antony's way of life." Those requesting this account wanted to know "whether the things told of him are true." There was a desire to "imitate" St. Antony's way of life and the author agrees that "the life of Antony is a sufficient pattern of discipline" - actually the Greek word used for "discipline" is "asceticism." The author advises that they believe the things they heard and further encourages them to discover more about his life - "but think rather that they have told you only a few things, for at all events they scarcely can have given circumstances of so great import in any detail. And because I, at your request, have called to mind a few circumstances about him, and shall send as much as I

can tell in a letter, do not neglect to question those who sail from here: for possibly when all have told their tale, the account will hardly be in proportion to his merits." The author writes that he was "eager to learn any fresh information" when he received the request and wanted to send certain monks who had known Antony well to ask about his life. But the "season for sailing was coming to an end" and the author "hastened to write . . . what I myself know, having seen him many times." The author asserts that he was Antony's "attendant for a long time." The author is judicious and advises that they should have truth as their objective "that no one should disbelief through hearing too much, nor on the other hand by hearing too little should despise the man."

The description of Antony's early life and what led him to his "ordeal" conveys a realistic picture of asceticism at that time. "Antony . . . was by descent an Egyptian. His parents were of good family and possessed considerable wealth [at Coma in Middle Egypt according to the historian Sozomen]. Since his parents were Christians, Antony was raised in the same faith." The author writes that Antony disliked school - "he could not endure to learn letters." The reason given is ambiguous - "not caring to associate with other boys." The text implies that Antony was, as it were, by character, prone to solitude and isolation. Antony attended Church services regularly - "with his parents he attended the house of the Lord, and neither as a child was he idle nor when older did he despise them." He was "attentive" at the Church services and "kept what was read in his heart." That he was an obedient son is stressed. The author has immediately portrayed his character as one prone to solitude, as one deeply serious about his religion, and as one that was obedient. Antony's attitude towards the affluence of his family is important - "though as a child brought up in moderate affluence, he did not trouble his parents for varied or luxurious fare, nor was this a source of pleasure to him."

Then came the death of both parents. "He was left alone with one little sister: his age was about eighteen or twenty, and on him the care both of home and his sister rested." Six months after the death of his parents Antony was, as was his custom, in the house of the Lord "communing with himself and reflecting." He was reflecting on "how the Apostles left everything and followed the Savior [*Matthew* 4: 20], and how they in *Acts* [4: 35] sold their possessions and brought and laid them at the feet of the Apostles for distribution to the needy." "Pondering over these things he entered the church and it happened that the Gospel was being read, and he heard the Lord saying to the rich man, 'If you wish to be perfect, go sell your belongings and give to the poor, and come

follow me and you will have treasure in heaven' [*Matthew* 19: 21]. Antony, as though God had put him in mind of the saints, and as though the passage had been read on his account, went out immediately from the church and gave the possessions of his forefathers to the villagers - they were three hundred acres - ἄρουραι - productive and very fair." The author writes that he did this "that they should be no more a clog upon himself and his sister." Some scholars interpret this in a sense that is not in the letter or spirit of the text - that he did this to avoid taxes. Antony then gathered the remaining "moveable possessions," sold them, and gave it to the poor, "reserving a little however for the sake of his sister."

Again in church, Antony hears the Gospel from *Matthew* 6: 34 - "Therefore be not anxious for the morrow." It appears that this is what prompted him to give whatever was left to the poor and to set him on the path of his "ordeal." That there was already an established structure for asceticism, especially for virgins, is clear from the text. "Having committed his sister to known and faithful virgins, and having placed her in a house for virgins - εἰς παρθενῶνα - to be brought up, he from that time devoted himself outside his house to asceticism, taking no thought for himself and training himself with patience." The author then adds the important statement - "because there were not yet so many monasteries in Egypt, *and no monk at all knew yet of the distant desert*." The text makes it clear that there already existed an ascetical tradition for virgins and an unstructured monastic life. "All who wished to give heed to themselves practiced asceticism in solitude near their own village."

Antony imitated the life of "an old man" in a neighboring village. Whenever Antony heard "of a good man anywhere, like a prudent bee, he went forth and sought him." Though the word "vow" is not explicitly used, it is clear that Antony has already made decisions that fall within the spirit of a vow. One such decision or "vow" is that "he confirmed his purpose not to return to the abode of his fathers nor to the remembrance of his kinfolk, but to keep all his desire and energy for perfecting asceticism." What would have pleased Luther and Calvin, at least in part, is that Antony "worked with his hands, having heard, 'he who is idle, let him not eat'." [*II Thessalonians* 3: 10]. The money Antony received for his labors was used to buy bread, and the rest "he gave to the needy." While laboring, Antony also continued in the spiritual life of prayer: "He was constant in prayer, knowing that a man ought to pray in secret unceasingly" [*Matthew* 5: 7; *II Thessalonians* 5: 17].

The ideal of spiritual brotherhood in love is then portrayed. Antony became "beloved by all." He observed the special areas of "zeal and asceticism" where others were more advanced than he. "He observed the graciousness of one; the unceasing prayer of another; he took knowledge of another's freedom from anger and another's loving-kindness. He gave heed to one as he watched, to another as he studied; one he admired for his endurance, another for his fasting and sleeping on the ground; the meekness of one and the long-suffering of another he watched with care, while he took note of the piety towards Christ and the mutual love which animated all."

The text of the *Vita Antonii* also stresses that Antony remembered the Scriptures read in church - "none of the things that were written fell from him to the ground, but he remembered all, and afterwards his memory served him for books." The text elsewhere speaks of his regard for reading. What is often missed by some commentators on Antony is the life of oral tradition. Modern man is too often a slave to the written read, too often forgets that societies flourished once on nothing but the oral word. The men of antiquity would memorize enormous portions of their traditional culture. It is merely the phenomenon of the printed word which has allowed modern man to fall into a form of slavery to it, to read a text rather than to hear and memorize it. One scholar writes that "a number of Scripture passages were very familiar to [Antony], but of a connected and deep knowledge of Scripture in him, or in these anchorites generally, we find no trace." Such an evaluation is inaccurate and is based on the modern approach of analysis of Scripture by the written word. Antony - and the early monks in general - knew most, if not all, of the New Testament "by heart." Moreover, their knowledge of Scripture extended also to the Old Testament, large portions of which were committed to memory. That he was not able to "connect" Scripture is an evaluation based on no fact, and implies that man is incapable of structuring or connecting material that is remembered "in the heart."

Antony's next step on the path of his "ordeal" was to "strive to unite the qualities of each." The ideal of of ascetic quest is to progress without jealousy of others and without provoking jealousy in others. This ideal is clearly portrayed in the *Vita Antonii*. "And this he did so as to hurt the feelings of nobody, but made them rejoice over him. So all they of that village and the good men in whose intimacy he was, when they saw that he was a man of this sort, used to call him Beloved of God. And some welcomed him as a son, others as a brother."

The *Vita Antonii* reveals that opposition to the ascetical and monastic life strikes from suggestions of the devil, who always strives to prevent this path, this "ordeal." The demonic means of attempting to prevent this path can be both subtle and blatant, always suggesting to the would-be ascetic the ambiguity of the path, always suggesting that it may not be reasonable. The attempt is "to whisper to him the remembrance of his wealth, care for his sister, claims of kinfolk, love of money, love of glory, the various pleasures of the table and the other relaxations of life." And then come the suggestions of "the difficulty of virtue and its labor, the infirmity of the body, and the length of time." This, the *Vita Antonii* declares, did not work, precisely because of Antony's "settled purpose." There then follows a description of Antony's spiritual struggle with the devil's attempt to uproot Antony from his path of "ordeal" by confronting him through the weakness of the flesh, through sexual temptation. "For they are the first snare for the young - he attacked the young man, disturbing him by night and harassing him by day, so that even onlookers saw the struggle which was taking place between them. The devil would suggest foul thoughts and Antony would counter them with prayers. The devil would fire him with lust and Antony, as one who seemed to blush, would fortify his body with faith, prayers, and fastings. And one night the devil . . . even took upon himself the shape of a woman and imitated all her acts simply to beguile Antony. But Antony, his mind filled with Christ and nobility inspired by Christ, and considering the spirituality of his soul, quenched the coal of the devil's deceit. Again the enemy suggested the ease of pleasure. But Antony, like a man filled with rage and grief, turned his thoughts to the threatened fire and the gnawing worm . . . and passed through the temptation unscathed." The comments in the *Vita Antonii* on this struggle are quite Athanasian. "For the Lord was working with Antony, the Lord who for our sake became flesh and gave the body victory over the devil, so that all who truly fight can say [*I Corinthians* 15: 10]: 'Not I but the grace of God with me'." Here the *Vita Antonii* not only expresses the synergistic path by stating that "the Lord was working with Antony" but explicitly supports this from St. Paul, a passage which speaks of the primacy of the grace of God. This passage must not be forgotten when one encounters the spiritual struggle in Eastern and Byzantine ascetical and monastic spirituality. The essence of the vision, the essence of the struggle always knows of the initiative of God and the primacy of grace regardless of how the texts may often emphasize the aspect of human activity. The *Vita Antonii* then describes how the devil appeared to Antony as a young boy - taking a visible shape

"in accordance with his mind" - and speaking to him "in human voice." "I am the friend of whoredom, and have taken upon me incitements which lead to it against the young. I am called the spirit of lust." The words of the comment on this in the text are important. Antony has triumphed in his first encounter. Yet the text explains: "This was Antony's first struggle against the devil, *or rather this victory was the Savior's work in Antony.*" In this statement is the essence of the basic fundamental theological understanding of the spiritual "ordeal" in Eastern and Byzantine ascetical and monastic thought. The second part of the comment is added almost parenthetically. Indeed, in many texts of ascetical and monastic literature it will be omitted. But if it is omitted, it is done so because it is the obvious presupposition of the entire Christian life, of the entire spiritual "ordeal." This is the authentic synergism of the Eastern and Byzantine tradition - both Antony is "working" and God is "working," yet it is clear that all comes from God, that even in man's spiritual "ordeal" the work, the energy, the strength, and the victory come from our Lord, indeed is the work of our Lord. The author then quotes from *Romans* 8: 3-4.

But the "ordeal" continues. The spiritual life never ceases, as is manifestly made clear by the New Testament. "But neither did Antony, although the evil one had fallen, henceforth relax his care . . . nor did the enemy, as though conquered, cease to lay snares for Antony." Again Antony's knowledge of the New Testament is invoked by the author. "But Antony, having learned from the Scriptures [*Ephesians* 6: 11] that the methods - *μεθοδείας* - of the devil are many, zealously continued his asceticism, realizing that though the devil had not been able to deceive his heart by bodily pleasure, he would endeavor to ensnare him by other means." Antony's resolve was to increase his repression of "the body" to keep it "in subjection" [*I Corinthians* 9: 27]. "He therefore planned to accustom himself to a severer mode of life." The entire purpose of this stricter form of asceticism is to weaken the body to implement the words of St. Paul [*II Corinthians* 12: 10]: "when I am weak, then I am strong." Antony said that "the fiber of the soul is then sound when the pleasures of the body are diminished." The author writes that Antony had reached "this truly wonderful conclusion" - "that progress in virtue, and renunciation of the world for the sake of it, should not be measured by time, but by desire and firmness of purpose." Antony, as though he were at the "beginning of his asceticism," rejected thoughts of the past and "applied greater pains for advancement, often repeating the words of Paul" from *Philippians* 3:14: "Forgetting those things of the past, and stretching forward." Although the second aspect of St.

Paul's though in verse 14 is not quoted in the *Vita Antonii*, it is implied by the text: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." St. Paul then adds: "Therefore as many as [are] perfect, let us think this way" - *ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν*. That these texts from St. Paul express a spiritual dynamism, a growth in spirituality, is clear. It is also clear that the goal is the "high calling" - *ἄνω κλήσεως* - and that this "high calling" or "calling from above" is linked with "perfection." Antony, it would appear, is implementing the teaching of the New Testament. The author then quotes from *I Kings* 18: 15 - "the Lord lives before whose presence I stand today." The author underscores the significance of "today" for the dynamic process of the spiritual "ordeal." "For Antony observed that in saying 'today' the prophet [Elijah] did not compute the time that had gone by, but daily, as though ever commencing." And again the primacy of the will of God is placed in its proper perspective: "he eagerly endeavored to make himself fit to appear before God, being pure in heart and ever ready to submit to God's counsel and to God alone." And Antony found in Elijah a prototype of the hermit: "And he used to say that from the life of the great Elijah the hermit ought to see his own as in a mirror."

The next step on Antony's path in the "ordeal" is to enter the "tombs." The "enemy was fearful that in a short time Antony would fill the desert with asceticism." The text claims that a multitude of demons physically attacked Antony in the tombs and "so cut him with stripes that he lay on the ground speechless from the excessive pain." What follows in the text is again the "providence of God" which protects those "who hope in God." Here is again the two wills, the two activities of God and man participating in the process. This time the language is the same as one would find in the Scriptures. Though by itself the language might imply that man's hope solicits God's activity, the context - as the general context in Scripture - refers one to the presupposition of the initiative of God. The language is merely reflective of human realism.

Antony is carried back to church in the condition similar to a corpse. But he recovers enough so that he is able, with help, to return to the tombs to confront the enemy again. Antony exclaims that he will not flee from "their beatings" and quotes from *Romans* 8: 35 - "nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ." Antony then sings from *Psalms* 27: 3 - "though a camp be set against me, my heart shall not be afraid." Antony challenges the demons, who have appeared in the form of "beasts and creeping things" by exclaiming: "For faith in our Lord is a seal and a wall of safety to

us." The text points out that "the Lord was at hand." Antony challenges God: "Where were you? Why did you not appear at the beginning to make my pains to cease?" The text relates that "the voice" of God spoke to him: "Antony, I was here, but I waited to see your fight. Since, therefore, you have endured . . . I will ever be a help to you, and will make your name known everywhere." Antony's response is to rise and to pray. He "received such strength that he perceived that he had more power in his body than formerly."

Antony's next step on the path of his "ordeal" is to leave for the desert. It is to be noted that Antony almost always responds to the attack of the enemy by quoting Scripture. In his first encounter in the desert he refers to *Acts* 8: 20. "More and more confirmed in his purpose," Antony established himself in an abandoned fort, into which "he descended as into a shrine, and abode within by himself, never going forth nor looking at any one who came. Thus he spent a long time asceticizing himself, and received loaves, let down from above, twice in the year." When acquaintances would come, instead of finding him dead, they heard him singing from the Psalms. "Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered! Let those who hate him, flee before his face! As smoke vanishes, let them vanish! As wax melts before the face of fire, so let the wicked perish from the face of God!" [*Psalm* 68: 1-2]. And from *Psalm* 118: 10: "All nations compassed me about, and in the name of the Lord I cut them off."

The result of Antony's "ordeal" gave birth. He became "the childless father of an innumerable offspring." As one scholar has correctly observed: "after the transition from the ordinary life to the cenobitic life, the passing on from this in turn to more and more complete anchoritism, until this anchoritism itself flowers in spiritual paternity. There is nothing static about this idea; on the contrary everything tends continually to go beyond what has already been achieved. . . [there is] the purely evangelical character of Antony's vocation." As the *Vita Antonii* relates, Antony "continued his asceticism in solitude for nearly twenty years." The time came when those who wanted to imitate his asceticism - and his acquaintances - "began to cast down and wrench off the door by force."

The description that follows in the *Vita Antonii* is one of a very well-balanced spiritual person. "Then for the first time he was seen outside the fort by those who came to see him. And they, when they saw him, wondered at the sight, for he had the same habit of body as before, and was neither fat, like a man without exercise, nor lean from fasting and striving with the demons, but he was just

the same as they had known him before his isolation. And again his soul was free from blemish, for it was neither contracted as if by grief, nor relaxed by pleasure, nor possessed by laughter or dejection, for he was not troubled when he beheld the crowd, nor overjoyed at being saluted by so many. But he was altogether calm, as being guided by reason and abiding in a natural state. Through him the Lord healed the bodily ailments of many present, and cleansed others from evil spirits. And God gave grace to Antony in speaking, so that he consoled many that were sorrowful, and set those at variance at one, exhorting all to prefer the love of Christ before all that is in the world. And while he exhorted and advised them to remember the good things to come, and the loving-kindness of God towards us, 'Who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all' [*Romans* 8: 32], he persuaded many to embrace the solitary life. And thus it happened in the end that cells arose even in the mountains, and the desert was colonized by monks, who came forth from their own people, and enrolled themselves for the citizenship in heaven."

"While Antony was thus speaking all rejoiced. In some the love of virtue increased, in others carelessness was thrown aside, the self-conceit of others was stopped. And all were persuaded to despise the assaults of the Evil One, and marvelled at the grace given to Antony from the Lord for the discerning of spirits. So their cells were in the mountains, like tabernacles, filled with holy bands of men who sang Psalms, loved reading, fasted, prayed, rejoiced in the hope of things to come, labored in alms-giving, and preserved love and harmony one with another. *And truly it was possible, as it were, to behold a land set by itself, filled with piety and justice. For then there was neither the evil-doer, nor the injured, nor the reproaches of the tax collector. But instead a multitude of ascetics, and the one purpose of them all was to aim at virtue.*"

Antony speaks much of his experience with the demons. Yet, he puts even his experience within a proper balance in his teaching to others. He warns them not to fear demons, how to discern whether a vision or an appearance is from God or demonic forces, and not to be tempted to "cast out demons." "It is not fitting to boast at the casting forth of the demons, nor to be uplifted by the healing of diseases. Nor is it fitting that he who casts out devils should alone be highly esteemed, while he who casts them not out should be considered nothing. But let a man learn the asceticism of each and either imitate, rival, or correct it. For the working of signs is not ours but the Savior's work. And so he said to his disciples: 'Rejoice not that the demons are subject to you, but that your

names are written in heaven' [*Luke* 10: 20]. For the fact that our names are written in heaven is a proof of our virtuous life, but to cast out demons is a favor of the Savior who granted it. Therefore to those who boasted in signs but not in virtue, and said: 'Lord, in your name did we not cast out demons, and in your name did many mighty works?' [*Matthew* 7: 22]. He answered, 'Truly I say to you, I know you not,' for the Lord knows not the ways of the wicked. But we ought always to pray, as I said above, that we may receive the gift of discerning spirits; that, as it is written [*I John* 4: 1], we may not believe every spirit."

There are appearances of angels, according to Antony, and he offers advice on how to discern whether a vision or appearance is from God or demonic forces. The vision of "*the holy ones* is not fraught with distraction." Antony quotes from *Matthew* 12: 19 - "for they will not strive, nor cry, nor shall any one hear their voice." "But it comes so quietly and gently that immediately joy, gladness and courage arise in the soul. For the Lord who is our joy is with them, and the power of God the Father. And the thoughts of the soul remain unruffled and undisturbed, so that it, enlightened as it were with rays, beholds by itself those who appear. For the love of what is divine and of the things to come possesses it, and willingly it would be wholly joined with them if it could depart along with them. But if, being men, some fear the vision of the good, those who appear immediately take fear away - as Gabriel did in the case of Zechariah [*Luke* 1: 13]; and as the angel did [*Matthew* 28: 5] who appeared to the women at the holy sepulchre; and as he did who said to the shepherds in the Gospel, 'Fear not'. For their fear arose not from timidity, but from the recognition of the presence of superior beings. *Such then is the nature of the visions of the holy ones*."

Antony has much to say about fear, about its harmful effect on man, about eradicating it through a firmness of faith. "And let this also be a token for you: whenever the soul remains fearful there is a presence of the enemies. For the demons do not take way the fear of their presence as the great archangel Gabriel did for Mary and Zechariah, and as he did who appeared to the women at the tomb. But rather, whenever they see men afraid, they increase their delusions that men may be terrified all the more. And, at last attacking, they mock them, saying, 'fall down and worship'. . . But the Lord did not suffer us to be deceived by the devil, for he rebuked him whenever he framed such delusions against him, saying, 'Get behind me, Satan, for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve' [*Matthew* 4: 10]. More and more, therefore, let the deceiver be despised by us, for

what the Lord has said, this for our sakes he has done: that the demons, hearing like words from us, may be put to flight through the Lord who rebuked them in those words."

"But the inroad and the display of the evil spirits is fraught with confusion, with din, with sounds and cryings such as the disturbance of boorish youths or robbers would occasion. From which arise fear in the heart, tumult and confusion of thought, dejection, hatred towards them who live a life of asceticism, indifference, grief, remembrance of kinfolk and fear of death, and finally desire of evil things, disregard of virtue and unsettled habits. Whenever, therefore, you have seen something and are afraid, if your fear is immediately taken away and in place of it comes joy unspeakable, cheerfulness, courage, renewed strength, calmness of thought and all those I named before, boldness and love of toward God - take courage and pray. For joy and a settled state of soul show the holiness of him who is present. Thus Abraham beholding the Lord rejoiced [*John* 8: 56]. So also John at the voice of Mary, the Bearer of God - θεοτόκος - leapt for gladness [*Luke* 1: 41]. But if at the appearance of any there is confusion, knocking without, worldly display, threats of death and the other things which I have already mentioned, know then that it is an onslaught of evil spirits." Again and again Antony emphasizes that "the Lord is with us."

The *Vita Antonii* is rich with penetrating, well-balanced spiritual advice. But attention should be called to a few other aspects of the *Vita*. The author writes that Antony "was tolerant in disposition and humble in spirit" and that he "observed the rule of the Church most rigidly, and was willing that all the clergy should be honored above himself. For he was not ashamed to bow his head to bishops and priests, and if ever a deacon came to him for help he discoursed with him on what was profitable, but gave place to him in prayer, not being ashamed to learn himself. . . And in addition, his countenance had a great and wonderful grace. *This gift also he had from the Savior.*"

The *Vita Antonii* describes Antony's attitude towards the Arians. "And once also the Arians, having lyingly asserted that Antony's opinions were the same as theirs, he was displeased and wroth against them. Then being summoned by the bishops and all the brethren, he descended from the mountain, and having entered Alexandria, he denounced the Arians, saying that their heresy was the last of all and a forerunner of Antichrist. And he taught the people that the Son of God was not a created being, neither had he come into being from non-existence, but that he was the Eternal Logos and Wisdom of the Essence of the Father. And therefore it

was impious to say, 'there was a time when he was not', for the Logos was always co-existing with the Father. Therefore have no fellowship with the most impious Arians. For there is no communion between light and darkness [*II Corinthians* 6: 14]. . . When they say that the Son of the Father, the Logos of God, is a created being; they do not differ at all from the heathen, since they worship that which is created, rather than God the Creator, the Lord of all."

The *Vita Antonii* gives interesting encounters of Antony with Greeks, through whom he discoursed by using an interpreter. One conversation touches on *faith and demonstrative arguments*. Antony asks certain "wise" Greeks who had come to him to ask for "a reason for our faith in Christ": "As you prefer to lean upon demonstrative arguments, and as you, having this art, wish us also not to worship God until after such proof, *do tell us first how things in general and specially the recognition of God are accurately known*. Is it through demonstrative argument or *the working of faith*? And which is better, *faith which comes through the inworking of God* or demonstration by arguments? . . . To those who have *the inworking through faith*, demonstrative argument is needless, or even superfluous. For what we know through faith this you attempt to prove through words, and often you are not even able to express what we understand. So the *inworking through faith* is better and stronger than your professional arguments. We Christians therefore hold the mystery not in the wisdom of Greek arguments, but in *the power of faith richly supplied to us by God through Jesus* Christ. . . We persuade by faith which manifestly precedes argumentative proof." Antony then asks them to cast out the demons - "behold, there are here some vexed with demons." After Antony cleansed the men from demons, the philosophers "were astonished." *It is Antony's answer which is vital*: "Why do you marvel at this? We are *not* the doers of these things, *but it is Christ who works them by means of those who believe on him* . . . it is faith through love which is wrought in us towards Christ." Here once again the authentic perspective is given, a perspective which is always present, always so inherently obvious and known that it merely becomes a presupposition in ascetical and monastic life.

The author considers the death of Antony important. "It is worth while that I should relate, and that you . . . should hear what his death was like. *For this end of his is worthy of imitation*. According to his custom, he visited the monks in the outer mountain. Having learned from providence that his own end was at hand, he said to the brethren, 'This is my last visit to you which I

shall make. And I shall be surprised if we see each other again in this life'. And when they heard it, they wept, and embraced, and kissed the old man. But he, as though sailing from a foreign city to his own, spoke joyously, and exhorted them 'not to grow idle in their labors, nor to become faint in their asceticism, but to live as though dying daily'. And as he had said before, 'zealously to guard the soul from foul thoughts, eagerly to imitate the saints, and to have nothing to do with the Meletian schismatics . . . nor have any fellowship with the Arians . . . Observe the traditions of the fathers, and chiefly the holy faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which you have learned from the Scripture, and of which you have often been put in mind by me'. But when the brethren were urging him to abide with them and there to die, he did not permit it for many other reasons . . . Having bidden farewell to the monks in the outer mountain, he entered the inner mountain where he was accustomed to abide. And after a few months he fell sick. Having summoned those who were there . . . he said to them: 'I, as it is written, go the way of the fathers, for I perceive that I am called by the Lord. And be watchful and destroy not your long asceticism, but as though now making a beginning, zealously preserve your determination. For you know the treachery of the demons, how fierce they are, but how little power they have. Therefore, fear them not, but rather ever breathe Christ and trust him. Live as though dying daily. Give heed to yourselves and remember the admonition you have heard from me . . . Therefore be the more earnest always *to be followers first of God and then of the saints*, that after death they also may receive you as well-known friends into the eternal habitations. . . Bury my body, therefore, and hide it underground yourselves, and let my words be observed by you that no one may know the place but you alone. For at the resurrection of the dead I shall receive it incorruptible from the Savior. And divide my garments. To Athanasius the bishop give one sheepskin and the garment whereon I am laid, which he himself gave me new, but which with me has grown old. To Serapion the bishop give the other sheepskin, and keep the hair garment yourselves. For the rest fare you well, my children, for Antony is departing, and is with you no more'. His countenance appeared joyful - he died and was gathered to the fathers. . . his fame has been blazoned everywhere . . . For not from writings, nor from worldly wisdom, nor through any art, was Antony renowned, but solely from his piety towards God. *That this was the gift of God no one will deny*. . . Read these words, therefore, to the rest of the brethren that they may learn what the life of monks ought to be; and may believe that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ glorifies those who glorify him."

NEGATIVE EVALUATIONS OF THE *VITA ANTONII*

The lack of appreciation of the *Vita Antonii* is exemplified by Harnack. "If I may be allowed to use strong language, I should not hesitate to say that no book has had a more stultifying - *verdummender* - effect on Egypt, Western Asia, and Europe than the *Vita Antonii*. . . It would be impossible to believe more sincerely in demons than Christians did in the second century. But that age was yet ignorant of the fantastic tricks with them, which almost turned Christendom into a society of deceived deceivers (this expression was first applied to Christians by Plotinus - *ἐξηπάτων καὶ αὐτοὶ ἠπατημένοι*). When we reflect that the *Vita Antonii* was written by an Athanasius, nothing can again surprise us." Harnack testifies to the great influence of the *Vita Antonii*, an influence which he, of course, considers to be extremely harmful. Nygren's comment on the influence of the *Vita Antonii* is factual, not passionate as is Harnack's. Yet he still manages to color it negatively. "Athanasius is the great advocate of Virginity - he finds one of the best proofs of the divinity of Christ in the fact that Christ has succeeded as no other in winning humanity to the virtue of Virginity - and monachist piety, a fact particularly revealing for the structure of his thought. As the author of the *Vita Antonii*, Athanasius has helped perhaps more than any other to mould the ascetic ideal of Christianity. It is significant that it was the story of the hermit Antony which was the occasion of Augustine's conversion." Nygren finds in Augustine's account of this in his *De Confessione* 8, 6, 15 the "Eros tendency." Nygren interprets the comparison of the hermit's life with the building of a tower indicative of Eros thinking and quotes from Holl's *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* (II, p. 396) as a kind of evidence: "The monkish striving to come near to God is given a naive, outward interpretation when the Stylite climbs on to a pillar in order to lessen the distance between himself and heaven." Nygren has gone from the influence of the *Vita Antonii* on St. Augustine to the Stylites in order to indicate that in St. Augustine's appreciation of the *Vita Antonii* there was an Eros tendency, a tendency which of course is unauthentic Christianity. Another Protestant scholar writes that St. Antony "is the most celebrated, the most original, and the most venerable representative *of this abnormal and eccentric sanctity*. . . The whole Nicene age venerated in Antony a model saint. This fact brings out most characteristically the vast difference between the ancient and modern, the old Catholic and the evangelical Protestant conception of the nature of the Christian

religion. The specifically Christian element in the life of Antony, especially as measured by the Pauline standard, is very small." Unfortunately the standard by which these scholars evaluate St. Antony and all of ancient Christianity is a standard quite foreign to that of the ancient Church, a standard of a wholly different understanding of Christianity which first intrudes upon the life of Christianity through Luther. Rationalists and secularists likewise find monasticism repulsive. Gibbon's comments are well-known. "There is perhaps no phase in the moral history of mankind of a deeper or more painful interest than this ascetic epidemic. A hideous, distorted and emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, spending his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero and the lives of Socrates and Cato."

THE WRITINGS OF ST. ANTONY

Antony also carried on a correspondence with both monks, emperors, and high officials. None of the letters addressed to political persons, which he dictated in Coptic, is extant. Seven letters do exist - these are letters addressed to Egyptian monasteries. St. Jerome is the first to mention these letters in his *De viris illustribus* (88). St. Jerome had read them in a Greek translation. The collection has come down to us in late Latin translations of other translations. The first of the seven authentic letters also survives in Syriac. In Coptic the seventh survives, as well as the first part of the fifth letter and the end of the sixth. A version in a Georgian translation has recently been discovered.

What is known as the *Rule of St. Antony* is not authentic. Extant in two Latin translation, its very nature reveals that it was composed by several hands. Numerous sermons have also been attributed to Antony. That he gave sermons or discourses is obvious. A collection of twenty sermons exists in a Latin translation, none of which are authentic - *Sermones ad filios suos monachos*. Another sermon, also preserved in Latin, is also spurious - *Sermo de vanitate mundi et resurrectione mortuorum.*

THE INFLUENCE OF EGYPTIAN MONASTICISM ON THE LATIN WEST THROUGH ST. ATHANASIUS

It must not be forgotten that the person who first introduced monasticism to the Latin West was St. Athanasius. During his exile

in 340, St. Athanasius brought with him to Rome two monks from the Egyptian desert, one of whom was Ammonius; the other Isidore. Rome was stunned. But the initial reaction of disgust and contempt soon changed to one of admiration and then imitation. Two additional visits to Rome by St. Athanasius strengthened the beginning of the monastic movement in the Latin West. St. Athanasius influenced even the northern part of the Latin empire - during his exile in 336 he spent time in Trier, and wherever St. Athanasius went he spread the knowledge of monasticism.

CHAPTER FOUR

ST. PACHOMIUS AND CENOBITIC MONASTICISM

This path of isolated struggle was difficult and for many it proved to be dangerous. Very early on another type of monastic settlement arose – the *community*, the *coenobium* (from the Greek *κοινόβιος*; communal living; from *κοινός*; "common" and *βίος*; "life"), the originator of which is claimed to be St. Pachomius, although some scholars claim that St. Pachomius was but one of many monastic superiors of monasteries with a common life. It was St. Jerome who first made such a claim in his translation of of the *Rule of St. Pachomius*. This was not merely a jointly shared life but precisely a common life, with full reciprocity and full exposure to one another. The first *cenobium* was, it is claimed, established by St. Pachomius (c.290-346), who had begun his spiritual "ordeal" as a hermit. He was convinced that the isolated way of life was beyond the strength of novices and useless for them.

Pachomius' early life differs from that of St. Antony. He was a contemporary of St. Antony, and also an Egyptian - a Copt. Unlike St. Antony, he was born of pagan parents in Esneh in the Upper Thebaid of Egypt. Pachomius served in the military - he took part in the expedition against Constantine and Licinius. The facts of his life are confused as a resut of minimally six lives written of St. Pachomius. He and his military associates were treated so kindly by the Christians in Thebes that Pachomius became interested in Christianity. It appears that he was baptized shortly thereafter - some claim the year of 307; others, the year 313, after his discharge from military service. Pachomius began his "ordeal" under the hermit Palemon in Schenesit. It was his beginning in the anchoritic life, a life full of difficulties as Palemon told him. "Many have come here from disgust with the world, and they have had no perseverance. Remember, my son, my food consists only of bread and salt. I drink no wine, take no oil, spend half the night awake, singing Psalms and meditating on the Scriptures, and sometimes I pass the entire night without sleep." Pachomius spent six or seven years in the anchoritic life with Palemon.

One has to be cultivated gradually for the *creative freedom* of hermitic, anchoritic life. The early form of monasticism - *anchoritic life* - contained many risks, as Palemon suggests. "However

simplified material life might be, when pursued individually it could become so difficult that the spiritual effort of the monk ran the risk of being more encumbered than liberated by this simplification . . . monasticism risked losing itself . . . and degenerating from the very fact of its own development." At the end of his first seven years Pachomius, it is claimed, heard a voice reminding him of "his vow" to serve others. With his own hands he constructed buildings to gather companions. His "call" is described by Palladius in the *Lausiac History*. "In the country of Thebes . . . there was a certain blessed man whose name was Pachomius, and this man led a beautiful life of ascetic excellence, and he was crowned with the love of God and of man. Now, as this man was sitting in his cell, there appeared unto him an angel who said to him, 'Since you have completed your discipleship, it is unnecessary for you to dwell here. But come, and go and gather together unto yourself those who are wandering, and dwell with them."

Pachomius imposed a rule of discipline so that the new community would function unchaotically, would function orderly under the undisputed authority of a superior. This was Pachomius' first attempt to impose order on the monks. What happened as a result of this first attempt is described. "When he saw the brethren gathering around him, he established the following rule for them: each monk would be responsible for himself and would busy himself with work on his own account. But they would have a common purse for everything that concerned material needs: for example, food, or again, for the costs incurred by the guests who came to visit them - for they ate together. The monks were to give over to him the care of what they had to dispose of, and this they were to do freely and willingly, trusting him to watch over all their needs. It was understood that he was their trusted instrument in matters of business and their father according to God." The result, however, was disastrous. Pachomius' monk treated him not like a head with undisputed authority but rather like a servant. "Seeing his humility and his meekness, the monks treated him arrogantly and with total lack of courtesy. And, on all occasions, if he had to take a decision for the regulation of some of their affairs, they contradicted him to his face and insulted him, saying that they would not obey him. But he, far from doing the same to them, put up with them with enormous patience: 'They will see,' he said, 'my patience and my sorrow, and they will come back to God. They will repent and they will fear God'." Yet this wish, this hope of Pachomius, proved deceptive. For approximately five years Pachomius endured their insults and abuse. Finally, after having

spent the entire night in prayer, Pachomius changed his approach radically. From now on, the monks would be compelled to accept a strict rule or else leave. The first principle of the new rule was obedience to his authority. "Now, when you are called to common prayer [*synaxis*], you will all come and you will not act as you have in the past. . . Likewise, when you are called to eat, you will come together, without acting as you have done in the past. And if you have some business to carry out related to our common needs, you will all come together, and you will not be careless about it as you have been until now. If now you are prone to disobey the instructions that I have given you, go wherever you please, for the earth is the Lord's with all that is in it [*Psalm* 23: 1]. And if you wish to go somewhere else, do as you wish, for, as far as I am concerned, I will not keep you any longer unless you conform to all the instructions I have given you." The immediate reaction of the monks was not to take this new approach seriously. They began to deride and to make sport of Pachomius, who finally realized that it was impossible to reach these undisciplined monks. He threw them out.

According to legend, an angel of God gave a rule to St. Pachomius and explained: "I gave you this rule for those whose minds have not yet matured so that they might attain freedom of spirit by fulfilling a general rule of life through fear before the Lord, even though they are recalcitrant slaves." *The ideal remained the same as that of the anchorites – freedom of the spirit – but the path to this ideal had changed* . Palladius, a Galatian monk, writes of the interchange of discussion on the rule between the angel and Pachomius. "And the angel gave him a book in which the following was written: 1) Let every man eat and drink whenever he wishes, and according to the strength of those who eat and drink impose work. And you shall restrain them neither from eating nor from fasting. Furthermore, on those who are strong you shall impose severe labors; and upon those who are of inferior strength and upon those who fast you shall impose light labors; 2) And you shall make for them a cell, and they shall dwell together three by three; 3) And they shall partake of food all together in one place; 4) And they shall not take their sleep lying down, but you shall make for them seats so that when they are sitting down they shall be able to support their heads; 5) At night they shall put on garments without sleeves, and their loins shall be girded up, and they shall be provided with skull-caps; and they shall partake of the Eucharist on the Sabbath and on the First Day of the Week, wearing skull-caps without any nap upon them, and each skull-cap shall have in the front of it a cross worked in puple; 6) And you shall establish

the monks in four-and-twenty grades, and to each grade give a letter of the Greek alphabet . . . every grade a letter." "And the angel commanded that 'a monk who was a stranger and who had a different garb from theirs should not enter in with them to the table; the man who sought to be accepted as a monk in that monastery was obliged to labor there for three years, after which he was to receive the tonsure. When the monks were eating together they were to cover up their faces with their head-coverings, that they might not see each other eating, and might not hold converse together over the table, and might not gaze about from one side to the other'. And the angel commanded that during each day they should repeat twelve sections of the Psalter, and during each evening twelve sections of the Psalter, and during each night twelve sections of the Psalter, and that when they came to eat they should repeat the Great Psalm. And the blessed Pachomius said to the angel, 'The sections of the Psalter which you have appointed to us for repetition are far too few'; and the angel said to him, 'The sections of the Psalter which I have appointed are indeed few, so that even the monks who are weak may be able to fulfill the canons, and may not be distressed by it. For to the perfect no law whatever is laid down because their mind is at all seasons occupied with God, but this law which I have laid down for those who have not a perfect mind is laid down for them, so that although they fulfill only such things as are prescribed by the canons they can acquire openness of face'. Now very many nuns hold fast to this law and canon."

Having thrown out his lot of undisciplined monks, St. Pachomius did not have to wait long before others came, others willing to submit to obedience and discipline. "By a providential disposition of God, there came to Pachomius three men . . . who told him of their desire to become monks in his company and to serve Christ. He asked them if they were capable of separating themselves from their parents and following the Savior, and then he tested them. When he was satisfied that their dispositions were good, he gave them sentiments of joy and love of God. As for them, once they had entered into the holy congregation, they devoted themselves to great exercises and many kinds of asceticism." The number of those interested in becoming monks increased. Pachomius built a church when the number reached one hundred. But they attended the local church in the village for the Eucharistic Liturgy. Pachomius believed in a lay concept of monasticism, something commonly expressed in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. The reason for this was fear of jealousy and vainglory for monks who became priests. Even when it

became common for the Eucharistic Liturgy to be celebrated at the monastery, it was celebrated by the village clergy. If priests came to Pachomius to become monks, he admitted them but only if they accepted the very same life as the other monks.

A commune of disciples gradually gathered around St. Pachomius at Tabennisi and then at Pebou in the Thebaid. He organized them on principles of strict obedience - his monastic rule, the first monastic rule of which we know, consisted of 194 articles. No one was to be admitted if he could not read - therefore a "novice" was compelled to learn how to read and write before being accepted. The basic rule of the community is precisely this strict, faithful adherence to the established rules, even in the trivialities of everyday life. In other words, *there is a complete severance of will or freedom*. Instead of the creative improvization of hermitic life, here an ideal of a rhythmical life is realized and is protected by the severe discipline under the direction of a special superior. All the brothers gathered together to pray. Each was given work to do by hand – these were strictly defined tasks in agriculture, boat building, basket making, weaving. One was not allowed to willfully change these or even augment them. This was a genuinely communal life and struggle with strict communality and mutual attention and concerns where nothing was to be left concealed. That the discipline was severe is confirmed by St. John Cassian in his *Institutes of the Coenobia* . The main purpose of St. John Cassian's work was to interpret monasticism and its origins to the Latin West. He writes (4, 1) that the monastery at Tabennisi "is stricter in the rigor of its system than all others," that "the obedience with which the whole number of monks is at all times subject to one Elder is what no one among us would render to another even for a short time, or would demand from him." Elsewhere (4, 30) he writes that "the *Coenobium* of Tabennisi is the strictest of all."

When the monastery at Tabennisi was developed, St. Pachomius was soon creating a second of the same kind at Pebou, an abandoned village near Tabennisi. His sister, Mary, requested that he set up and organize a monastery nearby for nuns. St. Pachomius never permitted his sister in his presence when she would visit. He did, of course, accede to her request. "And there were there large numbers of women who were nuns, and who closely followed this rule of life, and they came from the other side of the river and beyond it, and there were also married women who came from the other side of the river close by. And whenever anyone died, the other women would bring her and lay her down on the bank of the river and go away. Then certain brethren would

cross over in a boat and bring her over with the singing of Psalms and with lighted candles, and with great ceremony and honor, and when they had brought her over they would lay her in their cemetery. Without elder or deacon no man could go to that nunnery, and then only from one Sunday to the other."

Other new monasteries then followed. At his death in 346 St. Pachomius had founded nine monasteries for men and two for women. The numbers given by Palladius may be no exaggeration, for the Pachomian monasteries counted their monks by the tens of thousands. "And there were living in that mountain about seven thousand brethren, and in the monastery in which the blessed Pachomius himself lived there were living one thousand three hundred brethren; and in addition to these there were there also other monasteries, each containing about three hundred, or two hundred, or one hundred monks, who lived together. And they all toiled with their hands and lived by this. And with whatever they possessed which was superfluous for them they provided the convents of nuns which were there. Each day those whose week of service it was rose up and attended to their work; and others attended to the cooking, and others set out the tables and laid upon them bread, and cheese, and vessels of vinegar and water. And there were some monks who went in to partake of food at the third hour of the day, and others at the sixth hour, and others at the ninth hour, and others in the evening, and others who ate once a day only; and there were some who ate only once a week . . . some worked in the orchard, some in the gardens, some in the blacksmith's shop, some in the baker's shop, some in the carpenter's shop, some in the fuller's shop, and some wove baskets and mats of palm leaves, and one was a maker of nets, and one was a maker of sandals, and one was a scribe. Now all these men as they were performing their work were repeating the *Psalms* and the Scriptures in order." With the increase in numbers, however, there came an increase in discipline.

There are at least six biographies of St. Pachomius which are extant - they survive in Bohairic Coptic, Sahidic, Arabic, Syriac, Greek and Latin. St. Jerome translated the Pachomian *Rule* into Latin in 404 - his is the only Latin version that has survived. The influence of Pachomian monasticism advanced in the Latin West as a result of the translation of the *Rule*. The *Regula Orientalis* - also known as the *Regula Vigilii* - which was written in Gaul in about 420 borrows heavily from the Pachomian *Rule*. The *Regula Tarnatensis*, composed in the sixth or seventh century, also depends heavily on the Pachomian *Rule*. The *Rule of St. Benedict* (c. 540) and the *Rule* of Caesarius of Arles (c. 512-550) are not as

dependent on the Pachomian *Rule*, though an influence is obvious. St. Benedict of Aniane (d. 821) includes the Latin version of St. Pachomius's Rule in his collection of rules - *Codex Regularum monasticarum*, and he refers to it quite often in his *Concordia regularum.*

Over the course of time, the positive, higher value of a common life, of communality in life and struggle, was revealed and recognized. It is claimed that St. Pachomius was the first to assert that cenobitic monastic life was superior to anchoritic life precisely because "common life" allowed in its very structure a service to humanity. *The Rule of St. Pachomius* contains nothing on this subject. That, however, does not preclude that St. Pachomius taught such an idea.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SPREAD OF MONASTICISM

By the end of the fourth century all of Egypt had been built up with monasteries. At this time the monastic population numbered in the many thousands. Rufinus writes that the number of anchorites and cenobites equalled the population in the cities - *quanti populi habentur in urbibus, tantae paene habentur in desertis multitudines monachorum*. The deserts of Egypt, from Nitria, south of Alexandria, and the wilderness of Scete, to Libya and the Thebaid were filled with monasteries. And pilgrims and believers flocked here from various countries in the West and in Asia. The general appreciation of this early stage of monasticism is exhibited in St. Augustine, who himself was moved deeply by St. Antony. In his *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* (31) St. Augustine writes in praise of and admiration for monasticism. "Hear now . . . the customs and notable continence of perfect Christians, who have thought it right not only to praise but also to practice the height of chastity . . . For who does not know that there is a daily increasing multitude of Christian men of absolute continence spread all over the world, especially in . . . Egypt? . . . I will say nothing of those who, in complete seclusion from the view of men, inhabit regions utterly barren, content with simple bread, which is brought to them periodically, and with water, enjoying communion with God, to whom in purity of mind they cleave, and most blessed in contemplating his beauty, which can be seen only by the understanding of saints. I will say nothing of them *because some people think them to have abandoned human things more than they ought*, not considering how much those may benefit us in their minds by prayer, and in their lives by example, whose bodies we are not permitted to see. . . the abstinence and continence of the great saints of the Catholic Church has gone so far *that some think it should be checked and recalled within the limits of humanity* - so far above men, even in the judgment of those who disapprove, have their minds soared. But if this is beyond our tolerance, who can but admire and commend those who, slighting and discarding the pleasures of this world, living together in a most chaste and holy society, unite in passing their time in prayers, in readings, in discussions, without any swelling of pride, or noise of contention, or sullenness of envy; but quiet, modest, peaceful, their life is one of perfect harmony and devotion to God, an offering most

acceptable to him from whom the power to do those things is obtained?"

At the beginning of the fourth century the monastic movement spreads to Palestine. The first hermitc monastery forms in the 320s around the cell of St. Hilarion (c. 291-371) south of Majuma near Gaza. St. Hilarion had been converted to Christianity in Alexandria and, under the influence of St. Antony, he retired for a short period to the Egyptian desert as a hermit. About 306 he returned to Palestine to live a life of extreme asceticism. Hence, the disciples of St. Hilarion are in effect the disciples of St. Antony. St. Hilarion's fame became so well-known that enormous crowds came to visit him. To liberate himself from these crowds, St. Hilarion returned to Egypt in about 353. He later went to Libya, Sicily, and to Cyprus where he died. Not far away from St. Hilarion's cell near Gaza was the monastery of St. Epiphanius (c.315-403) near Eleutheropolis in Judea. The two of them obviously came into close contact again in Cyprus where St. Epiphanius had been elected by the bishops of Cyprus to be their metropolitan as bishop of Salamis.

Later the *laura* or *lavra* comes into existence. Literally, *lavra* – *λαύρα* – means in Greek a "street" or "alley." The *lavra* was a colony of *anchorites*, their separate huts or cells forming the "street" or "passage way." These *anchorites* in a *lavra* actually lived a semi-hermitic life. Their huts were grouped around a central building called a *coenobium* which was physically close to a nearby Church. The monks in a *lavra* were subject to a spiritual father and gathered on Saturday and Sunday for the communal celebration of the liturgy. The oldest *lavras* were founded in Palestine in the early fourth century and they continued to flourish for centuries. In recent times the term *lavra* is applied to cenobitic communities of special importance. The first *lavra* was founded by St. Chariton (c. 350) at Pharan, northeast of Jerusalem. After this a whole series of other *lavras* were founded on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and in the vicinity of Bethlehem. The *lavra* represents a type of mid-step between the life of the reclusive hermit and the fully cenobitic monastic life developed by St. Pachomius. St. Euthymius (377-473) and his disciple St. Sabas (439-532], a native of Mutalaska in Cappadocia, founded the most famous Palestinian *lavras*. In 483 St. Sabas established southeast of Jerusalem the *Great Lavra*, known as *Mar Saba*, which stands even today. In 507 he established the *New Lavra*; in 512 the *Lavra Heptastomos*; and in 531 the *Lavra of Jeremiah*. According to his biographer (thought to be Cyril of Scythopolis), St. Sabas entered a monastery in his native Cappadocia but in 457 he left to go the monastery of

Passarion in Jerusalem where he met St. Euthymius, who because of Sabas' young years, sent him to St. Theoctistus in Wadi Mukelik. There he is said to have remained for seventeen years. St. Sabas was obligated by Sallustius, patriarch of Jerusalem (d. 494) to take holy orders. He was then appointed the director of all the anchorites living in the *lavras* in Judea. In all, St. Sabas established four *lavras*, six monasteries, and four hospices. His disciples, in turn, founded three *lavras* and two monasteries. In the *lavra* the *cenobium* was not so strict; it was viewed as a first step on the way to a life among the "cells."

In Syria monasticism developed independently of Egypt's example. The works of Aphraates – early fourth century – witness to this. Aphraates was the first of the Syriac Church Fathers, known as the "Persian Sage" because he lived under the Persians and lived through the persecution of the Sasanid king, Shapur II. He is not to be confused with Jacob of Nisibis, as he once was. Aphraates' works reveal the importance of asceticism and celibacy to the Syriac Christians. His works also shed valuable light on early Christianity in Persia and on the text of the New Testament.

In Syria there were many monasteries around the large cities. But especially characteristic for Syria was hermitic or eremetic monasticism combined with exceptional means of self-mortification – the *βόσκοι* arise in the fourth century. Subsequently, the phenomenon of the Stylites – from the Greek word *στῦλος* which means "pillar" – arises. St. Simeon the Stylite (c. 390-459) is considered the founder of the Stylite phenomenon in monasticism. St. Simeon was born on the Syrian border of Cilicia. He spent some time as a monk at the monastery of Eusebona between Antioch and Aleppo. He then moved on to Telanissos, which was in the same general vicinity. It was at Telanissos that St. Simeon, after several years of anchoritic life, mounted a "pillar." He increased the height of his "pillar" gradually until it, according to tradition, reached "forty cubits." He lived on the "pillar" until his death. His time was spent in prayer, fasting, adoration of God, and correspondence with the world – he reconciled enemies, attracted pilgrims, converted pagans, stirred up the indolent, and supported the orthodoxy of the Council of Chalcedon. His influence was great and not just limited to being the founder of the Stylite movement. There are still extensive remains of the Church and monastery which were built around his pillar – in modern Qal'at Sim'an. He has been confused at times with a sixth century namesake, also a Stylite, who "pillared" just west of Antioch.

In the late fourth century monasteries begin to appear near cities – for example, the Acoemetae – from the Greek *ἀκοίμηται*

which means "the sleepless ones" – Monastery in Constantinople. It was Abbot Alexander (c.350-c.430) who, after establishing a monastery on the Euphrates, went to Constantinople and established the Acoemetae Monastery. These monks were to observe absolute poverty, do no manual labor, and kept up a perpetual psalmody with alternating choirs. These ideas or ideals were completely new in Byzantine monasticism. It attracted, however, numerous monks from other places. Their practices provoked such controversy that they incurred the wrath of patriarch Nestorius and other prelates in Constantinople and Alexander was driven out of Constantinople. He then established a monastery with the same principles at Gomon in Bithynia. In any case, the situation in Constantinople revealed that the desert was drawing closer to the world.

Justinian tried to include the monasteries in the general system of political Church relations, and he persistently legislated on monastic affairs. Monasticism's inner life, however, remained original and independent. The monasteries remained an alien insertion in the worldly fabric.

The iconoclastic controversy was reflected most sharply in monastic life. This was a turning point in the history of Byzantine monasticism and, in a certain sense, this controversy was itself a pointed clash between the *Empire* and the *Desert.*

An ascetic ideal was elaborated and developed in the novitiate and in the experience of the life of withdrawal. This was primarily an ideal of spiritual birth and perfection, an ideal of a "spiritual life" and life in the Spirit. This is not so much a moral ideal as a precisely religious one. In Eastern Christian asceticism in general there is more mysticism and metaphysics than ethics. The ideal of salvation is an ideal of "deification," of "theosis" and the path to it is "courting the Spirit" – a path of spiritual struggle and spiritual grasping, a charismatic path.

The monastic movement began in a non-Greek milieu. In Egypt the first ascetics were Copts who were totally untouched by Hellenic culture. St. Antony hardly knew Greek. Greeks appear among the anchorites and in the *cenobia* only later, and then, even in the *cenobia*, the Greeks and Copts live apart – this subsequently happens in Syria as well.

However, it is precisely the Greeks who first synthesize the ascetic experience and formulate the ascetic ideal. What is more, they formulate it in the customary categories of Hellenistic psychology and mysticism. The ascetic world view is organically connected with the traditions of Alexandrian theology and with the teaching of Clement of Alexandria and Origen. It is no accident that

many monks, especially those in cells, were reading Origen in Egyptian monasteries in the Nitrian desert and in Scete – the southern portion of the Nitrian desert. St. Ammon (d.c.350), one of the most celebrated ascetics of the Nitrian desert, studied Origen, Pierius, Didymus, and a certain Stephen (see the *Historia Lausiaca*, chapter 11 by Palladius [c.365-425], a historian of early monasticism; the *Historia Lausiaca* derives its name from its dedication to Lausus, the chamberlain of Theodosius II).

Even more characteristic is the controversial image of Evagrius. We must remember that in Cappadocia, in their seclusion in Pontus, people studied Origen. Subsequently, Origenism developed into a whole movement in Palestinian monasteries. It is not surprising that the first disputes about Origen flare up in the monastic milieu. According to legend, St. Pachomius himself tried to persuade those who came to him not to read Origen; hence, the question had already been raised. St. Pachomius flatly forbade his brotherhood to read Origen.

A pointed argument flared up at the very end of the fourth centgury in Scete between the "anthropomorphites" and the "Origenists." [See Fr. Florovsky's articles on this subject in Volume IV of *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, "The Anthropomorphites in the Egyptian Desert" and "Theophilus of Alexandria and Apa Aphou of Pemdje"]. And it is Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, who interfered in the controversy quite rudely and unsuccessfully. This was a clash of two religious or mystical types. One can guess that the "anthropomorphites" were visionaries: their religious experience turned on graphic, perceptible visions. On the other hand, the "Origenists" strove to overcome perceptible contemplation and for a non-imagic intellectual vision. The story of St. John Cassian is very typical. He was in Scete at this precise time and describes the events in his *Conferences* X, II. For as comprehensive picture as possible on this controversy, it is necessary to read St. John Cassian's account along with the consequent events reported in Sozomen, Socrates, Palladius and the letters of Jerome. In short, Theophilus first supported the "Origenists" and then turned completely in favor of the "anthropomorphites. Rioting broke out in Alexandria and elsewhere. Theophilus finally expelled the Origenist monks from the monasteries and the desert. St. John Cassian was among those expelled - he went to Constantinople where he was ordained by St. John Chrysostom.

Denying "anthropomorphism" seemed to many to be heresy of the worst kind. They felt this was also a denial of the belief that man was created "in God's image." The explanation that this had to

be understood "not according to the letter of the Scripture but according to the spiritual meaning of Scripture" did not reassure the "anthropomorphites" but only distressed them. They could no longer pray "when the man-like image of God was driven from their hearts." "They took my Lord away from me, and there is no one for me to rely on," one of them cried, "and I know not to whom to pray and upon whom to call."

In later documents of monastic literature we frequently encounter polemics against visions. "If an angel really appears to you, do not receive him but submit and say: 'I who live in sin am unworthy to see an angel'." Seeing one's sin is the best vision and it is even better to see other people's virtues. The devil appeared, it is claimed, to a certain elder in the form of Christ. And the elder answered him: "I do not want to see Christ here but in the next life."

Origen was attractive not only as a mystic and theologian but also as an exegete of the Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures were read constantly in the monasteries, in the cells, and during the liturgy; entire books of the Bible were even learned by heart. Rule and custom attached such importance to studying the Scriptures that literacy was obligatory in St. Pachomius' monasteries for precisely this reason. The illiterate were taught to read immediately after being accepted into the community and in the meantime had to memorize the Psalter and the Gospels and recite them.

What had been read was discussed at general meetings and in private discussions. Hence, special interest in the exegetical literature is understandable. Also, an allegorical tendency, the "Alexandrian" style of perception, is quite manifest in the interpretation or application of Biblical texts among the Egyptian ascetics. Here can be seen Origen's influence, whether direct or through Didymus, who was generally close to monastic circles.

Clement of Alexandria's influence can be seen in the fact that the ideal of ascetic struggle is often defined as "impassivity" – *ἀπαθεία*. This is especially evident in the works of St. John Cassian, Evagrius, and in Palladius' *Lausiac History*. Among the Cappadocians and later in the *Areopageticum* it is possible to note the conscious borrowing of Neoplatonic and mystical terminology, a terminology which was in the spirit of Clement of Alexandria.

The influence of Alexandrian theology is clearly felt already in the first experiments of ascetic synthesis, in the remarkable biography of St. Antony composed by St. Athanasius, although there are still some who are not convinced of St. Athanasius' general authorship. This is not so much a biography as a religious

description, an ideal portrait, a holy image, an icon in words depicting the great anchorite and Spirit-Bearer.

The ascetic world view was not worked out without a struggle, and one should not stylize it as an oversimplified synthesis. In the monuments of ascetic literature, we encounter not only different aspects or nuances of the same thought, but also very profound disagreements and even conflicts. This does not only concern practical questions and the tension between the ideal of complete isolation ("I cannot be with God and people at the same time," said abbot Arsenius) and the ideal of active charity. This simply remained unresolved. *In this disagreement a kind of maximum religious antinomy – not merely an antithesis – is laid bare.*

More than once theological and dogmatic questions were also raised with great poignancy. One should not forget the immanent difficulties or temptations of ascetic experience and thought. First of all, the question of sin and freedom arose. Connected with this was another question concerning the sacraments and prayer. In another formulation this is also a question about grace and freedom – or struggle; that is, man's creative coming-into-being. It is not surprising that Pelagianism and Origenism – and even the heresy of the Eutychians – disturbed monastic circles.

All these individual questions reduce to one general question, one which concerned fate and man's path. *In ascetic texts we find not only psychological and ethical meditations but also the metaphysics of human life*. The problems of asceticism could be resolved only in a precise dogmatic synthesis. This was clear even with St. Athanasius and the Cappadocians. Christological disputes were resolved not only by dogmatic synthesis but by ascetic synthesis as well. We find it in St. Maximus the Confessor. Dogmatics and ascetics are organically and inseparably brought together in the system of St. Maximus.

The essence of the spiritual ideal of monasticism is within Christianity from the beginning. Monasticism is not an aberration from original and authentic Christianity, not a distortion of the Gospel, of the *kerygmatic* apostolic deposit. Rather it is one form of Christian spirituality, a form whose essential features are found in the Gospels, the epistles of the New Testament, and in the life of the early Church. The fourth century merely begins to develop, to organize those ideals, those precepts which were always a part of the Christian message. And it is precisely here that one of the deepest problems facing the Ecumenical Movement is to be found – there are two basic and contradictory views toward monasticism. And in these two opposing views toward monasticism one clearly sees two differing views toward the essence of the Christian

message, toward the Christian vision of God, man, and redemption, toward the very essence of Christian spirituality. The question must be raised. It must be confronted, not forgotten or neglected. What precisely were those essential aspects of monasticism that were contained in the Christian message from the beginning? What precisely defines the two opposing views toward monasticism and monastic forms of spirituality? Again *dogma and spirituality* are intertwined, are inseparable, and again *it concerns the metaphysics of human life and destiny*.

The best introduction to the world of the Egyptian "ordeal" is *The Lausiac History* [*Historia Lausiaca*]. This book was composed by Palladius (c. 365-425), the bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia. Palladius was a native of Galatia. He took monastic vows in Jerusalem in the 380s but soon moved to Egypt. He first lived in Alexandria, then in the Nitrian desert and in the "cells" under Evagrius Ponticus (346-399). After the death of Evagrius, Palladius, who evidently had become ill, returned to Palestine (presumably at the advice of an Alexandrian physician) and was soon elevated to the rank of bishop. It is claimed that he was consecrated bishop of Helenopolis by St. John Chrysostom. In any case, Palladius was very close to Chrysostom and subsequently described his life. He appeared with St. John Chrysostom at the Synod of the Oak near Chalcedon in 403. The Synod banished Chrysostom and Palladius went to Rome to lay the case before Pope Innocent I in 405. The Western emperor Honorius sent Palladius to Constantinople with a decision in favor of St. John Chrysostom. But the Eastern emperor Arcadius exiled Palladius to Egypt. It was in Egypt, at Syene (406-408) that Palladius wrote his *Dialogus de vita Sancti Joannis Chrysostomi*, a main source for the life of Chrysostom.

Palladius spent four years in the Thebaid of Egypt at Antinoë and returned to Palestine only after opposition to Chrysostom ceased in 412. In Galatia he lived with a priest named Philoramus but in 417 he was made bishop of Aspuna in Galatia. It was here that he wrote (419-420) *The Lausiac History*, so named – as previously mentioned – because it was addressed to Lausus, the chamberlain of emperor Theodosius II.

Palladius wrote for edification. From memory he tells of ascetics whom he had met and knew personally. He tells of others from the words of trustworthy people. He displays a picture of the Egyptian ascetical ordeal in bright and vivid images but does not pass over failings in silence. Palladius writes simply, evenly, and somewhat curtly. There is everyday truth in his stories, but he was not only an annalist. In his characters he depicts the ascetic ideal –

the ideal of apathia. A disciple of Evagrius in monasticism, Palladius was close to Rufinus and Melania. This explains why St. Jerome accused Palladius of Origenism. The more so since Palladius was on the side of Chrysostom and opposed to Theophilus of Alexandria.

The second book about Egyptian monasticism –*The History of the Monks in Egypt* – is of a different nature. At an early time this work seems to have been fused with Palladius' *The Lausiac History*. It was written in Greek, probably by the Alexandrian archdeacon Timothy (see Socrates; F. Diekamp ascribed it to Rufinus). It was immediately translated into Latin and most likely revised by Rufinus. It is in the Latin text that this work was best known (Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 21, 387-462]. It was published in Greek for the first time in the late nineteenth century.

This work is more a tale than a history or biography. The narration proceeds in the form of the description of a journey along the Nile. This is possibly a literary device in imitation of Hellenic novellas. However, this does not diminish the authenticity of the reported events. Much more harmful is the abundance of fairy-tale motifs.

As early as the fourth century begins the collection and recording of "*dicta*" or "sayings" of the Egyptian elders. These were usually called *Apophthegmata*. The original collections were subject to further revision. Such collections are known in different redactions and under different names, although most commonly in Greek they are referred to as *Apophthegmata*. It is still difficult to trace the history of these collections. It is possible to discern two kinds of collections: the "alphabetical," organized by names of the elders, and the "systematic," organized by "chapters." This is a record of oral legends and reminiscences. In general, the source is trustworthy enough – only the names of the elders are not very reliable. In terms of style and composition they very frequently become ephemeral or rambling. Most important is the fact that in these collections one feels the warmth of direct observations and impressions. One does not perceive any tendency in the selection of the "sayings." Different and often contradictory views are given. The darker aspects of monastic life are not hidden.

Much later John Moschus (c. 550-619 or 620) composed his *Λειμών*, known in English as *The Spiritual Meadow* and in Latin as *Patrum Spirituale*, which is a collection of stories and "sayings" of ascetics of various countries. Personal impressions blend here with reminiscences and oral legends.

CHAPTER SIX

ST. BASIL AND ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA

ST. BASIL THE GREAT

The *community ideal* received its principle foundation in the fourth century from St. Basil the Great. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration that St. Basil radically changed monasticism. St. Basil viewed the cenobitic life as a microcosm of the Church, as a social organism, as a kind of special "*politia*." St. Basil's *Rule* rendered a decisive influence on the entire subsequent history of monastic life in Byzantium and in the West. St. Basil put forth his *Rule* between 358 and 364. It consists of two forms. In the common Latin terminology the first form, the *Regulae fusius tractatae*, consists of 55 categories; the second form, the *Regulae brevius tractatae*, consists of 313 categories. These categories are in the form of question and answer. Although the *Rule* is strict, it avoided encouraging the more extreme forms of asceticism practiced by the hermits of the desert. The *Rule* conceived of asceticism as a means to the perfect service of God and this was to be actualized in community life under obedience. St. Basil laid down hours for liturgical prayer and hours for manual labor and other types of work. Poverty and chastity were also included in the *Rule*. St. Basil's *Rule* carries with it a *social injunction*: children were to be taught in classes that were attached to the monasteries and the monks were to care for the poor. The present form of St. Basil's *Rule* is a revision by St. Theodore the Studite (d. 826). St. Basil himself founded monasteries in Pontus. Here he was continuing the work begun by Eustathius of Sebaste (c.300-c.377), who was once close to St. Basil in friendship and in the monastic movement but in his later years became the leading person in Asia Minor in spreading the Macedonian heresy – it takes its name from Macedonius (d.c. 362), bishop of Constantinople; the heresy is also known under the name *Pneumatomachi*. Eustathius also propagated a form of monasticism that claimed that marriage prevented salvation and hence priests must not be married. If St. Basil's "reformation" of monasticism was so radical, what was his motivation?

In his *Letter 223*, a letter addressed, by the way, to Eustathius of Sebaste, St. Basil explains himself on the subject. "I had given much time to vanity . . . Waking up one day, as if from a deep sleep, I opened my eyes to the wonderful light of the truth of the

Gospel . . . bitterly weeping over my miserable life, I prayed that a rule of conduct would be given me to enter into the ways of piety. Above all, I took care to rectify somewhat my way of living, long perverted by my intimacy with wicked men. Then I read the Gospel and noted that the great means of attaining perfection was to sell one's possessions, to share them with our brethren who are in need, and to disengage oneself completely from the cares of this life without keeping any attachment of soul to the good things of this earth, and I hoped to find some brother who had chosen this way. And to succeed with him in crossing the surging floods of this short life."[*Patrologia Graeca* 31, 337]. Here precisely is St. Basil's idea of the "other," his ideal of the cenobitic life, for this path towards perfection he will travel with "some brother," not alone, not in the solitude of anchoritic monasticism.

This thought is continued in the *Regulae fusius tractatae* (3). "Who is not aware that man, indeed, is a tame and sociable being, and not solitary or savage? Nothing is as consonant with our nature as to enter one another's society, *to have need of one another*, and to love man who is of our race. The Lord has given us these seeds which he has planted within our hearts. He now comes to claim their fruits and he says: 'I give you a new commandment - to love one another'. [*John* 13, 34]. The Lord wished to arouse our souls to observe this commandment. He did not ask of his disciples either unheard of prodigies or miracles - even though he gave them the power to do such things in the Holy Spirit - but . . . what did he say to them? 'All will know that you are my disciples by this - if you have love among one another'. [*John* 13: 35]. He unites these principles everywhere to such an extent that he refers to himself the good deeds of which our neighbor is the object. 'For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat . . .' and he adds: 'Whatever you did to the least of my brethren, you did to me'. [*Matthew* 15: 35-40]. And thus, by means of the first principle it is possible to observe the second, and by the second to go back to the first: in loving the Lord, to love also the neighbor, for 'he who loves me', says the Lord, 'will keep my commandments' and 'My commandment is that you love one another as I have loved you'. [*John* 14: 15; 15: 12]. St. Basil becomes more explicit. "Thus *in the solitary life* what we have is without usefulness and we are without assistance in what is lacking, for God, our creator, has decided that *we should have need of one another* . . . Behold! The Lord, exceeding his *kenosis*, was not content to teach us his doctrine but, in order to give us a clear, an obvious example of his humility, he, in the perfection of his love, washed and dried with a towel the feet of his disciples . . . But whose feet will you wash? For whom will you

care? How will you place yourself in the last pace, if you live alone with yourself? . . . In solitude how can you verify that it is pleasing and good for brothers to live together? [*Psalm* 132: 1]. A community of brothers is then a stadium in which athletes are exercised, a good road towards progress, a continual training, a constant concern for the commandments of God: its end is the glory of God according to the commandment of our Lord [*Matthew* 5: 16], but it also preserves the example of the saints of whom the *Acts of the Apostles* tell us [*Acts* 2: 44; 4: 32]: 'All those believing together had all things in common' and 'Now the heart and soul of the multitude of those having believed was one, and not one said anything of his possessions was his own, but all things were to them common'." [*Patrologia Graeca* 30, 340; 345; 347]. St. Basil is stressing the Biblical meaning of "common" - κοινά St. Basil rejects the solitary life on theological grounds, and his theological vision finds support in the life and words of Christ and in the example of the early Church.

But St. Basil's emphasis on the cenobitic life must be considered in the light of everything he has written. He is not opposed to solitude, and certainly does not reject contemplation. He is opposed to making solitude the only form of monastic life. And indeed he "prefers" and finds cenobitic life "more profitable." In his *Letter 2* to Gregory, one of the most edifying letters in the history of Christian thought, he advocates solitude, but again one must understand this in context. "What is of most help in this respect is solitude. Solitude stills our passions and gives reason the opportunity to cut them right out of the soul . . . So the place to be chosen must be like ours here, well away from human company, to ensure that nothing external can interrupt the continuity of the disciplined life. . . Quiet then is the beginning of the soul's purification." The total context of this sublime letter does not support the contention that St. Basil is advocating solitude as the permanent way of spiritual life. Rather, it appears that Gregory is in need of temporary solitude. It is precisely that type of solitude that St. Basil supports.

St. Basil is asked "whether it is necessary that he who withdraws should remain alone or live with brothers of like mind who have placed before themselves the same goal of piety?" His response in the *Regulae brevius tractatae* (74) [*Patrologia Graeca* 30, 441] gives full expression to his thought. "I think that the life of several in the same place is much more profitable. First, because for bodily needs no one of us is sufficient for himself, but we need each other in providing what is necessary. For just as the foot has one abilility, but is lacking another, and without the help of the

other members it would find neither its own power strong nor sufficient of itself to continue, nor any supply for what it lacks, so it is in the case of the solitary life: what is of use to us and what is lacking we cannot provide for ourselves, for God, who created the world, has so ordered all things that we are dependent upon each other, as it is written that we may join ourselves to one another. But in addition to this, reverence to the love of Christ does not permit each one to have regard only to his own affairs, for love, he says, seeks not its own. *The solitary life has only one goal, the service of its own interests.* That clearly is opposed to the law of love, which the Apostle fulfilled when he did not in his eyes seek his own advantage but the advantage of many, that they might be saved. Further, *no one in solitude recognizes his own defects*, since he has no one to correct him and in gentleness and mercy direct him on his way. for even if correction is from an enemy, it may often in the case of those who are well disposed rouse the desire for healing . . . Also the commands may be better fulfilled by a larger community, but not by one alone . . . Who would therefore value higher the idle, useless life than the fruitful which fulfills the commandments of God? . . . Also in the preservation of the gifts bestowed by God the cenobitic life is preferable . . . For him who falls into sin, the recovery of the right path is so much easier, for he is ashamed at the blame expressed by so many in common . . . *There are still other dangers which we say accompany the solitary life, the first and greatest is that of self-satisfaction.* For he who has no one to test his work easily believes that he has completely fulfilled the commandments . . . For how shall he manifest his humility when he has no one to whom he can show himself the inferior? How shall he manifest compassion, cut off from the society of many? How will he exercise himself in patience, if no one opposes his wishes?"

St. Basil responds in his *Regulae brevius tractate* (277) to the question raised by our Lord's injunction in *Matthew* 6: 6: "When you pray, enter into your private room and, having shut your door, pray to your Father in secret" - *σὺ δὲ ὅταν προσεύχῃ, εἴσελθε εἰς τὸ ταμιεῖόν σου καὶ κλείσας τὴν θύραν σου πρόσευξαι τῷ πατρί σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ*. St. Basil's exegesis and his theolological understanding in general places this text in a broader context, a context that does not imply only anchoritic monasticism, for he juxtaposes the text with *Matthew* 5: 14-16. "The conditions under which this injunction is given indicate its meaning. It is addressed to people consumed by the desire to be pleasing to men. Whoever suffers from this passion is therefore correct to withdraw in prayer and to live in solitude until such time as he is no longer

consumed by the passion of seeking the praise of men, but is able to look at God alone. But, when anyone, by the grace of God, is purified from this passion, it is no longer necessary that he hide what is beautiful. This is what the Lord teaches us when he says: 'A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden, or do they light a lamp and place it under a bushel but on the lampstand, and it lightens all those in the house. Therefore, let your light shine before men so that they may see your good works and may glorifiy your Father in heaven'." [*Patrologia Graeca* 30, 513].

St. Basil took the monasticism existing in his time, the anchoritic monasticism and the strict Pachomian cenobitic monasticism, and altered their structure. From an "ordeal" which was in essence solitary, he brought the "ordeal" under the direct wings of the social obligations of the Church. The "ordeal" now becomes inseparable from the service to man. The monks now are to take part in the education of children, in the comforting of the sick, and in the care for orphans. St. Basil's influence on monasticism in both the Greek East and the Latin West was vast. His "rule" was translated into Latin before the end of the fourth century by Rufinus of Aquileia. He was known by St. John Cassian, though St. Basil's ideal is in conflict with St. John Cassian's advocacy of and stress on contemplation - Cassian was at root and in spirit an "Egyptian monk," and could not be influenced by St. Basil's form of monasticism. In the preface to his *Institutes of the Coenobia*, however, St. John Cassian mentions St. Basil in passing. "On this very subject men who were noble in life and eminent for speech and knowledge have already put forth several little books, I mean Basil and Jerome." The Latin West often refers to Eastern Orthodox monasticism as "Basilian." This is a false application of nomenclature. There are no "orders" of monasticism in Eastern Christianity. Though Eastern Christian monasticism was heavily influenced by St. Basil, it has never rejected anchoritic monasticism as a valid form of monastic life. The Roman Curia applied the term "Basilian Order" to the Uniate monks and to the Melchite monks in Lebanon.

ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA

As one scholar has accurately written, "Gregory of Nyssa built up a whole system of Christian thought which would be the justification of the monastic life and provide it with a mysticism made expressly for its needs. We must say even more: it was Gregory of Nyssa who prepared within monasticism a final development of Alexandrian gnosis which would lead it towards

what the following periods would call, precisely, mysticism. It is beginning to be recognized that Gregory of Nyssa was one of the most powerful and most original thinkers ever known in the history of the Church. He was also one of the spiritual writers who most deeply influenced the spirituality of Eastern monasticism. His discovery by the West brought about one of the most active ferments in the meditation of the spiritual writers of our high Middle Ages or of the twelfth century. The importance of this influence, even where it was immediately exercised, nevertheless was only recognized a short time ago. For this to come about was needed Werner Jaeger's discovery of the integral text of his *De Instituto christiano* and the subsequent demonstration that the writings of Pseudo-Marcarius, far from having influenced this treatise, were in many respects nothing but a popularization in monastic circles of Gregory's own teaching. At almost the same time, the influence of Gregory was recognized, not only on Evagrius, but on the whole Syrian school. It was by this last shift, perhaps, that he appeared as the precursor and doubtless the chief inspirer of the unknown who is still concealed for us under the mask of the Areopagite. . . [Gregory] was one of the rare writers of whom we can be sure that he had read the ancients integrally and had completely assimilated them. But this assimilation is precisely of such a quality that he finds no difficulty in dominating the immense mass of ideas and formulations that he possesses, in order to use it and submit it to the expression of his own thought . . . The basis of Gregory's thought, in fact, remains Christian and biblical, at the school of Origen, whom he understood perhaps better than anyone else, but used with the sovereign freedom which is always his. A spontaneously metaphysical mind, in which keenness of existential perception was allied with vigor of methodical reflection . . . his thought spontaneously weds itself to the complexity of a concrete problem by means of analyses that reunite and complete one another in order to envelop the whole reality . . . In general, his thought goes through three successive stages. At the starting point comes the biblical, Christian intuition, grasped in a text or a theme that he draws from tradition . . . Then comes the compact and very personal expression of this intuition in the philosophic language that is his own, and here we must be on guard against too quickly interpreting its terms as we might if we found them in Plato, in later Stoicism, or even in Plotinus. And, finally, this thought is unfolded by a return to the Bible in which the connections, not only with a single isolated text, but with the whole current of tradition are indicated and justified."

St. Gregory's theological vision has been presented in my book entitled *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century* [see Volume VII in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, pages 146-220] and will not be repeated here. It is sufficient to call attention here to the misunderstanding of the theological thought of St. Gregory of Nyssa which is still promoted. Nygren's book *Agape and Eros* has contributed greatly to a misunderstanding of the entire vision of Christian spirituality, including that of St. Gregory of Nyssa. As Louis Bouyer has correctly observed in his fair and objective book titled *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* (French original, 1954), a book which stresses the positive elements of Protestant thought - only one chapter is devoted to the "Negative Elements of the Reformation," "the recent book of Anders Nygren, *Eros et Agape*, in spite of the extreme ingenuity, and even forcefulness of some of its analyses, unintentionally makes this fact brialliantly clear." The "fact" about which Bouyer speaks is the doctrine of extrinsic justification. "Scripture, even St. Paul alone, apart from the evidence of the four Gospels, sweeps aside the last dialectical device for safeguarding the theory of extrinsic justification. If this is the case with the opposition set up between grace and a justification intrinsic to man, or inclusive of some element in man, what are we to say to the opposition defined by Luther . . . against the idea that the love of God (having God for its object) pertains in some way to justification - whether the connection is expressed by the formula of faith 'informed' by charity, or in some other way? It would seem hard to deny that this is the least defensible of Luther's negations that Lutheranism has striven to justify." This is the "fact" to which Bouyer refers when discussing Nygren's position. "Nygren guides his whole inquiry on the Christian doctrine of love towards Luther's paradoxical negation, contrasting faith with the love of God, and making their opposition the basis of that between Protestantism and Catholicism. Nygren attempts to show that it is at this point that Protestantism alone has shown itself faithful to the new creation proclaimed in the Gospel. But the price that has to be paid for this demonstration is, he admits, so heavy that one wonders if it is not the best refutation of the whole system. He finds himself obliged to reject the whole body, the heart in particular, of the thought of St. John, as already infected with the 'Catholic error' *par excellence*. Further, he is driven to the necessity of denying the fundamental importance, even the bare truth, of the summary of the law as given in the Synoptics: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' The fact that he had to go to such an extreme in order to maintain the Lutheran position which turns on its opposition to the *fides caritate*

formata, or else admit its invalidity, constitutes, we believe, the most tragic but the clearest admission possible that Protestantism was led, in the elaboration of its own principles, to a crisis which it cannot resolve."

The influence of Nygren's *Agape and Eros* cannot be underestimated. It has left many scholars and students of Christian thought confused or with a wholly incorrect understanding of Christian spirituality. It is the taking of the essence of the Reformation doctrine of an imputed justification and the doctrine of a valueless humanity vitiated completely by an extremist interpretation of original sin and then using this basic principle under the "motif" of "Agape and Eros" to reinterpret Christian thought from the perspective of the Reformation. In the process Nygren has distorted the original thought of numerous Christian writers, including St. Gregory of Nyssa whom he finds of "particular interest." Nygren writes that "it is nevertheless not the Agape but *the Eros motif* that really characterises Gregory's thought. Here we meet the attitude of pure mysticism, with its whole apparatus of concepts that were traditional ever since Philo and Plotinus. There is the ecstatic Vision of God and the "bright darkness" - *ὁ λαμπρὸς γνόφος, ὁ θεῖος γνόφος* - and we hear of a "seeing by not seeing" - *ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ ἀληθής ἐστιν εἴδησις τοῦ ζητουμένου, τὸ ἐν τούτῳ τὸ ἰδεῖν, ἐν τῷ μὴ ἰδεῖν* - a "knowing by not knowing," of a "sober intoxication," and so on - *ἡ θεία τε καὶ νηφάλιος μέθη, δι' ἧς ἐξίσταται αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ.* Gregory's great and ever-recurrent them is *fellowship with God according to the scheme of ascent.*"

The profound and spiritually dynamic thought of St. Gregory in his *De vita Moysis* is diminished, indeed cut bare, by Nygren. In theological principle it is wrong, in Nygren's theology, to depict any mystical ascent on the part of man to God. Indeed any attempt to ascend to God, to strive toward God, is tantamount to heresy and blasphemy. As a result, everything that St. Gregory says about the ascent of Moses is merely wrong and distorted theology. Nygren speaks similarly of St. Gregory's interpretation of the Beatitudes in his *De beatitudinibus*. "To the same theme Gregory returns in his work On the Beatitudes. Since Jesus spoke these words on a mountain Gregory will interpret each Beatitude as a stage in the spiritual mountain ascent, or as a step upwards to the Vision of God and union with God." Nygren applies the same understanding to Gregory's interpretation of the *Song of Songs*. "Gregory's work on the *Song of Songs* is particularly interesting in this connection. It, too, is constructed wholly according to the scheme of ascent." It is precisely this spiritual activity within man

that is considered unreal by Nygren, following Luther. Hence, any theological thought which attributes real spiritual activity toward God is unreal, unauthentic and therefore not genuinely Christian, as Nygren understands it. "It would be easy from Gregory's writings to multiply proof that his thought is dominated by the upward tendency." Any "upward tendency" for Nygren is Eros, which is non-Christian. With his theological presuppositions and his all too convenient dichotomy between Eros and Agape, it is no wonder that Nygren is confused when he attempts to unravel the thought of St. Gregory. Nygren writes that St. Gregory "uses the terms Eros and Agape interchangeably 'without troubling about words,' since they are simply different names for one and the same reality. . . It seems, then, that Gregory uses the words Eros and Agape without distinction; but did he never reflect on the relation between them?" For Nygren, who creates an artificial distinction between the two words, not to distinguish between these two terms means that one has not grasped the essential message of Christianity! Christianity is Agape, and it is so in a very technical interpretation of the word Agape, whereas Eros represents the non-Christian, pagan notion of striving towards the good, the beautiful, or even towards God - Nygren does, of course, distinguish in his book between a "vulgar Eros" and a "heavenly Eros," but the result is the same for him, for Eros even in its "heavenly striving" is a form of idolatry, a false understanding of the Christian idea of love, a false understanding of the Christian doctrine of God and man and redemption. Nygren has great difficulty in attempting to explain St. Gregory's statement that "a heightened and intensified Agape is called Eros" - *ἐπιτεταμένη γὰρ ἀγάπη ἔρως λέγεται*. Nygren, given his self-created dichotomy between Eros and Agape and given his theological presuppostions, can reach only one conclusion. "Thus Agape means for [Gregory] *fundamentally love in the sense of desire*; constitutive of it is its connection with the Beautiful and its ceaseless effort to win this for itself . . . Our question is now answered as to how Gregory of Nyssa believes fellowship with God to be brought about. At every point the answer indicates the Eros Way of salvation . . . Our enquiry has confirmed what we said above, that Agape in Gregory is but another name for what is otherwise called Eros. . . We have seen how the strength of the Eros motif increases through the compromise theology of the fourth century, until it becomes, if not the only, at least the decisive factor in Gregory of Nyssa." The Nygren equation is simple: Eros is pagan. St. Gregory of Nyssa, according to the structure of Nygren's position, is incapable of grasping the basic theological principle of Christian revelation. A

greater distortion of the thought of St. Gregory of Nyssa is difficult to imagine - indeed, it is difficult to imagine a greater distortion of all the Christian writers analyzed by Nygren in his *Agape and Eros*, which in actuality is the reduction to the absurd of the rich, dynamic, and authentically faithful thought of great Christian writers of the patristic age. One patristic scholar has aptly written on this distortion. "Certain modern studies, brilliant, filled with illuminating intuitions, but too regimented by a systematization that history knows nothing of and it is useless to try to impose on it, have tried to characterize the development of patristic spirituality as being a passage from the prophetic religion to a mystical religion. The progressive immersion of the Gospel theme of *agape* in the Hellenic theme of *eros* is denounced [by these studies], mysticism and Hellenism being supposed *a priori* to be the same thing."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SPIRITUAL HOMILIES

THE SOURCES AND THE PROBLEMS WITH THE MANUSCRIPTS

The fifty *Spiritual Homilies* – *ὁμιλίαι πνευματικαί* – which have come down to us under the name of St. Macarius of Egypt (c. 300- c.390) – known also as St. Macarius the Great – have been one of the greatest sources in the history of early Christian mysticism and their influence has been enormous throughout the history of Christianity both in the East and the West. The question of authorship is still under contention. Since the time of the first edition (the first to publish them under Macarius' name was Johannes Picus in 1559 who added a Latin translation), it has been customary to consider the author St. Macarius. Our knowledge of St. Macarius comes chiefly from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Rufinus' translation of the *Historia Monachorum*, and Palladius' *The Lausiac History*. He was a native of Upper Egypt who, at about the age of thirty, founded a colony of monks in the desert in Scete (Wadi-el-Natrum). This colony became one of the main centers of Egyptian monasticism. After obtaining a reputation for powers of healing and prophecy, St. Macarius was ordained a priest about 340. St. Macarius was also a staunch supporter of St. Athanasius and, as a result, experienced a brief period of exile under St. Athanasius' successor Lucius, who banned him to an island in the Nile. St. Macarius was greatly influenced by St. Antony. In addition to the sources mentioned above, St. Macarius is mentioned by the historians Socrates (c.380-450) and Sozomen (early fifth century). A separate biography of St. Macarius exists in Coptic and Syriac translations. However, none of these accounts by these ancient authors mentions the writings of St. Macarius.

St. Macarius lived an isolated life with two disciples but did receive visitors. As Palladius puts it, he lived like a wanderer on this earth, dead to the world and terrestrial cares, totally absorbed in contemplation of, and discourse with, God. The only writer to speak of the writings of St. Macarius is Gennadius of Marseilles (d. between 492 and 505) whose *De viris illustribus* is a continuation of Jerome's book by the same name. Gennadius' work contains 101 entries, nine or ten of which were most probably added by a later writer. He completed his *De viris illustribus* in 480. Although the work is brief in biographical detail,

its value lies in its bibliographical information – Gennadius mentions several dogmatic works of which only fragments remain – and gives bibliographichal information on such writers as Evagrius Ponticus, Gennadius of Constantinople (89), Isaac of Antioch (66), Eutropius of Spain (50), Fastidius of Britain (56), Nicetas of Remesiana (22), Commodian (15), Prosper of Aquitaine (84), and Maximus of Turin (40). Gennadius names "only one epistle" by St. Macarius – *unam tantum ad juniores professionis suae scripsit epistolam.* This is probably the "spiritual" epistle" *To the Friends of God*, addressed to younger monks and which is preserved in a Latin translation.

The utter lack of any mention of the collection of the "Macarian writings" – *The Spiritual Homilies* – provokes bewilderment. Palladius' silence is especially strange because he was close to Evagrius who was a disciple of St. Macarius and could not help but know about the saint's writings. Doubts involuntarily arose as to whether *The Spiritual Homilies* really belong to the great Macarius.

It is difficult to rely on the inscriptions in the manuscripts. What is more, individual conversations or homilies exist under other names as well – St. Ephraem the Syrian, and even more frequently the blessed Mark the Hermit. In its Arabic translation the entire collection (in this case, 21 homilies) is inscribed with the name of St. Simeon the Stylite.

In any case, the published text of *The Spiritual Homilies* is hardly correct. In it one senses later revisions. Even the very division into "homilies" ought probably to be ascribed to a later scribe. Recently, more homilies have been published. The original publication by Picus in 1559 was based on manuscripts of Paris (*Paris. gr.* 587 s. XVI and 1157 s. XIII). This edition was improved by H. J. Floss from a Berlin Codex (*Cod. Berol. gr.* 16 s. XII/XIII) and reprinted by Migne in *Patrologia Graeca* 34, 449-822. Seven additional homilies found in an Oxford manuscript were published by G. L. Marriott in 1918. H. Dörries discovered in a Moscow manuscript (*Cod. Mosqu.* 177) the same 57 homilies that are contained in the Oxford Codex but in a text which is much older. Another Moscow Codex (*Cod. Mosqu.* 178) contains 24 homilies which are almost entirely different. A Vatican Greek manuscript (*Cod. Vat. gr.* 710) contains 27 homilies. The most extensive is the Greek manuscript (*Cod. Vat. gr.* 694) with 64 homilies.

Individual homilies differ too much in size. Others are more of the nature of letters – word for word repetitions in the text are not infrequent. It must be added that editorial work on *The Spiritual Homilies* is still continuing. Especially important is the work by W.

Jaeger (see his *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* which was published in 1954).

In the manuscripts St. Macarius' "seven addresses" are known under various headings ("On Preserving the Heart," etc.) in the arrangement by Simeon Metaphrastes (also known as Simeon Logothetes; fl. c. 960). It is possible to think that the basic text of the homilies which is known to us is also the result of a reworking.

THE CLAIM OF MESSALIANISM IN *THE SPIRITUAL HOMILIES*

Observations on the contents of the homilies are much more important. In many places the author's views recall the delusions of the so-called Messalians (also known as the Euchites – *Εὐχῖται*. The name "Messalian" is derived from the Syriac *mesallein* which means, as does the Greek *Εὐχῖται*, "the praying people." They originated in Mesopotamia shortly after the middle of the fourth century and spread rapidly to Syria, Asia Minor, Thrace and elsewhere. This mendicant sect believed that everyone had a demon substantially united with his soul, and that this demon, which was not expelled by baptism, could only be completely expelled by concentrated and ceaseless prayer, the goal of which was the elimination of all passion and desire. Those who achieved the expulsion of the demon received an immediate vision of the Holy Trinity. After reaching this state, they claimed there was no need to fast or to control lust by the precepts of the Gospel. In addition, it is claimed that the Messalians believed that God changed in different ways to unite with their souls, that the body of Christ was infinite as was his divine nature, that his body was at first full of devils which were driven out when the Logos united itself to his body, that they possessed clear knowledge of the state of souls after death, that they could read the hearts and desires of man, that man could equal God in virtue and knowledge. It is further claimed that men and women slept together (in the open streets during warm weather), and that they forbade all manual labor as evil and unworthy of the spiritual life. It is further alleged that the Messalians held the Cross in horror, refused to honor the saints unless they were martyrs, that they mutilated themselves, that they dissolved marriages, that they perjured themselves without scruple, and that women were appointed as mistresses of the sect to instruct men.

The earliest mention of the Messalians is found in St. Ephraem the Syrian (*Homiliy*, XXII). The Messalians were attacked by

Amphilochius of Iconium (c. 340-395), who presided at the Council of Side in 390 which excommunicated the Messalians; by Flavian of Antioch; and by St. Epiphanius. The Messalians were condemned at the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431. The Council of Ephesus not only condemned Messalianism but also the Messalian book titled the *Asketikon*: "In addition to this it seemed good that the filthy book of this heresy, which is called the *Asketikon*, should be anathematized as composed by heretics, a copy of which the most religious and pious Valerian brought with him." Theodoret in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (4, 11, 2) writes that "the following were the leaders of this sect: Dadoes, Sabbas, Adelphius, Hermes, Symeon, and many others." It was H. Dörries who believed that the Symeon listed by Theodoret was the author of the "Macarian writings." Dörries' entire hypothesis is dubious and his claim that the "Macarian writings" were of Messalian origin has been challenged by the important discovery of W. Jaeger.

Diadochus (mid-5th century), bishop of Photice after 451, wrote devastatingly against the Messalians in his *One Hundred Chapters on Spiritual Perfection – Capita centum de perfectione spirituali*, especially in chapters 76-89. In these chapters Diadochus deals with the relationship of grace and sin within man, stressing that spiritual life is a continuous battle and that the true Christian will be involved in this struggle until the end of his life. It should be noted that this work by Diadochus had enormous influence on future generations in both the East and the West. The fact of the great number of manuscripts which have come down to us attests to its popularity. St. Maximus the Confessor, Sophronius of Jerusalem, the compiler of the *Doctrina Patrum*, Thalassius, and St. Photius quote it. It inspired both St. Simeon the New Theologian and St. John Climacus. It was printed in the Russian *Philokalia* and its influence spread to Russian literature. The Society of Jesus recommends it in their *Regulae magistri novitiorum.*

Diadochus was not the only one who wrote against the Messalians. Timothy, presbyter of Constantinople, in his *De receptione haereticorum* (early seventh century) wrote against them, as did St. John of Damascus (c. 675- c. 749) in his survey *A Brief Word About Heresies*. Both Timothy and St. John of Damascus quote very characteristic excerpts from the Messalian books – and they are very close to other arguments of the author of *The Spiritual Homilies*! Mark the Hermit (fl. c.431) attacks the Messalians directly in his famous work titled *On Those Who Suppose Justification is from Works – De his qui putant se ex operibus iustificari*. This work caught the attention of Protestant theologians but to compare the theology of the Reformation on the subject of

justification, works, and grace with Mark the Hermit's ideas is completely incorrect; one is dealing with two quite different theologies and two different perspectives of those theologies. Epiphanius of Salamis in his *Panarion – Πανάριον –* considers the first of Christian heresies to be that of Simon Magus and the last to be that of the Messalians. St. Nilus the Ascetic (d. c. 430), bishop of Ancyra, in his work titled *On Voluntary Poverty* [*De voluntaria paupertate – Περὶ ἀκτημοσύνης*] attacks the Messalians.

It would be too hasty to identify *The Spiritual Homilies* with the lost and condemned *Asketikon* of the Messalians. One can note in *The Spiritual Homilies* only individual Messalian motifs. Moreover, the author not only does not share many Messalian views but rejects them outright. There are grounds for seeing the Messalian *Asketikon* in the Syrian text titled *The Book of Degrees*, which was published in the twentieth century. This is a genuinely integral ascetical system built on principles which are very close to those of the Messalians. The document is a very early one – possibly dating back to the very beginning of the fourth century, or even to the end of the third century. However, here the archaisms should not be taken for heresy. In *The Spiritual Homilies* we find only individual views which are similar to those of the Messalians. There is no need to view these as later interpolations. An orthodox author can also be close to, but not identical with, the Euchites. In any case, it is more prudent to leave the questions about *The Spiritual Homilies* open.

THE THEOLOGY OF *THE SPIRITUAL HOMILIES*

The Spiritual Homilies are not a theological discussion. They are rather the intimate confessions of a contemplative who teaches and edifies from personal experience. He describes this experience in a definite philosophical language – the influence of Stoicism is felt most strongly. However, the author mentions external philosophy merely in order to contrast Hellenic wisdom with the true and beneficial philosophy. "The Hellenic philosophers learn to master the word. But there are other philosophers who are ignorant of the word, who rejoice in and are gladdened by God's grace." Genuine philosophy is ascetic diligence, courting of the Spirit – the Spirit of Wisdom and Reason. The true "wise" person is the Spirit-Bearing contemplative or seer of secrets – this is a fairly common idea in ascetic documents.

The language in which *The Spiritual Homilies* is written is vivid and expressive. In them one senses a profound knowledge of the Scriptures, which are always understood in the "spiritual

sense," as some epistle from God to people written to call them to spiritual ascension. "If a person does not come, does not ask, will not accept, then reading the Scriptures will be of no use to him."

In particular, the Old Testament is a symbolic or mystical tale of the soul. Two homilies are entirely devoted to allegory. The forty-seventh explains "that which was under the law." The first is about the mystical visions of the prophet Ezekiel - "the prophet contemplated the mystery of the soul, which shall receive its Lord and become a throne of his Glory." *The throne of the soul is the basic theme of all the homilies*.

Man is the "highest of all creations." He is not only higher than visible creation – he is higher than angelic powers and the secondary spirits. And God himself testified to this when he came to earth for the sake of mankind and was crucified for man's salvation. "Investigate, beloved, the intelligent essence of the soul, and do not investigate lightly. The immortal soul is a certain valuable vessel. Look at how great the sky and earth are. God did not favor them but only you," for only man was created in God's image. "God was not talking about the archangels Michael and Gabriel when he said: 'Let us create in Our image and likeness' but he said that about intelligent human essence, about the immortal soul."

God's image in man signifies first of all a profound closeness and a certain kinship with God, a "reciprocity" with him. "He who can know the worth of his own soul will be able to know the power and mystery of the Godhead." The Lord created the whole world but he rests in no other creature except man: "all creatures are in his power, but he did not secure a throne in them, and did not establish communion with them." Therefore, the soul can find peace for itself only in God.

In the first-created Adam the "image of God was expressed primarily in a certain inspiration of the soul in the wings of the Holy Spirit which could raise man to God. God created man in the image of the virtue of the Spirit and put in the soul the laws of virtue." The author distinguishes two images of God in man – a natural image, as it were, which expresses itself in the powers and capabilities of the soul and a "celestial image." The first feature of the natural image is man's freedom. "Visible creation is connected by some fixed nature" – visible creatures cannot leave that state in which they were created and do not have a will. "But you are created in the image and likeness of God because, as God is free and creates what he wills, so, too, are you free. And if you should will to perish, then your nature is changeable. If you should will to belch forth abuse, concoct a poison, or kill someone, no one will

oppose you or forbid it. Whoever so wills, can be odedient to God – and go the way of truth and control his will."

This formal freedom of choice and will, "absolute power, self-power" – *αὐτεξουσία* – is an immutable feature of human nature. Grace only arouses the will; it does not coerce, just as sin does not snuff out freedom – freedom of choice or arbitrariness. Even a fallen person has the power to fight and oppose sin, although he cannot triumph without God's help. What is more, sin is never stronger than man – in that case, guilt would be removed from man. On the contrary, the mind is a fighter, and a fighter of equal strength, and the mind has enough strength to combat sin and oppose intentions. And, conversely, grace and success do not invariably protect man from temptation and seduction, "for as a perfect one is not attached to good by some necessity, so, too, is someone who is wallowing in sin and is making himself a vessel of the devil not attached to evil. . . On the contrary, even he has freedom to become a vessel of choice and life."

Grace does not bind a man – he remains free and can fall again if he so wills, and again enter into peace and communion with Satan. Cases are known where people "[who are] enlightened and experienced, who even perfected themselves in goodness, have fallen away: a person has given away his possessions, freed his slaves, but has fallen into self-importance and arrogance; a confessor, who has suffered torture, has in his very dungeon fallen into fornication with the nun who attends him; an ascetic, who has already become possessed of the power of healing, has fallen into pride. For nature is changeable and man, because of the arbitrariness which remains with him, becomes a son of God, if he wills, or in the same way a son of perdition."

Freedom is a God-like feature, but this is only a formal precondition of the act of becoming like God – a precondition which determines its possibility. Outside of freedom there is no likeness to God; but it is realized only in living communion with him. This is where God's essential image in man lies, that "celestial image" which was given to the first-created Adam but was lost by him in the Fall. From the beginning man was created in such a way that he must derive his powers for life from that which is without him: his body needs nourishment and his soul needs spiritual food. If he limits himself to that which is in his nature, not borrowing anything from without, he will be destroyed and perish. "Woe to the soul," exclaims the clairvoyant, "if it settles on its own nature and puts its trust only on its own deeds, without having communion with the Divine Spirit."

The soul, which has been created in God's image, receives power and sustenance not from its own nature but from God, from his Spirit. "And, lo, the first-created was invested with word and spirit." Here was his "celestial image," his "celestial soul."

The Messalians also spoke of man's second "celestial soul" but the similarity here is imaginary. By "celestial soul" the author of *The Spiritual Homilies* means the gifts of Spirit and Logos. The Logos abided in the first-created, and the Logos was his legacy and clothing and glory. This means: "In the beginning was the Logos." And the Spirit abided in Adam, and taught and inspired him, for the Logos was everything for him, and Adam was God's friend. He was the master of everything from the sky to the earth; he knew how to distinguish the passions, was alien to the demons, and free from sin and vices – he was God's likeness. This doctrine about two "images" and about the primordial anointing of man partially recalls St. Athanasius' distinction between the creation and "birth" of man.

Adam loses these first gifts, this "celestial image," in the Fall – transgressing the commandment by the power of his evil arbitrariness and heeding the Evil One. "He becomes wounded and dead." Man goes astray to evil through his own guilt, through "self-arbitrariness." Evil envelops man and permeates him but man himself does not turn into anything evil. Evil remains something external, something alien to his nature. Man is possessed by evil.

In the Fall man loses both his natural and his "celestial image." "First of all, he lost the property of his nature, which was pure, sublime, and created in God's image. Secondly, he lost the very image in which, by promise, all of his celestial heritage lay." This was death. Resurrection is the restoration of the "celestial image"; that is, of communion with God, that Spirit-Bearing fullness from which Adam fell; it is a new courting and receiving of the Spirit.

If the soul's communion with God is a kind of mystical wedding with the celestial Bridegroom, the sinful separation from God is a kind of widowhood of the soul, a transgressing of the commandment left by the celestial Husband. From the time of the Fall, man did not see the heavenly Father, did not see the merciful and good Mother, or the grace of the Spirit, did not see the Lord, the sweetest and longed-for brother (see Aphraates). God's face ceased to be reflected in the soul, although God did not cease to gaze at it. Thus, deprived of the king's stamp, it lost honor and value – as a coin without the emperor's image is not in circulation even though it is made of a valuable metal. The revival or resurrection of the soul is the return of this image and stamp to it. It does not belong to human nature, but is laid on it from without, as

it were, and this raises man higher than himself, raises him over his closed nature.

However, this is only possible in freedom: "if there was no will, God would do nothing, even though he could." The Fall is a great catastrophe. Everything becomes confused. Close up in his nature, man becomes feeble and powerless. Man can live a genuine life only in God. Therefore, by falling away from God, man lives a false life, a "life of death." In his disobedience man "died a horrible psychic death." His mind turned from on high to below, and his eyes, when celestial blessings became inaccessible to them, "recovered their sight for vices and passions." Here again St. Athanasius' motifs resound.

Nature is darkened by evil and a dusk of cunning: a fallen soul is permeated by sinful powers. Sin is added to the soul like some leaven. The serpent becomes for the soul "a second soul, as it were." The Prince of Evil wraps the soul in his malice and sin, as if in some "purple robe of darkness." He defiles it entirely and "imprisons it all in his power, leaving nothing free – not intentions, not the mind, not the body."

From the soul's sinfulness the body also becomes a suffering body and liable to decay. The cunning word penetrates the heart and invades the entire human composition, and sin flows in the heart like water in a pipe. That is what happened with Adam – "and we are all sons of this darkened race." Adam's whole race is leavened with this "leaven of pernicious passions" with which Adam communed in transgressing the commandment. Introspection reveals the possessive and ulcerous state of the soul. This fallen state becomes the point of departure for the ascetic battle – the struggle through which the soul has to be purified and liberated and die for a better life. Yes, die. The "second soul," the "cunning word" which has struck against it, must fly away from it.

In the heart there is a certain depth, and on the bottom lies a slime. There is life there, and there is death. Sin has taken root in the soul. Satan shakes and rocks souls, and leads them into confusion and anxiety – "and in various ways he agitates human intentions, like wheat returned in a grating." All of Adam's race has secretly taken upon itself a certain image of Cain, "the likeness of Cain's cunning."

The whole visible world is in disorder, dissonance, and struggle. However, not many know that this is because of the cunning force. "The world suffers from the disease of vice and does not know it." Sin is "a certain intelligent and mental force of Satan," who seeks a place for himself in the soul. Sin is the sting of death. "Sin" –*ἁμαρτία* – is a kind of dark anti-force to grace –

χάρις. Their clash and struggle unfolds in freedom. "Thus, the ascetic's heart is a spectacle – there, cunning spirits struggle with the soul while God and the angels gaze down upon the struggle."

Satan pours a kind of ambiguous and secret power of darkness into the soul and wraps it in a purple of gloom. Once again, this is the antithesis to the Divine light and the vestments of glory. This symbolism of light and darkness is not merely a metaphor. Satan's darkness is a certain material cover of gloom and fog. First of all, however, sin is the area of mystical communion with Satan. Temptation begins with the dispersal of the spirit which attaches itself to earthly cares and impressions. Because of this, perspicaciousness grows dim; man ceases to notice his spiritual ulcers and the secret passions of the soul. "He does not know that within him there is a struggle, a battle, a conflict." Then the soul becomes defenseless and imprudent."

Satan usually makes his suggestions to the soul under the guise of good intentions and draws the soul into crafty and specious undertakings – "and he who is so drawn cannot distinguish and therefore winds up in the net of diabolic perdition." Satan never rests content with his attacks – therefore it is so dangerous to imagine that the battle has ended and ceased. Such insensitivity is more dangerous than anything else. Thus it frequently happens that lust suddenly flares up in people who hoped a long time ago that desire had faded in them.

And if the soul does not fight and does not fortify itself in love for God, it becomes clouded and falls into Satan's power. Such is the "carnal man" (see the Alexandrian distinction between "carnal" and "spiritual" man). For the "carnal man," these pseudo-Christians who have not yet courted Christ's riches, everything is alien, and they themselves are naked. Just like worldly people, they are divided in two, and are in confusion and disorder. The main struggle is within, and if the soul does not wage this inner struggle, Satan will try harder and harder to seize it, and lay it to waste, and put his stamp upon it. He will finally mount the mind, the heart, and the body like his throne. "When you hear of coffins, picture not only visible coffins, for your heart is a coffin and a grave for you. When the Prince of Darkness and his angels are lodged there, when they build paths and roads there along which the Satanic forces could travel into your mind and thoughts, then are you not hell, coffin, and grave before God?"

This cohabitation with the cunning Prince of Darkness is corruption and fornication, "for there is fornication which is performed corporally and there is the fornication of a soul which enters into communion with Satan. One and the same soul can be

the confederate and sister either of demons or of God and his angels. And when it commits adultery with the devil, it becomes unfit for the heavenly Bridegroom." It is the betrothed queen who leaves the king to become a whore – and concerning this fall there is much sadness and weeping and grief in heaven.

Satan takes root in the soul and tries to persuade it – "and if it agrees, then the incorporeal soul enters into communion with incorporeal malice of spirit, and he commits adultery in his heart who accepts into himself the intentions of the cunning one and consents to them." It must be emphasized that this communion is not a blending but a kind of "dissolution" -*κρᾶσις*"Satan becomes something of one with the soul – both spirits during fornication or murder are one." However, the soul always remains itself, and this presents an opportunity for it to repent and lament. This is a certain dynamic linking of two heterogeneous and independent principles: sinfulness is possession by an evil force, but the soul does not turn into something evil and does not lose its freedom, although freedom of nature is insufficient for really liberating the soul from slavery and captivity.

In these arguments there is much that is original, and it really does recall the Messalian doctrine about Satan's "communion" with the human soul as a sort of debauched cohabitation, about the lodging of demons and the strange "co-inhabitation" of Satan and the Holy Spirit in human souls, where a struggle takes place between them. The most mysterious thing of all is the author's tacit assumption that baptism does not free man from filth, that there is even a certain corruption in baptism which is only healed through spiritual ordeal and prayer. It comes out that not baptismal grace but the force of one's own ordeal of prayer frees man from sinful filth, from "original sin." It is rather the power of grace, but of a grace found in the ordeal of prayer, not in baptismal rebirth. Such was also the basic idea of the Euchites – "those who pray."

However, it was hardly the Euchites alone who thought this way. Christian introspection generally reveals in the human soul a sinful feebleness, a property which facilitates the incursion of sin and diabolic strikes. In any case, baptismal liberation is consolidated only by ordeal.

Monastic experience predisposes one to psychological pessimism. From the ascetic texts we know that in the East ascetics were frequently inclined to exaggerate the power of sinful nature and to belittle baptismal renewal to a certain extent. Also, we must remember that the author of *The Spiritual Homilies* is reasoning as a psychologist, not as a dogmatist. One must not forget the ancient experience of possessions, often described in the manuscripts in

almost fantastic - but psychologically veracious - images (see, for example, *The Life of St. Antony* and also Evagrius).

In the Fall of the First-Created, mankind falls away from God, is deprived of beneficial communion and support, "remains with its own nature," and becomes feeble and impotent. It therefore falls under the devil's power. Man cannot free himself from this power with his own powers. God himself descends to earth to set him free. Christ came first of all to struggle with Satan for man's soul. This is the Origenist motif. The Lord comes to death, descends into Hell, and "converses with death and enjoins it to disgorge all souls from Hell and death and return them to him" to be revived. "And the forces of cunning, trembling, give back the imprisoned Adam. The dead body triumphed and destroyed the serpent which lived and crawled in the heart. The dead body triumphed over the living serpent."

This was done once but is repeated again in every soul, and the Lord descends not only into Hell but also into the murky depths of every heart. There he casts out the weeds of sin and cultivates the desolated soul – cultivates it with the wood of the Cross. Satan's power is shattered but entrances into every soul still remain for him.

For every man the struggle and the dispute with the forces of cunning is still ahead. In this struggle he has a helper and protector – Christ, who struggles with the adversary for every soul. Purification of the heart and victory over the devil do not exhaust Christ's redemptive work. "The Lord came not only to drive out evil spirits but also to retrieve his own house and temple – man." Christ came to again unite the heavenly image in man's heart and return the wings of the spirit to the soul "so that even you, who are of dust, could receive into yourself the heavenly soul."

For the sake of this, God came down from his Holy Heaven, assumed a reasoning human nature, and united it with the Divine Spirit "in order to change, renew, and transform the nature," in order to make us, according to the Apostle, "participants of Divine nature." For that reason, the Lord came to give man the Spirit and life, "to make those who believe in him a new mind, a new soul, new eyes, new ears, a new spiritual tongue – in a word, to make them new people or new wine-skins to pour into them a new wine – his Spirit." Therefore he is called Christ "in order that we, who are anointed with the same balm as he, become anointed ones and be, so to speak, of one essence and body with him." Man is called to this, but he must attain this through spiritual "ordeal."

By nature, striving is a characteristic of man - "and God seeks this striving." He enjoins that man first understand, then love and

strive with his will. Thus the completion of the Spirit's acts depends on the will of man. Thus, if someone through his own will and because of complete arbitrariness does not approach the Lord and beseech him with complete faith, he will not receive healing. Only in souls which have come to believe in him and turn to him does Christ "paint a celestial man in his own image and draw a heavenly image from the hypostasis of his ineffable light. And in that person who is *not* continually directed to him and who disdains all else Christ does, he does *not* draw his image with his light."

Man's spiritual way begins with repentance. "If the soul sighs and cries out to God, he will send down to it the spiritual Moses who will deliver the soul from Egyptian slavery. But before then, let the soul wail and groan – then it will see the beginning of deliverence." This is only the beginning of the "ordeal" and struggle. Free will must be tested by many sorrows. Thus did God foreordain "that the path which leads to life have many trials, sorrow, and bitter temptations – it is the narrow path." Christianity is a path which is indeed narrow and not smooth, for it is the path of a free man.

Man's free will cannot attain much but it is an eternal and necessary element of spiritual growth. Man must not and dare not rely on himself and exaggerate his powers, for the power of perfection belongs to God alone. But grace works only in free-willed souls. "And God's power leaves room for freedom so that man's will is disclosed." The synergism of free will and grace is revealed at all stages of spiritual life. That is why it is so difficult to delimit these two elements of spiritual growth: the whole man becomes double. He always retains the freedom "to agree with the Spirit" or to scorn the Spirit's gifts.

Therefore vigilance and exertion of will is always necessary, and dissatisfaction with one's self must always remain. "Here is a feature of Christianity – however much you work, however many righteous deeds you perform, be left with the thought that you still have not done anything." This does not depreciate the "ordeal." Its entire significance lies in the effort, in total commitment to God – freedom is like a receiver of grace: "Whoever does not observe humble wisdom, puts himself in the hands of Satan. He is stripped of the grace God gave him and his self-opinion is revealed, for he is poor and bare. Only he who humbles himself before God and man and considers himself poor can preserve the grace which has been given to him."

It is a great temptation and danger to feel that you are successful, to think that you have entered a safe haven. "Suddenly

the waves rise again and once again a man sees himself in the middle of the sea where there is only water and sky and ready death. Only humility can save you from this."

Only the frivolous think that if grace is working partly in them, then there is no sin in them and they have already triumphed. Spiritual life is an organic process, similar to physical growth and maturation. It also has its own stages, stages defined by the measure of the "ordeal" and struggle, and grace works not at once but gradually. "And do not think that the entire soul has been illumined, for a great pasture of vice still remains inside it, and this demands more great effort and labor in accordance with the grace which is acting on the soul. In an instant grace can purify man and make him complete but it visits the soul partially." In any event, man grows little by little – "and it is not like others say: to be taken off and put on." Therefore constant intensity is needed.

Spiritual life begins with an "ordeal" of faith. Faith crosses over to hope and attention is diverted from the visible world. Nothing can attract a believing soul - "and some pass away and move foreover, and abide in thought in the celestial world of Divinity." This is an indispensable condition of spiritual perfection, for the person who does not give himself over entirely to searching for Christ's love and does not focus all his efforts on this single goal of courting the Spirit, the goal is impossible.

More necessary than anything else is inner renunciation. "The most important weapon for the fighter and ascetic is to come to hate one's self, to renounce one's soul, to be angry at it, to reproach it, to oppose one's customary desires, wrangle with one's thoughts, struggle with one's self." Again, this inner battle is only the beginning – purifying the soul is merely making ready a chamber for the Lord. It is only the negative side of the "ordeal." The whole significance, and the goal, of the "ordeal" lies in courting the Spirit, in letting the Lord settle within you. "And the soul in which the Lord finds repose needs many adornments."

The way of "ordeal" is the way of struggle. The struggle occurs first of all in the realm of the mind. The soul is always penetrated from without by thoughts, good and evil, which come from God or from demons, and thought first of all finds itself in a fight and battle. The task of this mental battle is to bar access to cunning thoughts. This is possible not through simply opposing them but by contrasting them with good thoughts, and primarily by cultivating in one's self a certain impassivity or indifference towards sinful excitements - *apathia*.

For the carnal life, this is dying. Thoughts still burst into the soul and disturb it, but do not lure it, and therefore do not take root

in it. The carnal man dies and becomes barren because of his previous evil life. First, he has to distinguish the spirits. Second, he needs a kind of indifference, a volitional immunity to temptations "so as not to heed vice and delight in it in one's thoughts" (see the later ascetic doctrine about the "attack" and development of "thoughts"). For sin begins in the heart and only manifests itself in deeds. Restraint in deed still does not mean tranquillity in the heart.

Genuine liberation is possible only through becoming strong in goodness, through love for the single heavenly Bridegroom of human souls. Renunciation of the world is justified to the end only in this striving. "There is no sufficient reason for a man to reject the delights of this world if he will not take part in the bliss of the other world." Only then is there no doubt that the spiritual path is opening before him. In the "ordeal" only steadfastness and constancy lie in man's power – and then only under the condition of total devotion to God and striving towards him. Man only prepares himself for receiving grace. For this he must concentrate, gather his thoughts, and always strive towards the one thing. Gathering his wits is possible only through a unity of love – love to the one God.

The highest law is the spiritual law of love, "for it is impossible to be saved unless it is through one's neighbor," through an all-embracing love fortified by grace. The Christian's whole struggle is inspired by the *pathos of love*. This is love for God, "a divine love for the heavenly king, for Christ," and an "ardent striving" for celestial beauty. It is consummated in the mystical union or communion, in the mystical marriage with Christ.

This does not distract one from love for one's neighbor, for in God and in Christ the soul sees the loving and merciful Sovereign who extends his love to all and envelops all in it. For this reason this spiritual love cannot but include love for one's neighbor. It simply cannot be any other way - the way is through goodwill, mercy, and compassion. Christians must struggle, but must not condemn anyone at all – "not an arrant whore, not sinners, not unseemly people, for purity of the heart lies in seeing sinners or weak people and feeling compassion and mercy for them." Such love attracts God's goodwill and is transformed into the mystical and God-like love in which all wordly love fades, and the very nature of the soul, its sinful rigidity, is rediscovered.

Grace transforms and renews a man to the extent of his struggle, like some "Divine fire." "As many lamps and burning candles light up by fire, and all lamps are lit and shine with a

uniform and identical fire, so, too, do Christians flare up and shine with one and the same Divine fire of the Son of God. And they have in their hearts burning candles and already on earth shine before him and like him." This fire is the "love of the Spirit."

The mysticism in *The Spiritual Homilies* is first of all a mysticism of light and fire. "The immaterial and Divine fire illuminates and tempts souls. This fire was at work in the Apostles when they spoke in fiery tongues. This fire illuminated St. Paul with a voice, illuminated his mind and clouded his sense of sight, for not without flesh did he see the power of that light. Moses saw this fire in the brush. This fire in the form of a chariot carried Elijah away from the earth. Both the angels and the minor spirits hold communion with the brightness of this fire. This fire drives demons away and destroys sin. It is the power of resurrection, the reality of immortality, the illumination of holy souls, an affirmation of intelligent forces."

These are not only symbols and metaphors. The appearance of God and the manifestation of grace in fire and light is a certain "incarnation" of the Godhead - the development of this is found in St. Simeon the New Theologian (949-1022). "The limitless, unapproachable, and uncreated God became incarnate - *ἐσωματοποίησε* - through limitless and inscrutable goodness and, so to speak, humbled himself in unapproachable glory so that it would be possible for him to enter into union with his visible creations – I mean holy souls and angels – and so that they could be participants of the life of the Godhead. Transforming through leniency and by his love for man, he becomes incarnate and unites with and receives holy, saintly, faithful souls. According to St. Paul's words, he becomes one Spirit with them – soul into soul, so to speak, and hypostasis in hypostasis – so that the soul which is worthy of God and pleasing to him can live in renewal and experience immortal life and become the participant of imperishable glory. And when he so desires, he can be fire. When he so desires, he can be an ineffable tranquillity, for everything he may want is pleasing to him."

This is *theophany* – the appearance of the Lord in an unapproachable glory of light, *not only vision or contemplation*. The limit or goal of human rebirth or regeneration is to "change the present debased nature into another, divine nature." This is the *deification of man – theosis*. Man becomes a son of God, becomes "greater than himself." He rises and ascends higher than the measure of the first Adam, for he not only returns to his original purity, but becomes "deified."

For all of that, man still by nature remains immeasurably far removed from God. "He is God and the soul is not. He is Lord and the soul is a slave. He is Creator and the soul is a creation. And its nature has nothing in common with God. Only through his infinite, ineffable, and inscrutable love, and through the goodness of his heart, does he deign to settle in this creation, in this reasoning creature."

This beneficial transformation of man has its stages. Grace, as it were, flares up in the soul. At first, it consumes both cunning and natural desires in it; it burns up the weeds of sin, and demons melt in this celestial fire like wax. Then grace ignites the very soul and it burns as if permeated throughout and illumined by the celestial fire. "Sometimes this fire flares up and burns stronger, and sometimes it is as if it grows weak and burns more gently. This light now radiates and shines more brightly, and now diminishes and fades. And the soul's lamp, which is always burning and shining, now becomes clearer and flames up more with God's love, now emits its radiance frugally, and the light which is inherent in man grows weak."

This is connected with man's "ordeal" and struggle. The heavenly fire flares up in him when he is devoted to the Lord and puts his trust in him and relies on him. The soul is soothed and finds repose in God – the Spirit is peace and tranquillity for it. "Those who have had the honor to become God's children and be born from on high of the Holy Spirit sometimes are gladdened as if they were at a royal banquet and rejoice with joy and an ineffable gaiety. Sometimes they are like a bride who is finding repose in Divine tranquillity, in communion with their Bridegroom. Sometimes they are as if intoxicated by drink, gladdened and intoxicated with the Spirit, in ecstasy over the Divine mysteries. But sometimes they cry and lament over the human race and, in praying for the whole race of Adam, shed tears and cry, inflamed by a spiritual love for mankind. Sometimes their Spirit inflames them with such joy and love that, if it were possible, they would accommodate every man – good and evil, in their heart. Sometimes in their humility they so debase themselves before any man that they are deemed the absolute worst and least of all men. Sometimes the Spirit keeps them invariably in an ineffable joy. Sometimes man becomes like one of the ordinary ones."

But he who is not born of the regal Spirit is not adopted by God. He has not received the "Lord's sign and seal" and has no hope, for by his seal God recognizes his own and will recognize them – on the last day. If the soul, while still in this world, does not accept the Spirit's sacred object and does not open up for

grace, it is unfit for the heavenly kingdom. Indeed, the good which the soul has achieved here will be life in this kingdom."

In the heart grace is revealed as peace and joy. In the mind grace is revealed as wisdom – and through the Spirit's power man becomes wise and hidden secrets are revealed to him. To begin with, the nature of a man's own soul is revealed to him only in the spiritual light and he sees the "image of the soul" as one sees the sun with one's eyes. And this image is angel-like. This self-knowledge gives him sagacity. And the spiritual man knows everything about everyone but no one judges him or can know him. In this sagacity is based the right to spiritual leadership. The gaze of the spiritual sage penetrates into the celestial world. He becomes the "prophet of the heavenly secrets" and, under the guidance of the Spirit, he "ascends to heaven and enjoys the wonders there with indubitable certainty in his soul."

There are different stages and kinds of spiritual contemplation. "There is sensation, there is vision, and there is illumination. He who has illumination is higher than he who has sensation. His mind is illumined. This means that he has received a certain advantage over the person who has sensation, for he recognizes in himself a land of indubitableness of visions."

But revelation - "apocalypsis" - is something else. When God's great secrets are revealed to the soul, visions occur and then man can see something in the distance. Contemplations, though, are revealed somewhere inside, in the depths of the heart, and when that happens a certain inner, secret, most profound light flashes out there – before eyes which are more internal than perceptible eyes. In the Divine light the spiritual man sees and recognizes with these internal eyes his "true friend, the sweetest and much-desired Bridegroom – the Lord."

There is a kind of indisputableness and an obviousness in this contemplation, for the whole soul is illumined and made tranquil by an ineffable peace. And as God is love, joy, and peace, so the new spiritual man becomes like unto him through grace. "The gates open before him and he enters many cloisters and, to the extent that he enters, gates will open again from one hundred cloisters into a new hundred. And he is enriched and, in the same measure as he is enriched, new wonders are shown him. As son and heir, he is entrusted with that which cannot be spoken by man, which cannot be said by lips or tongue."

Then the mind goes into raptures, into ecstasy – the tongue falls dumb and the soul is captivated by something wondrous. At such moments the soul renounces the world entirely; to the world, the soul becomes a mindless barbarian "by virtue of abounding

love and sweetness and by virtue of hidden secrets. And at such a moment a person prays and says: 'Oh, if only my soul could depart with my prayer'." The soul is liberated entirely and becomes pure. It is as though it "fuses" with God. The Lord vests successful ascetics in a "life-giving garb of light." They belong to the body of Christ, to the "body of light," and not to the "body of darkness" as souls fallen and sinful. In them blows the life-giving wind of the Holy Spirit, which permeates the whole essence of the soul and thought and all the bodily members.

Christ himself invisibly reigns in such souls. The Lord prepared the soul of man as a bride for himself and "receives it, changes it gradually with his own power until he makes it to grow into his own image – and then it will come to the throne with him for endless centuries."

However, no one achieves this limit in this life, here on earth – except perhaps in rare and transient moments of rapture and ecstasy. But these are only instants, moments. The "perfect measure" of grace is not yet given here and now. The charismatic transformation of man will achieve fullness only upon the day of resurrection when the inner, hidden glory of the Spirit begins to shine in bodies as well. They will be glorified by that "ineffable light which even now is concealed in them." The naked bodies of the righteous will be vested in and covered by the Spirit, and will be carried away to Heaven so that the body "can rule together with the soul."

The spiritual resurrection of the soul anticipates the future resurrection of the body, as it were. "That heavenly fire of Divinity, which Christians even now, in this age, receive within, in their heart, where it acts – when the body is destroyed this fire will act without as well, and the members of the body will be attached anew and the resurrection of destroyed bodies will be achieved. The heavenly fire reproduces and renews and resurrects decaying bodies."

In a certain sense future fate is determined by man himself. "What the soul has now gathered into its inner treasure-house will at that time be revealed, and will appear without, in the body." Therefore, the courting of the Spirit is the courting of the Resurrection and an entering of resurrection, for the power of resurrection is the life-giving Spirit, who revives even in this life not only souls but bodies as well. In the Resurrection the Holy Spirit will appear as some radiant raiment or garment for the body – a garment of life and glory and repose. And the power of the light will permeate the whole body. "And everything will become as

light, will be submerged in light and fire. But it will not be destroyed and will not become fire, lest its former nature remain."

The prototype of this resurrection appeared in the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor. "As the body of the Lord, when he ascended the mountain, was glorified and transformed into God's glory and endless light, so, too, the bodies of the saints are glorified and become shining. For as Christ's inner glory was extended and came to shine on his body, in the very same way the existing power of Christ inside the saints will on that day pour forth onto their bodies. As many lamps are lit by one fire, these holy bodies, these members of Christ, must become one and the same with Christ himself." This will be Spring for our body – "the first month of the Kingdom." And it will bring joy to all creation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EVAGRIUS PONTICUS

LIFE

Among the Egyptian ascetics of the fourth century there were few writers. Evagrius stands out sharply against the general background. In Egypt Evagrius was a newcomer. Born about 345 or 346 in the town of Ibora in Pontus, Evagrius' father was a "chorbishop" - *χωρεπίσκοπος*, a bishop with limited authority. St. Basil's family estate in Annesi was quite close to Ibora. It was to Annesi that St. Basil went to live the ascetical life. In his *Letter 14* St. Basil describes the area. He was close to the great Cappadocians in his youth. St. Basil appointed him a reader. Some think that St. Basil was the first to accept Evagrius as a monk - Bousset, for example, who also thinks that Evagrius took flight from St. Basil's monastic community because of a sense of frustration with the emphasis on social obligations. It appears that Evagrius was more attracted to the life in Constantinople than the life at St. Basil's monastery - quite probably for the intellectual activity in the capital.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus ordained him a deacon not long after St. Basil's death in 379 and took him to Constantinople with him as an archdeacon. There Evagrius distinguished himself as a preacher - he delivered sermons in Constantinople which brought him some fame. Evagrius always felt close to St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and later in life he still spoke well of him. In his *Praktikos* 100, the concluding discussion on the ascetical life, Evagrius writes: "If the luminous light of justice shines on us . . . then we will imbibe its wine which gladdens man's heart through the prayers and the intercessions of the righteous Gregory, who rooted me." St. Gregory of Nazianzus felt close to Evagrius, as evidenced by his *Testament.*

As president of the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, St. Gregory of Nazianzus relied heavily on the talents of Evagrius. When St. Gregory resigned from the council and abdicated as bishop of Constantinople, he asked Evagrius to stay on to assist the new bishop, Nectarius. *The Book of Paradise* - "*Being the Histories and Sayings of the Monks and Ascetics of the Egyptian Desert*" - claims that Nectarius respected the character of Evagrius and felt deep affection for him - indeed, it appears that everyone felt the same way about Evagrius. He became known in the capital as

the "annihilator of the chatter of heretics." It is obvious that Evagrius came to know the illustrious participants of the Second Ecumenical Council. Whatever influence St. Gregory of Nyssa may have previously had on Evagrius was most probably intensified during their time together at the Second Ecumenical Council.

The *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* relates that Evagrius let his new position in Constantinople sweep him somewhat away from the contemplative life, that he enjoyed the "pomp" and used slaves to care for him. Then came the scandal. Evagrius fell in love with the wife of a man in high position in Constantinople. *The Book of Paradise* relates that during a stormy dream Evagrius vowed to leave the capital in order to protect his soul. The next day he was on a boat to the Holy Land. He wasted no time in establishing himself in Jerusalem where he became friends with Melania "the Elder."

Melania's life is a chapter in itself in the history of asceticism. She was born in Rome in 342 into the patrician family Antonia and had influential relatives. She was related to Paulinus of Nola - *noster sanguis propinquat*. At the age of sixteen she married the Prefect of Rome, Valerius Maximus. Widowed at the age of twenty-two, she determined to dedicate her life to strict asceticism. It appears that she lost two of her children at about the same time of her husband's death. Still, she had her son, Publicola, to consider. She entrusted Publicola to a tutor, sold off much of her wealth, and left in 372 for Egypt. There she supported the monks who were being persecuted by the Arians. In 378 Melania visited Palestine with Rufinus of Aquileia and there established two monasteries on the Mount of Olives. That same year her son Publicola married into nobility - Albina Ceionia. A daughter was born who is known as Melania the "Younger," the granddaughter of Melania. In Jerusalem Melania and Rufinus became entangled in the controversy with Jerome over Origenism, an encounter which caused St. Jerome to speak negatively of Melania. St. Jerome's comments about Melania injured her reputation historically. One such comment was that her "name means blackness and testifies to the darkness of her perfidy" - *cuius nomen nigredinis (melania) testatur perfidiae tenebras*. About 400 Melania returned to Italy to look after the ascetical education of her granddaughter. In 404 she visited Sicily and Hippo. At Hippo she came to know St. Augustine. She returned to Jerusalem and apparently died there about 409. She was an intelligent lady, well-read, and became deeply interested in the works of Origen. She also became the mother superior of a group of virgins.

Evagrius immediately became friends with Melania and Rufinus, a friendship that lasted throughout his life. But again Evagrius seems to have taken life in Jerusalem less seriously ascetically than he had vowed. Palladius relates that Evagrius' heart became hardened like that of Pharaoh's. Having fallen ill with a fever, he thought his end had come. It is claimed that it was Melania who discovered the spiritual cause of his illness - his broken vow. She was able to make him commit to reaffirming his vow and to fulfill it by entering a monastic environment. *The Book of Paradise* relates that a few days later the fever left and he was healed and strengthened.

Our sources next find Evagrius in Nitria with a group of monks. He went to the Nitrian desert to cultivate his soul among the monks. He appeared as a repentant sinner who sought redemption from his temptations and seductions. He lived in Egypt for seventeen years, first on the Nitrian mountain and then in the cells. Melania had previously been in Nitria in 372 and had become beloved by Pambo. In 383 Evagrius arrived. It is often claimed that it was Evagrius who brought Origenistic thought to Egypt. Historical fact does not allow for such a view, for St. Epiphanius found Origenists among the monks in Egypt in 370. It is also stretching the historical imagination to think that Alexandria, the home of Origen's early activities, so close to Nitria - some forty miles separated Nitria from Alexandria - and other monastic settlements, could not have been the source of Origenistic thought among the monks. Evagrius had obviously studied or learned of Origen from St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. In Palestine his knowledge of Origen was probably reinforced by his association with Melania and Rufinus, the translator of several works by Origen into Latin. Now he forms a lifelong friendship and monastic association with a monastic community that was engaged in the study of Origen. Evagrius was perhaps the first to write at length combining the wisdom of the desert with the thought of Origen but he could not have been the originator of Origenistic thought among the monks of Egypt. The disciples of Pambo, the monks with whom Evagrius associated, included the "Tall Brothers" who were included in the later expulsion of the Origenists from Egypt by Patriarch Theophilus. Sources claim that Ammonius Parotes was the leader of the group of monks after the death of Pambo, that the group was then referred to as that "of Ammonius and Evagrius," and later as "the group of Evagrius." Again his ability for leadership had become evident.

Evagrius did not isolate himself. He remained in close contact with the "rustic" Copts. In fact, he was closest to both St. Macarius the Great of Egypt and St. Macarius of Alexandria, a priest of the austere group of hermits at Cells, a community of monks approximately thirteen miles south of Nitria. It appears that he became a "disciple" of St. Macarius the Great, whom he would visit at Scete, and also a "disciple" of St. Macarius of Alexandria. Palladius writes that Evagrius moved to Cells where he remained for fourteen years in a life of prayer and strict asceticism. He spent the rest of his life in Egypt and died there in 399 at the age of fifty-five.

The *Lausiac History* contains a chapter on Evagrius. The Syriac version of the *Lausiac History* contains additional material. From these two sources some indication of how Evagrius lived is given. In the *Lausiac History* Palladius writes that Evagrius led a very austere life, that he lived on meagre amounts of bread and oil, that he practiced severe forms of asceticism to protect chastity, and that his greatest temptation was that of blasphemy. He was allegedly tempted by demons who appeared as representations of the heresies of that time - Arianism, Eunomianism, and Apollinarianism. Palladius, of course, always shows Evagrius as triumphant over his temptations. While continually engaged in strict asceticism, Evagrius did not neglect the intellectual life - he both wrote books and engaged in theological dispute. He would on occasion travel to Alexandria and there dispute heretics.

But Evagrius' life in Egypt did not pass without difficulties. It is the Syriac version that preserves these accounts of his difficulties. One episode reveals that Evagrius, on one of his visits to an "ascetic master, was told - when he asked the common question of what he should do to save his soul - not to speak before being asked a question. An episode of a similar nature is illustrative. The Coptic monks were obviously suspicious of his learning and of his Greek ways of thinking, of his intellectual tendency. A discussion was taking place by a group of elders of Cells. Evagrius offered his opinion and was sharply rebuked: had he remained in his own country, he would have been correct in offering his advice; "but here you are a stranger." The tension is obvious. What is significant in these narrations is that Evagrius accepts the advice and the reprimands of the Copts. Socrates tells us in his *Historia ecclesiastica* (4, 23) that Evagrius' reputation of holiness and his general abilities came to the attention of Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria, who wanted to ordain Evagrius bishop of Thmuis. Evagrius refused. Many bishops came from the ranks of the monks. Conversely, the monks had a saying that they were

to beware of women and bishops. The saying of "beware of bishops" meant that the monks should avoid any occasion which distracts them from their monastic life. Becoming a bishop carried with it the possibility of "ambition" and the fact of becoming entangled in the affairs of the world. *The Book of Paradise* claims that Evagrius in his last years had found profound peace and that his spiritual powers increased. He was known as "the man of understanding," and had a reputation for performing miracles as well as the gift of prophecy. His health began to deteriorate in his last years but he did not alter his strict asceticism - except for allowing himself to substitute on occasion cooked food for raw vegetables. He sensed that his end was approaching. The last recorded event of his life is that he asked to be taken to Church on Epiphany so that he could receive the Holy Eucharist. It is claimed that he died after receiving the Eucharist. It was 399. His death actually spared him from a great turmoil. Before that year of 399 had ended, Evagrius' followers and companions, those referred to as the "Origenists," were expelled from Egypt on orders from Patriarch Theophilus. These included the Tall Brothers. Palladius, St. John Cassian, and Cassian's companion, Germanus. [For a lengthy discussion of the expulsion of the Origenists from Egypt and the encounter between them and the anthropomorphites, see Fr. Florovsky's articles "The Anthropomorphites in the Egyptian Desert" and "Theophilus of Alexandria and Apa Aphou of Pemdje" in Volume IV of *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*].

Many of those expelled from Egypt found refuge in Constantinople with St. John Chrysostom. This would fuel the fire that was to rage with Theophilus against St. John Chrysostom, the final result of which was triumph for Theophilus and exile, which led to death, for St. John Chrysostom. Yet this very expulsion contributed greatly to the spread of Evagrian ideas. St. John Cassian was ordained a deacon by St. John Chrysostom and was instructed to bring a letter to the Roman bishop on the behalf of St. John Chrysostom. Cassian found a new life in the Latin West. He became friends with Leo, who was to become Pope Leo the Great. He was requested to go to southern Gaul to put order in the chaotic monastic movement there.

In his *Institutes of the Coenobia* and in his *Conferences* St. John Cassian was to interpret Evagrian monastic asceticism to the Latin West, albeit in a diluted form. In his preface to his *Institutes of the Coenobia* St. John Cassian writes: "I shall try, so far as I can, with the help of God, faithfully to explain only their institutions and the rules of their monasteries, and especially the origin and causes of the principal faults, of which they reckon

eight, and the remedies for them according to their traditions - since my purpose is to say a few words not about God's miracles, but about the way to improve our character, and the attainment of the perfect life, in accordance with that which we received from our elders. In this, too, I will try to satisfy your directions, so that, if I happen to find that anything has been either withdrawn or added in those countries not in accordance with the rule which I have seen followed in the monasteries anciently founded throughout Egypt and Palestine, as I do not believe that a new establishment in the West, in the parts of Gaul could find anything more reasonable or more perfect than are those customs, in the observance of which the monasteries that have been founded by holy and spiritually minded fathers since the rise of apostolic preaching endure even to our own times. *I shall, however, venture to exercise this discretion in my work - that where I find anything in the rule of the Egyptians which, either because of the severity of the climate, or because of some difficulty or diversity of habits, is impossible in these countries, or hard and difficult, I shall to some extent balance it by the customs of the monasteries which are found throughout Pontus and Mesopotamia because, if due regard be paid to what things are possible, there is the same perfection in the observance although the power may be unequal.*" Cassian was strongly prejudiced in his description of monastic Egypt - he wrote to present a particular doctrine of spirituality, the doctrine of Evagrius in which the elements of Origen linger. Chadwick has correctly remarked that "the title of 'father of our literature of spirituality,' which Henri Bremond reserved for Cassian, should be given to Evagrius." But it was conveyed to the Latin West through St. John Cassian. Cassian's reputation in the Latin West suffered severely because of his attack on St. Augustine's doctrine of predestination and grace. Yet his works on spirituality were too important to discard. The result was that they were passed on in a censored condition. In Africa his works were published in an expurgated version. In Italy Cassiodorus (c. 485- c. 580) exhorted his monks at Vivarium to read Cassian's Institutes and Conferences but simultaneously in his *Institutiones Divinarum et Saecularium Litterarum* (1, 29), a work heavily dependent on St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, he warns his monks about Cassian's theology of grace. Twice Cassian came close to condemnation in the sixth century. In the more critical case his name was mentioned in a list drawn up by an unknown person. Precisely at the same time St. Benedict was recommending the reading of Cassian to his monks. This list finally worked its way into the Latin Church in the eighth century as a list prepared by a Rome pope - it even worked its way into the

collection of Gratian. The condemnation was connected with St. John Cassian's opposition to St. Augustine. Still, his works lived on even without his name. Before the Rule of St. Benedict became essentially the rule of the Latin West, St. John Cassian's first four books of his *Institutes of the Coenobia* were used as a rule. Even the anonymous *Regula Magistri* contained the *Institutes*. In this way Evagrius' teaching on monastic spirituality found its way into Latin monastic thought.

St. Jerome in his *Letter 133 to Ctesiphon* (3) speaks of the popularity of the works of Evagrius in Latin translation. In this letter, which is an attack on Pelagian ideas, St. Jerome identifies Pelagius' idea that a man can live without sin to Evagrius' doctrine of apatheia, a doctrine St. Jerome characterizes as pagan in its source. St. Jerome finds Evagrius' teachings perverse, all the more so because of Evagrius' association with Melania and Rufinus - he referred to these three as an "unholy trio." Rufinus' Latin translations of Evagrius' work were circulating already a few years after the death of Evagrius in 399. In the late fifth century Evagrius' works were again translated into Latin, this time by Gennadius of Marseilles

The teachings of Evagrius were brought to Syria, to Armenia, and also to Persia, where its influence was great. Later still the Arabic Christian world became familiar with Evagrius's works and in turn passed his works on to the Ethiopian Church. Evagrius' writings were translated very early on into Syriac. Evagrius' influence on Persian monasticism has been noted by Guillaumont, who claims that Evagrius' works became the "main" manual of asceticism in Christian Persia - moreover, it is even claimed that Evagrius' work were so popular among Christian monks in Persia that his influence continued after the conquest of Islam, even influencing the Persian Sufis!

THE CONDEMNATION OF EVAGRIUS

At the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553) Evagrius was condemned as an Origenist, together with Didymus. The condemnation was repeated by the next two Ecumenical Councils. In its definition of faith the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680/681) states: "and in addition to these, to the last, that is the Fifth Holy Council assembled in this place, against Theodore of Mopsuestia, Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius." The first canon of the Council in Trullo, the Quinisext (692), repeats the condemnation of Evagrius: "Also we recognize as inspired by the Spirit the pious voices of the one hundred and sixty-five God-bearing fathers who assembled in

this imperial city in the time of our Emperor Justinian of blessed memory, and we teach them to those who come after us; for these synodically anathematized and execrated Theodore of Mopsuestia (the teacher of Nestorius), and Origen, and Didymus, and Evagrius, all of whom reintroduced feigned Greek myths and brought back again the circlings of certain bodies and souls, and deranged transmigrations to the wanderings or dreamings of their minds, and impiously insulting the resurrection of the dead." Evagrius had written at length on Origen's doctrine of the pre-existence of souls and on the doctrine of the *apokatastasis* - ἀποκατάστασις In this Evagrius was even less cautious than Origen. Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostica* was ordered destroyed by Justinian after the Fifth Ecumenical Council. It survived in a Syriac translation. In 1952 Guillaumont discovered the original version of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* which was published in 1958. Chadwick refers to the rediscovery of Evagrius' works as a "romantic feat of modern scholarship." The "latest step" in this "romantic feat" has been "the publication by Guillaumont of a more primitive text of the Syriac version of his principal doctrinal work, the *Kephalaia Gnostica*; more primitive, and more important, because it showed that the previously known Syriac version had been purified of its more outspoken Origenist doctrines. We have recovered the bulk of the works of the leading Greek teacher among the desert fathers." Nevertheless, Evagrius still presents an enigmatic portrait. A comparison of his Christology as put forth in his *Letter to Melania* and that as contained in his *Kephalaia Gnostica* reveals the gap between a Cappadocian Christology in the letter and an Origenistic tendency in the rediscovered work.

Despite these condemnations Evagrius' influence had a strong effect on later ascetic writers, especially St. Maximus the Confessor. St. Maximus, of course, never spoke openly of his reading of Evagrius - moreover St. Maximus refers to Evagrius as "impious." It was Viller in his article in 1930 entitled "Aux sources de la spiritualité de saint Maxime. Les œuvres d'Evagre le Pontique (*Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 11) who overstated the case of St. Maximus' dependence on Evagrius - indeed, Viller tried to prove that St. Maximus was totally dependent on Evagrius. Precisely the opposite is true. St. Maximus may use Evagrius but he radically alters Evagrius' thought. It is also noteworthy to compare Evagrius' writings with the Russian *Love of Goodness*.

THE WRITINGS OF EVAGRIUS

Evagrius wrote profusely, usually in the form of "chapters" or "sayings," often virtually aphorisms. Evagrius' writings immediately became very widespread in both the East and West. Especially important is his work titled *Monachikos* [*The Monk*] which consists of two parts. The first part is known as the *Praktikos* which consists of one hundred "sayings." The second part is known as the *Gnostikos* which consists of fifty "sayings." The *Praktikos* has come down to us in two Greek editions, one containing 70 and the other 100 "sayings." The *Gnostikos* has survived only in a Syriac version. In addition to *Monachikos*, mention must be made of his *Antirrhetikos* on the eight principal sins and *Gnostic Problems*. The Greek original of the *Antirrhetikos* is lost but the entire text has survived in Syriac and Armenian versions. *Gnostic Problems*, commonly referred to as the *Centuries*, consists of six hundred "sayings" divided into six books of one hundred "sayings." The Greek original is lost but the work has survived in a Syriac and an Armenian version. The famous eighth letter in the collection of St. Basil's letters belongs to Evagrius. Some of Evagrius' works were preserved under the name of Nilus of Ancyra.

THE THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF EVAGRIUS

Following in the path of Origen, Evagrius distinguishes three stages in spiritual life: *active* life, *natural* or *contemplative* life, and *theological* life – that is, knowledge ("*gnosis*") of the Holy Trinity. The latter is the limit of spiritual ascent. "The kingdom of God is knowledge of the Holy Trinity - even in his *Kephalaia Gnostica* - which is extended according to the state of the mind and which fills it with an endlessly blissful life." This is the highest "state" of the soul or, rather, its "standing" – *κατάστασις*– the highest tranquillity and silence, higher than discourse and intuition, the immovable property and immobility of the mind – "a single and identical vision, and there are no ascents or descents in it."

This is vision or knowledge without images, higher than images – *ὑπὲρ τὰ εἴδη*. This is pure prayer – or, rather, the soul's pure prayerfulness – and it is inaccessible by courting.*It is given as a gift from on high*, as charisma. The soul is able to receive this gift, for it is created in God's image. It is precisely this ability to cognize the Holy Trinity that Evagrius regards as the spirit's

likeness to God – not its immaterial nature. ***But it is received as a gift.***

In prayerful rapture and ecstasy the soul is suddenly illumined by a single Trinitarian light. And here there are no teachers and disciples – all are already gods ("*theosis*"). To this spiritual limit leads the long, steep path of ordeal. There are two stages in this: *action* and contemplation – *πρᾶξις καὶ θεωρία*. "Action" begins with faith and ends with "apatheia" and love. The whole significance of "action" lies in overcoming and extinguishing the passions – in other words, in calming the soul, in subordinating its disorderly "movements" to the laws of nature.

Passion is also a "movement" or wandering of the mind – *κίνησις*. Passionlessness or "apatheia" is *stasis*. *Passion* is diffusion or dissipation, dependence on external impressions, while *apatheia* is independence and steadfastness. "It is not the soul which is not captivated by things which have passionlessness, but the soul which stays undisturbed even when recalling them." Apatheia is imperturbability and undistractibility and it is impossible to say of the passionless person: he endures. He endures who suffers, who is "suffering," or passive.

The "movements" are born in the lower parts of the soul and thence ascend "thoughts" or intentions – *λογισμοί*. They are prompted and suggested by the demons which always surround man. Evagrius has a lot to say about the struggle of thoughts and about demonic attacks. The most dangerous of all are the demon of pride and the thought of vanity. The heaviest of all is the demon of despondency, the "midday demon," who wears down with monotony and tries to distract the soul. The soul is doctored through fulfilling the commandments – through humility, through fasting, alms, and prayer. "The mind will not behold the divine places in itself if it does not become higher than all thoughts about the material and the creatural. But it will not become higher if it does not divest itself of the passions which connect it with sensual objects and which dispose it to thoughts about them. It divests itself of passions by means of good acts and thoughts through the power of spiritual contemplation."

The limit and flowering of an active life is *apatheia*, and *apatheia* begets love – *ἀγάπη*. Love is the beginning of the gnostic ascent, the beginning of "natural" life. *Apatheia* is not insensitivity, or lack of sensation, or indifference, as it seemed to the suspicious St. Jerome. *Apatheia* is the independence of the soul – independence or freedom from external and sensual impressions - in no way is it passivity. It is just that all energy is turned inward.

Apatheia is revealed in love. And love is first of all the attraction to know God. Love and *gnosis* are indissolubly joined. *Gnosis* has its own consistency, a consistency of "contemplations." The soul is liberated from sensual perceptions. But another, higher world is revealed for it – the world in its "natural" foundations and depths. The "natural" contemplation of the world is primarily knowledge of God's providence and judgment – *πρόνοια καὶ κρίσις*. In other words, it is perception and knowledge of the world as it was willed and created by God.

From contemplation of things visible the mind ascends to contemplation of things invisible, so as to attain "theology" on the heights. In this "spiritual cognition" the very soul is transformed and transfigured. Even the body is transformed – it becomes "spiritual" and passionless. The whole person is transfigured or renewed, dies and is resurrected, becomes new. Evagrius calls this a "little resurrection." This is a forewarning of the great universal resurrection which in the chosen and the successful is the beginning even now.

Evagrius' direct dependence on the Alexandrians is completely obvious. His religious ideal is the same as Origen's and even Clement's - the gnostic ideal, a contemplative, anchoritic ideal. The dependence on Origen is felt in the very language, in the selection of words and definitions.

In his books Evagrius describes the whole path of a spiritual life, from beginning to end. He says a lot not only about his ideal but also about the ascetic struggle. He is the first in whom we find the outline of the eight basic vices which later authors reproduce after him. Evagrius' place in history is determined by his influence. He preserved and revived Alexandrian traditions of the third century for later generations. His historical influence was enormous in both East and West.

CHAPTER NINE

NILUS, MARK THE HERMIT, AND SHENOUTE OF ATRIPE

ST. NILUS OF ANCYRA

St. Nilus of Ancyra [modern Ankara in Turkey] was, unfortunately, incorrectly called "of Sinai." The misunderstanding resulted from the work titled *Narrationes de caede monachorum in monte Sinae – The Accounts of the Slaughter of Monks on Mount Sinai* (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 79, 589-693). This work purports to be biography but is nothing more than a typical Byzantine *romantic novella*. In this "romance" Nilus is presented as a prefect of Constantinople at the time of Theodosius the Great (379-395). Nilus, according to this "romance," resigned his position and took his son, Theodulus, with him to become a hermit on Mount Sinai. The monks, attacked by barbarian robbers, were slaughtered or captured. Nilus' son was captured; Nilus managed to escape. But Theodulus finally succeeded in being reunited with his father and both, according to the "romance," were ordained priests by the bishop of Eleusa in Palestine and sent back to Mount Sinai. It was this legendary account in the *Narrationes* that influenced the liturgical books of the Greek Orthodox Church, especially the Byzantine *Synaxarium* of the tenth century, and, hence, from this legendary account the erroneous name of "Nilus of Sinai" became established. It is nothing more than a typical Hellenistic *novella*. The actual biography is quite different.

Nilus was, it appears, born in Ancyra and educated at Constantinople where he became a disciple of St. John Chrysostom and strongly defended Chrysostom against his enemies. Nilus left Constantinople and became abbot of a monastery near Ancyra. He carried on an enormous correspondence and exerted a wide influence on his contemporaries. He lived at the monastery until his death in approximately 430.

What is striking first of all is the extent and variety of his correspondence – he penned 1,061 letters. His collection of letters were referred to as early as the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787). Not everything here is a letter in the proper sense. Some are too short – these are rather fragments, often individual "sayings." Neither a chronological nor a systematic order is maintained in the collection of letters (reprinted in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 79, 81-582).

St. Nilus' letters give evidence of his influence and authority. He was a "spiritual father," a leader of monks and laymen. Bishops and even the emperor turned to him for advice and instructions. He was hardly a priest. In any case, he says flatly and brusquely that priesthood is harmful for monks because it returns them anew to the world and its bustle.

In his letters St. Nilus touches upon the most varied themes. Now and then they are dogmatic (against the Arians, on the Resurrection, against Apollinarians); more often they are exegetical (see the fragments from his exegesis on the *Song of Songs* in Procopius of Gaza, who quotes St. Nilus' work 61 times]. He interprets the Scriptures morally and allegorically: "in the sensual we study the spiritual." Much in the Scriptures is said in such a way "that we try to find the meaning of all this" and discover "the sense concealed in the characters." This applies to the Old Testament in particular: "The Mosaic characters demand great speculation or understanding and great study." However this does not mean that one can disregard the literal or "historical" sense of the stories in the Bible. It is just that one must not dwell on it – one has to go farther – "in so far as we are a microcosm."

It is curious that St. Nilus advised monks to read the New Testament, not the Old Testament, since the Old Testament does not call forth sufficient distress and tenderness in the heart. St. Nilus has a negative attitude towards the reading of foreign writers: what is the purpose in collecting "this litter, this dust, this dirty heap of Hellenic books" full of "idle wisdom and sinfulness."

More than anything else, St. Nilus speaks of the ways of spiritual life in his letters. He discusses these same themes in his long epistles and "addresses." The most important is *De oratione* [*On Prayer*] which some scholars attribute to Evagrius of Pontus – the Syriac version also ascribes it to Evagrius. Much of what is said in *De oratione* is similar to what is said in the works accepted by most scholars as belonging to St. Nilus. The final judgment on the authorship of *De oratione* is still to come. The work, though small, contains 153 "chapters," all aphorisms. The number of 153 is taken from the number of fish caught in *John* 21: 11! We must also mention *The Ascetic Address* [*De monastica exercitatione – Λόγος ἀσκητικός*] and *On Voluntary Poverty* [*De voluntaria paupertate – Περὶ ἀκτημοσύνης*]. It is quite likely that St. Nilus' name was subsequently inscribed on some of Evagrius' compositions.

St. Nilus wrote in an era of monastic decline. A denunciatory motif sounds sharply in his writings. "Monastic life, which was once longed-for and very renowned, now arouses revulsion. All

the cities and villages are overcrowded with false monks who wander without purpose or sense. And can now a new Jeremiah be found to describe our situation completely and worthily?"

St. Nilus first of all reminds us of the meaning and certainty of monastic renunciation. This is a way out of city or "political" life. It is *evangelical* indifference in the hope for God's favor and generosity – a repudiation of and unconsciousness towards everyday cares. Monasticism is loving wisdom, philosophy (see Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood*) – the only true and genuine philosophy. And loving wisdom not only in thought but in life as well. It is necessary to be not only "disciples" but also "imitators" of Christ. "For loving wisdom is correction of habits, with true knowledge of what Exists."

The life of this world is all passion, trouble, and care. The goal of the ordeal is *apatheia* – in other words, immutability, unalterability, firmness, steadfastness, and constancy. Here is deification – a likening to Divine invariability and eternity. Here is the realization of God's image, the "imprint of the primordial Image."

Apatheia is possible only through renunciation. Nothing in the world must remain attractive. "The Lord freed us from every care about the terrestrial, and ordered us to seek only the heavenly kingdom." *This* is non-acquisitiveness - not simply poverty but total want, and even the lack of any desire to possess anything. "For it is not we ourselves who provide that which is necessary for our lives. God dispenses everything." Renouncing earthly life and its interests is not abhorrence of the body. The baseness of the body is in its mortality, not in its materiality, and the thirst for deliverance from carnal bonds is slaked by the hope of resurrection – in one's own body which, however, is now immortal and imperishable, having been revived by the Holy Spirit.

In any event, the root and sting of sin is not in the body but in volition or the heart – "sin begins and ends in human volition." Hence, the healing and purifying power of repentance. God accepts not only purity, truth, valor, and ordeal, but also tears – a "sowing of tears," the fragrance of lament, sorrowful thoughts, the kiss of the harlot, a heart grief-stricken and humble – in other words, the will or love for good, not less than doing good deeds or virtue itself.

Repentance is a "sign of regeneration and the last sign of resurrection, which hence is envisaged by intelligent eyes." And those who have wilted take their place with the righteous, for the most important thing of all is inner volition and a turning of the will. "You took up the cross, following Christ, having left everything –

your father, your ship, the nets, and the tools of every skill, and with them every blood tie and every memory. For Christ, with whom you have united, wishes to be loved more than every one else. With him you died, and with him you were interred in the blessed grave of impassivity."

This is a precept not only for monks – it is the general baptismal vow. But even more important is "freedom of the heart, which transgresses any measure of precepts and vows which bind everything with a certain slavery of duty, which outstrips the category of duty in insatiable love, in a longing and insatiable love for wisdom."

Perfection is not accessible to everyone, and it is given by God, as a gift. Love for perfection, however, is not only accessible, but obligatory. Total want is not within the power of everyone. But alienation from worldly things is a universal rule. In any event, no excess is permitted, and life must pass in labor.

The significance of monasticism lies not so much in "ordeal" and self-mortification as in prayer. It is for the sake of prayer that one must renounce. There are two types of prayer: *active* and *contemplative*. A prayer of words, when the mind follows them with tenderness; and a prayer of a silent, opened heart. When the heart is silently opened, like a book filled with writing, the prayer expresses its will in silent images, in silent ways. These are a "certain rapture of the mind, its complete renunciation of the sensual, when by the ineffable sighs of the Spirit, it approaches God." This is the goal or limit of prayer, the "limit of impassivity." This is a gift, however, and one must not willfully solicit it. "If you have not yet received the gift of prayer or psalmody, then wait tirelessly and you will receive it."

Prayer must begin with lamentation and grief. However, excess in prayer is not proper, lest the means for escaping the passions turn into passion themselves. For God is not merely angry or strict *but God is first of all merciful, and is love*. "But many, in pouring forth tears over their sins, forget the purpose of the tears, and lose their senses and their moderation." This is a false and dangerous frenzy. Silence and oblivion are needed in prayer – the mind must become deaf and dumb. This is not easy: during prayer, demons try to excite the memory, even if about something necessary, so as to distract the mind. Sorrow and malicious memories hinder one the most.

One must not pray for the fulfillment of one's desires – this would mean unreasonably attempting to coerce God's will. A genuine prayer is always "Let Thy will be done," for God's will is goodness itself. One can only ask for truth and the kingdom; that

is, for virtue and knowledge, and not only for one's self but also for any fellow human being, imitating in generality petitions to the angels (see St. John Chrysostom, where this idea is expressed even more sharply). Prayer is a conversation with God. Therefore, to pray one needs impassivity, deafness, and a lack of receptivity to worldly excitements.

But impassivity alone is not enough. The mind can dwell upon bare ideas, and enter into meditation on the laws of things, even if these laws are of a mental nature. They are still multitudinous and they therefore distract thought. Then the mind does not behold the perfect place where God abides.

In pure prayer there is no place for imagination. "In prayer, do not shroud the Godhead in any image, and do not permit your mind to take upon itself any aspect, but approach the Immaterial immaterially, and attain union." Images are deceptive, for God is higher than image and limitation. God is comprehended in imageless knowledge. "If you wish to behold the Heavenly Father's face, in no way seek during prayer an image. Do not desire to see perceptibly the Angels or Dominions or Christ, lest you fall into derangement of mind by mistaking the wolf for the shepherd and worshipping hostile demons. The beginning of delusion is the mind's vanity. A mind moved by vanity attempts to describe or comprehend the Godhead through some image or outline."

Prayer is always an "ordeal." The path to the heights of imageless contemplation leads through struggle and sorrow. But prayer is crowned with a joy which is greater than any joy, and only joy from on high is a faithful standard of true prayer. A "miraculous reciprocity" is realized in prayer, and a reality of freedom, of giving, of growth, of love. It must be added that genuine prayer is possible only in humility, in love for everyone and everything. Here renunciation achieves its fullness – someone else's success must become just as desired and joyful as one's own, and in everyone one must constantly see one's self. "That monk is blessed who knows every man as if he were a god after God," putting himself last behind all.

A prayer is a conversation with God. The significance of prayer is for God to descend and begin to speak in souls. Blessed be Thy name! Thy Kingdom come! This means: come Holy Spirit, come Thy Only-Begotten Son! (see St. Gregory of Nyssa).

The peak of prayer is theophany, and precisely a trinitarian theophany. "If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you will pray truly, you are a theologian." In the Venerable Nilus'

time – and earlier as well – to "theologize" meant precisely to try to comprehend God in his Trinity.

MARK THE HERMIT

Close to St. Nilus' writings are the works of Mark the Hermit, or Mark of the Desert. In any event, this is not the Mark of the Cells whom *The Lausiac History* mentions. Mark, the author of ascetical addresses and books, was active in Galatia, near Ancyra, as was St. Nilus. What little we know of his life is from his writings. He lived at first in a *coenobium* and was a prior and "spiritual father." He later left for the desert and became a hermit. This was in the first half of the fifth century.

Mark wrote against the Nestorians, markedly pointing out that it was a "new heresy." Quite a few works are known under Mark's name. According to Nicephorus Callistus (c. 1256-c. 1335), Mark the Hermit was a student of St. John Chrysostom and a contemporary of St. Nilus. Nicephorus in his *Church History* claims that Mark the Hermit wrote approximately forty ascetical works. Nicephorus had eight in his possession. St. Photius quotes from and evaluates (*Bibl. cod.* 200) nine works by Mark the Hermit. St. Photius mentions no other works by Mark.

A fascinating work by Mark is his work on the interpretation of *Romans* 7:14, an interpretation of St. Paul's "law of the Spirit." Mark's work, *De lege spirituali* – *περὶ νόμου πνευματικοῦ* – analyzes the "law of the Spirit" as precisely the life of perfection. Mark analyzes by using the monastic form of "sayings," covering the life of monastic obligations with 201 "sayings."

In his *On Those Who Suppose Justification is from Works* – *De his qui putant se ex operibus iustificari* – Mark uses 211 maxims to state his position. In this work Mark directly attacks the Messalians and their identification of grace with mystical experience. In his *De poenitentia* Mark considers penance as unceasing prayer in the "ordeal" against sinful lust and sinful thought.

In his work *On Fasting – De ieiunio* – Mark underscores the spiritual necessity of controlling the human appetite. He also gives what is traditional monastic theology on fasting, which applies to all forms of spiritual combat, and that is that no pride can be taken in such weapons of spiritual warfare.

In his work *Ad Nicolaum praecepta animae salutaria* Mark answers a letter addressed to him by a young Galatian ascetic named Nicholas. The most efficacious means of overcoming passions, writes Mark, is to reflect upon the grace and gifts of

God, especially the grace of redemption given through Christ. Nicholas is warned about the three principal evils that lay in wait for the soul – ignorance, forgetfulness, and negligence. Spiritual knowledge conquers ignorance. Remembrance of the grace of God, of all the graces God extends to his creation, conquers forgetfulness. Only spiritual zeal can overcome negligence. For Mark the greatest gift is the monastic life.

There is also a fervid attack on Messalianism in Mark's *On Baptism – De baptismo*. Mark uses the form of question and answer in this work. The full title of this work is *Responsio ad eos qui de divino baptismate dubitant*, a response to those who doubt that baptism actually is the remission of sin. The Messalians claimed that even after baptism sin remained in the interior existence of man and had to be annihilated by our spiritual efforts. For Mark, our spiritual life even after baptism must be one of constant spiritual warfare because of both internal and external temptation. Mark quotes often from St. Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*. His work entitled *Consultatio intellectus cum sua ipsius anima* is a soliloquy in which he exhorts his soul not to fall prey to self-deception. It is an interesting work on the nature of sin, for Mark does not believe that sin can be only ascribed to our source from Adam. Nor can sin be merely ascribed to the power of the devil or to the influence of other persons or society. Sin strikes us from all directions.

Mark's *Disputatio cum quodam causidico* is a dialogue between a lawyer and an old monk. The lawyer is concerned because the monks have destroyed his profession by preaching that lawsuits should be avoided. The ending has apparently been lost.

Mark's *De Melchisedech* is a dogmatic work against those who believed that Melchisedech was an incarnation of the Logos. St. Photius, in commenting on this work, accuses Mark of heresy. St. Photius thought he detected a tendency toward Monophysitism in Mark, especially in his interpretation of the *communicatio idiomatum*.

The full title of Mark's *Adversus Nestorianos* is *Against Those Who Claim That The Holy Flesh Of The Lord Was Not United With the Logos But Surrounded Him Like A Garment And That Therefore It Is Necessary To Distinguish Carefully Between The One Who Carries And The One Who Is Carried.* This work was not mentioned by St. Photius. This work is closely in agreement with St. Cyril of Alexandria's Twelve Anathemas. Mark stresses the *ἕνωσις καθ' ὑπόστασιν* in this work. He stresses the fact that the Logos was united with flesh from the moment of Incarnation. The work was written before the Council of Ephesus, in late 430 or

early 431. It was found and published comparatively recently – in St. Petersburg in 1891. Mark theologizes like a moderate Antiochene, while accepting and defending St. Cyril's formula about "union through hypostasis." It is curious that he does not touch upon the question of the name *Theotokos* in this work.

Other works known under Mark's name are referred to by Dorotheus , Isaac the Syrian, and St. John of Damascus.

In his works Mark reduces his moral exhortations to dogmatic principles and develops a coherent doctrine on sin and salvation, and on freedom and grace. Mark formulated his views in a polemic with the Messalians, and in the enthusiasm of the controversy he emphasizes the ineradicability of human freedom. In general, he reminds one very much of St. John Chrysostom.

According to Mark's thinking, the goal and end of the spiritual "ordeal" is deification. "The Logos became flesh so that flesh could become the Logos." The Lord becomes like us "so that we may become like him in every virtue." Redemption is first of all deliverance from death, "the devastation of hell and death." Mark is always quicker to speak of the heredity of death, and not that of sin, and he rejects the "necessity of natural succession" in sin. Sin for him is always a free act of will or "volition." Because of the first fall, Adam's race becomes mortal and liable to decay. Here lies his sinfulness, and his original sin. By mortality Mark understands not only the instability of the psycho-physical composition and corporeal mortality, but also decay of volition itself. In any case, salvation is revealed only in Christ, and for every man only through baptism – through baptismal renewal by the Spirit. "Do not look for the perfection of freedom in human virtues, for there is nothing perfect in them. This perfection is disclosed in Christ's cross." It is precisely for this reason that imperishability must be acquired and reinforced by a free spiritual "ordeal" and a growth in goodness. New sins cast man into the region of death – with his personal sins man again draws himself into the necessity of death, subjects himself anew to its tribute and censure, and becomes mortal and liable to decay, for he extinguishes in himself the renewing power of the Spirit, he renounces the baptismal grace of resurrection and imperishability. "Holy baptism is perfect and gives us perfection, but it does not make one who does not fulfill the commandments perfect, for grace works to the extent that the commandments are followed. Man's "despotism" is never forced. Where he loves, there by his will man will abide, even after baptism. And the grace given to him reveals itself in him "to the extent that the commandments and mental hope work."

In the "ordeal" the most important thing is "volition" or inner disposition of the heart and will – the inner "ordeal" "justifies," not the external one – the "ordeal of thought or mind. In other words, the "ordeal" of prayer through which God's image is reproduced in man by the power of grace. "The 'rite' of Christians is more internal." And all the work of the commandments is concentrated in prayer; that is, in addressing God, and in "mental hope."

The goal and purpose of the "ordeal" is knowledge – *gnosis* – and memory of God – " hell is ignorance," and ruin is oblivion. Knowledge is possible only through the purification and self-discipline of the mind. Therefore, not only does one have to "close the emotions," and not be attracted to external impressions; one, too, should not recall former sins or pretensions with excessive attention, so as not to pollute one's imagination.

The soul is always troubled by thoughts and attacks of temptation, but this is not where sin and impurity lie. Sin lies in an inner attention for or interest in seductive images, in "the mind's merging with them" – *συγκατάθεσις*. The attack of thought – *προσβολή* – is neither sin nor falsehood, but rather evidence of our will's despotism." Sin consents to sin.

What is therefore needed is purity of thought, and its independence from external impressions. As the mind is disciplined in prayer, it is purified and renewed by the Holy Spirit. "It receives into itself the outline of the God-like image, is vested in the ineffable intelligent beauty of the Lord's likeness, and is honored with the riches of spiritual wisdom." The heart is cleansed of all images, and the mind becomes "aspectless," and then it enters the "invisible and immaterial place of knowledge," the "country of knowledge." This is the Sabbath of Sabbaths – "the spiritual tranquillity of the reasoning soul which, by abstracting itself with its mind even from everything Divine which is secretly confined in the creatural, is wholly vested in God alone, in an ecstasy of love, and through mystical theology the mind becomes entirely inseparable from God." This is the goal of impassivity and ecstasy, and the same ideal that we find in Evagrius and Nilus.

SHENOUTE OF ATRIPE

As with everything in this life, extremes exist. It is no exception with monasticism. One must take special note of the White Monastery - also called the Deir Auba Chenouda [Monastery of Shenoute] near Atripe or Athribis and Schag in Egypt which was founded by the hermit Pgol. The menacing and severe abbot Shenoute (or 'Shenudi'; who died between 450 and 466) served as

abbot here for many years. His pupil and successor Besa claims that Shenoute ruled the White Monastery for 83 years and that he had 2,200 monks and 1,800 nuns under his rule. The regimen was especially strict and extreme. Shenoute found the *Rule of St. Pachomius* too lax, too soft for the authentic monastic life. His monks had to sign a monastic "vow" which promised unquestioned obedience to the rule drawn up by Shenoute. It is claimed that on one occasion he killed with his own hand a monk who was apparently guilty of a theft and a lie. It is also claimed that, though he was disliked by his monks, his fame spread throughout Egypt and that he was there considered a saint - the Coptic Church celebrates his feast day on the first of July. Characteristically, the tested monks had to go into isolation – they had to all come together in their cloisters only four times a year.

Shenoute, incidentally, accompanied St. Cyril of Alexandria to the Council of Ephesus (431) and played an important part in opposition to Nestorius. He knew Greek but wrote in Coptic. Shenoute is regarded as the most important Christian writer in Coptic. According to Besa Shenoute authored a great number of letters, and many of his sermons have been preserved. The letters are mainly addressed to monks and nuns and deal with monastic issues, though some are polemical. His sermons reflect his fiery temper and tend to focus on eschatological thought. Also attributed to him are apocalypses and visions. His works are extant in Ethiopic, Syriac, and Arabic versions. What is authentic and what is spurious is still to be determined. His biography exists in Coptic, Arabic, and Syriac. That Shenoute was an accomplished organizer seems undisputed. His biographers praise his personality as well as his achievements.

CHAPTER TEN

ISIDORE OF PELUSIUM AND DIADOCHUS OF PHOTICE

ISIDORE OF PELUSIUM

It is also possible to include the venerable Isidore of Pelusium among the ascetic writers, although he was more a moralist than a teacher of spiritual life in the narrow sense of the word.

Isidore was born in Egypt, in Alexandria. He died about 435. His spiritual style was, however, closer to that of the Antiochenes. He respected St. John Chrysostom very much, and took the side of St. John Chrysostom against Theophilus and St. Cyril. Isidore was not an actual disciple of St. John Chrysostom – as Nicephorus Callistus writes in his *Church History* (14,53) – and he did not travel to Constantinople to study with him. In many things, however, he was close to him in spirit.

While still in his youth, Isidore withdrew to the monastery near Pelusium and was subsequently the abbot and priest there. Some scholars do not accept Isidore's being the abbot of the monastery. They base their conclusion on a statement by Severus of Antioch and the works of Isidore. Severus wrote that in a letter by an ascetic Isidore was described as "the venerable priest Isidore, the altar of Christ, the vessel for the service of the churches, the treasury of Holy Scripture." That there is no mention of Isidore being an abbot is taken as conclusive proof that he was not. But in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* we find him described as the "abbas Isidore of Pelusium." It is true that this term could mean that he was an "abbot" in the sense of being a "Father of the desert" or a "Father of monks." But it also could mean that he was in fact an abbot of a monastery. The fact that the *Menologium* of Basil II and the *Synaxarium* do not use the title "abbot" proves nothing. The first time Isidore is referred to specifically as an abbot is in the sixth century by the Roman deacon Rusticus. It was Rusticus who selected forty-nine letters by Isidore, translated them into Latin, and appended them to the Acts of the Third Ecumenical Council. Here Isidore is referred to as a *doctor ecclesiae* and *abbas monasterii circa Pelusium*. There is no solid reason for discarding the information of Rusticus.

What is clear is that Isidore was a priest of Pelusium, and widely known for his spiritual life and his knowledge of Holy Scripture. His own works testify that he was a monk, that he led a

monastic life and acquired quite a reputation among the ascetics. Whether he was in fact an abbot becomes to a great extent a meaningless question. He was at least recognized as being an abbot in the spiritual sense. St. Photius includes Isidore of Pelusium in the same rank as St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nazianzus as a master of writing. St. Photius considers Isidore as a model of the priestly and ascetical life.

Isidore's 2,000 letters still exist. This rich body of correspondence reveals his personality, his theological knowledge, and his education. He not only knows Holy Scripture but also knows the early writers of Christian literature well. Isidore had a great respect for the secular sciences, provided they are illumined by Divine truth. There is nothing to prevent Christians from being nourished from the writings of pagan philosophers, for the Christian knows what to take that is authentic nourishment and what to reject. He quotes extensively from Demosthenes, Plato, and Aristotle. He was also fond of Homer. Isidore had a wide-ranging interest in everything secular and Divine, in everything that concerned the world in which we live and in everything that concerned the Church into which we are baptized. His judgment is passed on the secular world as well as the world of the Church.

His 2000 letters cover approximately four decades, from about 393 until 433. Numerous persons and subjects are referred to. All presently existing editions of Isidore's letters are based on the collection made by the Acoemetae monastery in Constantinople from 450 until about 550, a collection known as the *Corpus Isidorianum*. Facundus, the bishop of Hermiana, refers to this corpus in his *Pro defensione trium capitulorum* (Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 67, 573). Severus of Antioch writes that Isidore composed "almost three thousand letters." There is obviously the need for a new critical edition of Isidore's letters.

His influence spread very far and his authority as very great. His letters bear witness to this. In Isidore's letters one is struck by the independence and boldness of his judgment. He occupied an entirely independent place in the Nestorian dispute. He immediately rejected Nestorius but was also dissatisfied with St. Cyril's actions. He reminded St. Cyril that "partiality is not vigilance and that aversion is blind." The issue had to be discussed calmly and impartially. Isidore was not certain that such was the case at Ephesus.

Isidore held fast to the Christology of the Church and defended it against a variety of heresies on different occasions. He wrote against the Arians, whom he considered the most dangerous enemies of the Church. He refutes the Arians by a detailed analysis

of the Holy Scripture, by philology, and by a thorough exegetical methodology. Isidore refers to the Council of Nicaea: "That holy council which took place at Nicaea must be followed without adding or subtracting anything because, filled by the Spirit of God, that council taught the truth." He constantly uses the terms *homoousios* and *homoousiotes*.

Isidore also wrote against the Manichees, defending the true humanity of Christ against their teachings. "Our Lord chose his mother from the line of Abraham and he assumed flesh from her. Hence, our Lord in truth became man, like us in all things except sin."

Approximately eight of Isidore's letters are addressed to St. Cyril of Alexandria. In one letter he reproaches St. Cyril for his behavior at Ephesus. "Partiality is not vigilance and aversion is blind. If therefore you are to avoid both types of blindness, do not indulge in vehement negations but submit any accusations made against you to a just judgment. God himself, who knows all things before they come to pass, vouchsafed to come down and see the cry of Sodom. He thereby taught us the lesson to look closely into things and to weigh them well. Many of those who were present at Ephesus speak satirically of you as a man bent on pursuing his private animosities, not as one who has at heart the cause of Jesus Christ." Despite this warning, Isidore writes elsewhere to admonish St. Cyril not to relent from his doctrine, not to sacrifice the slightest aspect of his doctrine. Isidore also wrote to Emperor Theodosius to stop court interference in the matter. Isidore rejected both a "mixture" of natures and a "separation of natures" in Christ. He writes of two natures – *δύο φύσεις* – and uses the terms one "person" and one hypostasis – *ἓν πρόσωπον καὶ μία ὑπόστασις*.

In his letters Isidore refers to two works that he wrote. His *Against the Greeks* – *Λόγος πρὸς Ἕλληνας* – is lost. His *On the Non-Existence of Fate* – *Λογίδιον περὶ τοῦ μὴ εἶναι εἱμαρμένην* – appears to be the same as his lengthy letter to Harpocras.

Isidore's distinctive traits were calmness and impartiality. In his letters he touches upon the most varied themes, primarily exegetical ones. His interpretation of Scripture reminds one of St. John Chrysostom. He does not reject the allegorical method – and uses it himself more than once – but he insistently cautions against extremes and passions. One must begin with the direct and literal sense of Scripture and explain the texts in the connection between speech and thought. The two Testaments are harmonious with one

another, but one should not read the New Testament into the Old. They are different stages of Revelation. The law and the prophets are less than the Gospels. The Old Testament is heavy and also picturesque. Fulness of truth and the law of the Spirit are in the Gospels only. Therefore it is wrong to seek Christ in the Old Testament. This means instilling mistrust in the Holy Scriptures through a forcible application of the texts. "And not everything about Christ has been said, and if it has not been said, then it is incorrect to assume it has been said."

Isidore also frequently touches upon dogmatic themes. He may not be an original thinker but his thinking is always strict and precise, and he skillfully finds precise words for it. Most letters are on moral themes. He answers questions on particular issues, always simply and clearly. He says much about the inner struggle and repentance.

The venerable Isidore's image is very impressive. He was a teacher first of all, and he testifies with power. But his was a free and inner authority, not an external authority.

DIADOCHUS OF PHOTICE

The blessed Diadochus , bishop of Photice in ancient Epirus, stands apart in the ranks of ascetic authors. The only thing we know of him is that he was bishop in the mid-fifth century – his signature is on a letter to the Emperor Leo, a letter by the bishops of Epirus after the murder of Proterius of Alexandria by the Monophysites in 457. Contemporary historians do not mention him. St. Photius says nothing about his life but does refer to his "outstanding" address and mentions him as one of the opponents of the Monophysites at the time of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 (*Bibl. cod.* 231).

Diadochus' works enjoyed a wide circulation – there are numerous manuscript copies which are frequently referred to by others, and excerpts from them were taken for anthologies and *florilegiae*. His most important work is the *Capita centum de perfectione spirituali – One Hundred Chapters on Spiritual Perfection.* This is a concise and coherent manual of the monastic life. A polemical motif – the refutation of Messalianism – is very strong in this work. Diadochus helps us to understand the inner difficulties and dangers in the monastic life, in the life and "ordeal" of prayer, especially in chapters 76 to 80.

Diadochus defines the ascetical "ordeal" as the way of love – *ἀγάπη*. Faith is an impassive idea or concept about God. Hope is the "progress of the mind in love towards that which is hoped for."

And love "joins the soul with God's perfections, experiencing the Invisible with a kind of intelligent sensation."

Love for God is first of all a kind of self-denial and humbling of one's self before God, a kind of forgetting of one's self, non-love for one's self for God's sake. What is more, it is a kind of constant leaving of one's self for love for God. The true ascetic continually wishes that God be glorified in him, but he himself would like that he at this time remain, as it were, "non-existing." He does not know and does not feel any dignity in him.

One can, however, rise to this love only gradually. The ascent begins with fear of God. It is fear which cleanses the soul, and it is fear which befits the imperfected. Love flares up in the process of cleansing, and drives fear away. Fear of God is a land of "fire of impassivity," and therefore only those who have begun the purgative "ordeal" have genuine fear. One must court fear itself, through renunciation of all everyday cares, and through silence and great freedom from care.

Love is also psychologically impossible before purification. Then the soul is still bifurcated, bifurcated by the denunciations of the conscience, and refrains from contemplating the extra-terrestrial blessings. Only in a cleansed soul can that wholeness in which love enters be restored. Only in serenity or freedom from care can the mind feel Divine goodness and burn with love for the glory and glorification of God.

Genuine love is given by the Holy Spirit, through whose power the soul is purified, is calmed, and finds repose – however, not without man's freedom. This is not "natural love," but a spiritual gift. It is not a simple movement of the soul or will.

It is true that even in the soul itself, insofar as it approaches self-consciousness, there is a certain love for peace, and an attraction toward the God of peace. This attraction cannot be steady and constant, however, because of the poverty of the soul. It is not sufficient for courting apatheia. The "natural seeds" of the soul cannot germinate into spiritual fruit. A certain "Divine action" or Divine "energy" must yet flare up in the soul. Spiritual love is "a kind of continual kindling of the soul and its clinging to God through the power of the Holy Spirit."

In spiritual love a higher spontaneity is achieved. He who is possessed of such perfect love is already above faith, for he already possesses in his heart that which faith seeks and honors. He is already entirely with God, for he is entirely in love.

Man is created in God's image. This image is given to him, and is in his reason and his absolute power. But "image" must come to conform to "likeness," and this is accomplished in freedom

and in the self-devotion of love. Likeness to God is realized in the ordeal, and it is realized by the inspiration of grace, but not without man's freedom, for the seal cannot print on unsoftened wax. The way of "ordeal," especially at first, is terrifying and arduous. This is a path among temptations, the path of struggle. In general, it is impossible to eliminate the temptations.

Apatheia does not lie in not being attacked by demons or intentions but in remaining impenetrable, insuperable. However, perfect apatheia is unattainable in this mortal life, except perhaps for martyrs. Its fulness will be revealed when "the mortal may be swallowed up by life" – *ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς* (*II Corinthians* 5:4), when the soul no longer knows the temporal image of life here on earth.

The most important aspect of the "ordeal" is obedience. It is "the door and entrance of love," for it is the direct antidote for the pride of insubordination, the direct antithesis of disobedience. Then one needs abstinence, precisely as a doctoring and tempering of the body. The limit or goal of abstinence is a certain blindness for this fraudulent life – in other words, the customary "abiding in one's own heart – *ἐνδημία ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ*. This is "spiritual work" or "spiritual love of wisdom," the heeding and sobering of the mind. Here despondency, that "illness which makes one lazy," lies in wait for the soul. The only thing which cures it is the remembrance of God, which warms the soul, and also intense prayer.

The blessed Diadochus says much about prayer, primarily the Lord's Prayer. This is not only an invocation of the name of Jesus but a kind of "continual work," a continual remembrance of God. This is contemplation of Jesus' holy and glorious name in the depths of the heart. Through the power of continual remembrance, it takes root there, and leaves its mark on the soul like the impression from a stamp.

For this to happen, the soul has to be cleansed and tranquil – there can be no continual memory in an agitated or angry soul. "And that glorious and much desired name, which by means of the mind's memory long abides in the warmth of the heart, produces in us the skill of perfectly loving his goodness, and then there are no longer any obstacles to this. For this is that precious pearl which one may acquire by selling all one's property, and in the finding of which one has an ineffable and continual joy. It is as if the soul is seized by Divine light and fire. In this is the work of the Spirit. Grace itself contends within the soul and exclaims with it: "O, Lord Jesus! And no one can call Jesus the Lord except by the Holy Spirit" – *καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν· ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΙΗΣΟΥΣ, εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ* (*I Corinthians* 12:3).

The venerable Diadochus makes a distinction between *theology* and *gnosis*. *Theology* is a lower and earlier stage of spiritual work and life. It is contemplation and wisdom, the comprehension of God's word. But first of all it is God's gift, "the first fruit of grace." "In the beginning grace usually illumines the soul with its light in much feeling; and throughout the spiritual 'ordeal' it frequently performs its mysteries inscrutably in the theologizing soul in order to put us joyfully on the path of Divine contemplation." This is the illumination of the soul, its illumination and enlightenment by the "fire of change." And through this man becomes like the holy angels, who always abide in Divine radiance (see pseudo-Dionysius).

However, theology is not only a gift. Of man is demanded a "test" or study of the Scriptures. It is through the Scriptures that illuminating grace works. This is not an exertion of thought – the action of love is the most important thing of all. Love entices one to delight in God's glory. And wisdom is a gift of words, a gift for speaking of and praising God with power and force, the gift of the "spiritual word." This is the gift of spiritual teaching, and it is a special gift – a lower gift, for at the higher stages everything falls silent and one must not go back to the word when one has entered the realm of silence. "For experienced knowledge joins man to God without pushing the soul toward words. That is why many of those who are philosophizing are in seclusion – although they are tangibly enlightened with knowledge, they do not approach the Divine words."

There is a certain danger in philosophy. This is more of a wide path "because of the width and unlimitedness of Divine contemplation." It is somehow easier than the narrow path of prayer. Therefore it is useful to narrow one's self and compel one's self to prayer and psalmody. This tempers the mind and guards against reverie and verbosity.

In any event prayer is the highest thing of all, "higher than any width." *Gnosis is* prayer, prayerful experience, silence, and freedom from care. This is total liberation from passions. To the extent that there is spiritual success, the soul becomes more and more silent, and it prays or sings in the heart alone, not in audible words.

We must make particular note of the *gift of tears*, "the unremitting tear." There are tears of grief, the "tear of confession," and higher forms of tears. There are the tears of tenderness and joy, "spiritual tears" – painless and joy-giving – "tears of the mind," tears of a burning love, when one's very thoughts become

like tears from great emotion and joy. And after the spiritual weeping follows joy and love for silence.

The path of the spiritual "ordeal" is the path of temptation. However, one should not understand this to mean that the soul is divided between good and evil, and that "grace" and "sin" somehow co-exist in it. That is what the Messalians claim. Their mistake is their incorrect and limited understanding of baptismal rebirth. For in baptism Satan is driven away, and grace enters. Demonic temptations continue and even become stronger but they blacken the soul, as it were, from without.

The soul is not some "common abode" for God and the devil, and it cannot be. This is impossible because of the soul's simplicity. In baptism grace settles into the innermost recesses of the mind, "and where can the face of the evil one find room?" The temptations now strike through the body – "cunning spirits penetrate the corporeal feelings and take cover there, acting on still infantile souls through the easy compliance of the flesh."

Duality of desire remains, and in this is the opportunity for a fall. In the first fall the human mind somehow "slid off into a duality of knowledge – that is, a knowledge of good *and* evil. And "human memory divided into a certain dual intention because of Adam's *disobedience*" – so that man always recalls evil as well as good. Here is where the demons strike, as they try to distract and disrupt the "memory of the mind" with various kinds of reverie. But they are not allowed to penetrate deep into the soul, "as long as the Holy Spirit abides in us."

The struggle takes place in the region of the will. "The nature of good is stronger than the experience of evil, for good is, and evil is not, unless it is committed." In other words, good is a "nature" – φύσις – and evil is only a "state" – ἕξις – and moreover a state of the will.

Diadochus is correcting the psychological mistake of his adversaries – they take the bifurcation of the will to be a duality of hypostases. Evil takes possession of a believer only to the extent of his spiritual backwardness, when "not all of the members of the heart are yet illumined by the light of holy grace." It is true that our heart may generate wicked thoughts of its own accord – to the extent of its remembrance of the "not-good." However, this is much more frequently a demonic attack, and it only seems to us that they come from the very heart, for we assimilate them and communicate with them. Moreover, it must be noted that the majority of temptations are tests tolerated by God for the sake of strengthening the will and as a reminder of one's weakness – it is an "educational tolerance." Satan hides inside the soul only before

baptism, but then grace operates still from without, attracting the soul and still only predisposing the soul to good.

Here the dispute is mostly on the psychology of sin – how is one to understand the power that temptations have over Christians? What does the possibility of seduction and fall mean? Baptismal grace bears fruit only in spiritual "ordeal" and in freedom. But the path of sin is from without, through the inclination of the will.

Diadochus does not refer to his adversaries by name – there is mention of the heretical Messalians or Euchites only in the inscriptions of chapters, and these inscriptions are of later origin. It is possible to think that Diadochus had in mind the views of the author of the *Spiritual Homilies* – and even those conclusions which "certain brothers" could draw "in their extreme simplicity" (see Epiphanius of Cyprus).

However, here the dispute is not over the facts of the ascetic experience but only over their interpretations. It must also be added that Diadochus brusquely rejects all sensual visions – fire-like images and voices are the delusions of the enemy. In our corporeal body we are not permitted to see sensually either the Lord or anything celestial. He allows that there can be dreams from God. But even in this case it is best not to receive them and not believe any vision, lest one be mistaken in one's distinctions through the weakness of the soul. One must seek invisible and insensible attestations – and here is a new disagreement with the author of the *Spiritual Homilies*.

The *Capita centum de perfectione spirituali – One Hundred Chapters on Spiritual Perfection* – were exceedingly popular in following generations. They are quoted or cited by St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, the compiler of the *Doctrina Patrum*, Thalassius, and St. Photius. St. John Climacus, St.Simeon the New Theologian, and St. Gregory Palamas were inspired by the work. "It has been rightly remarked that Diadochus, through the association of these different themes: of the formless beauty of the divinity, limiting itself in order to communicate itself to us while remaining itself unlimited, and of the union of the body with the divine vision, appears as one of the clearest precursors of Palamism. He is also the precursor of Hesychasm, which St. Gregory Palamas merely wished to justify in its ascetic practice and mystical orientation. . . Diadochus calls the 'prayer of the heart' the 'memory or remembrance of the Lord'. He already explicitly centers all this on the constant invocation of the name of Jesus, and expects from this practice to gain the vision of the interior light."

Diadochus' work was printed in the Russian *Philokalia*, in a Greek spiritual *florilegium* of the eighteenth-century, and it was an influence on Russian literature.

Other works attributed to Diadochus are still controversial. A *Homily on the Ascension* was published in 1840 by Cardinal Mai. Its style has much in common with the *One Hundred Chapters on Spiritual Perfection*. The *Homily* defends the two natures in Christ and it ends with a Christological statement that is a sharp repudiation of Monophysitism. In the work the end of the Incarnation is seen as the deification of man.

All eleven manuscripts of a work titled *The Vision* – *ὅρασις* – attribute the work to Diadochus. It is a dialogue of a dream, a dream in which the author converses with St. John the Baptist. The topics about which they converse – in question and answer form – are ascetical topics: the essence of contemplation, the nature of Divine appearances, and the nature of the beatific vision. Much is reminiscent of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, especially the section which deals with angelology. The "vision" in glory of God is beautifully described: "Those who are to be judged worthy of it are constantly in the light, always rejoicing, in glory, in the love of God, but incapable of conceiving wherein consists the nature of the light of God that enlightens them. In the same way, indeed, as God limits himself as he wills while remaining unlimited, so also he allows himself to be seen by remaining invisible. and what are we to understand by the virtue of God? A beauty without form that is known only in glory." There is the constant thought that, although we can only fully grasp the heavenly vision after the transfiguration of the body, it is yet reflected on the body when we approach the vision here on earth in "*gnosis*." "The very energy of our spiritual *gnosis* teaches us that there is one natural sense of the soul, later divided into two energies in consequence of Adam's disobedience. But another sense is simple - that which comes to us from the Holy Spirit, which no one can know except those who willingly detach themselves from the advantages of this life in the hope of future blessings, those who by continence scourge the appetite of the corporeal senses. Only in these does the mind move with complete vigor thanks to its detachment, and can sense the Divine goodness in an indescribable way, following which it then communicates its own joy to its very body, according to the degree of its progress, exulting ceaselessly in its confession full of love: 'In him', says the Psalm, 'my heart has hoped, and my flesh has flourished again, and with all my will I shall confess him'. For the joy that then comes to soul and body is an infallible reminder of the incorruptible life."

A work known as *The Catechesis* might be the work not of Diadochus but of St. Simeon the New Theologian (d. 1022). There is much similarity between *The Vision* and *The Catechesis* and both could therefore be the work of one author. *The Catechesis* in its Greek original has only been known since 1952. They could also be the work of Diadochus.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MINOR ASCETIC WRITERS

St. Dorotheus began his monastic "ordeal" in the community founded by Seridon near Gaza. Seridon was the abbot but the actual spiritual leader of the brotherhood was the venerable Barsanuphius (d.c. 540). He lived in strict seclusion and silence – at one time with his friend and disciple John the Perspicacious or the "Prophet" – and communicated with the brethren only through the abbot, and even then only in writing. The venerable Barsanuphius was a charismatic. He had the gift of insight and spiritual power. He did not hold priestly office but he nonetheless absolved the sins of those who sought his aid. Transcripts of his replies – "answers to questions" or "letters" – have been preserved. An excerpt from these was compiled by Dorotheus, who added to them John's replies, as well as the replies of the abbot Zosimus from the environs of Caesarea in Palestine. Barsanuphius was also the author of a work against the errors of Origin and Evagrius.

About 540 Dorotheus founded a monastery of his own, also near Gaza – on the road from Gaza to Maiuma. For the use of the brethren in the monastery Dorotheus wrote a series of *Instructions* – *διδασκαλίαι ψυχωθελεῖς* – on the ascetical life, although not all of the twenty-four items in the standard edition which was put together in the ninth century are by Dorotheus himself. Eight of his letters are also extant.

*The Instruction*s became a model manual in monastic communities. The venerable Theodore the Studite (759-826) valued the work very highly. Dorotheus used literary sources and tried to sum up the tradition which had already taken shape and the ascetical experience which had been accumulated. He dwells little on general issues. His "instructions" are of a practical, often almost everyday, nature.

He is, however, starting from a clear charismatic ideal. The First-Created was a charismatic. In paradise he abided in contemplation and in prayer ,"in every glory and honor." Sin was a defection from contemplation into a "pseudo-natural state" – *εἰς τὴν παράφυσιν* – hence, into death. Dorotheus starts with this.

The God-Man, the New Adam, delivers us from sin and death. In baptism there is the beginning of a new life, the source of freedom for good. However, freedom is only realized in spiritual struggle, in the "ordeal." In the "ordeal" the most important thing is "cutting off one's will," cutting off desires – in other words,

complete subordination and obedience to a chosen spiritual leader. Cutting off the will is the means to apatheia. The causes for worrying because one's desires and passions are not fulfilled disappear. Then the desires themselves die out, and the soul becomes peaceful.

There is created the impression that desires are always fulfilled. Only when man abandons his will does he see God's pure path. Otherwise he will not understand that the ways of God are pure. However, obedience is not only pedagogy or discipline. One has to subordinate one's self to spiritual elders – that is, to charismatics. Thus the very rhythm of communal life is determined by the charismatic ideal. The monk's task is to overcome his passions, to attain inner peace and *apatheia*.

Among the minor ascetical writers we must also mention the elder Isaiah. To him belong twenty-nine addresses to disciples which cover all aspects of the monastic "ordeal" and life. We know of the author from Syrian sources, and from the *Church History* of Zacharias Scholasticus (d. after 536). Zacharias, a native of Maiuma near Gaza, is known as one of the "Gaza Triad," along with Procopius and Aeneas of Gaza. Zacharias later became Bishop of Mitylene. He was also the author of the lives of Severus of Antioch and Peter the Iberian, as well as the author of a work in dialogue form entitled *De Opificio Mundi* which was against the Neoplatonists and a *Disputatio* against the Manichees. His *Church History* is a valuable source for the years 450 to 491.

Isaiah was a hermit from Scete who later moved to Palestine and died about 488 in the vicinity of Gaza. He opposed the Council of Chalcedon, and in his time signed the *Henotikon* – *ἑνωτικόν*– of Emperor Zeno in 482. He was not intolerant, however, and he had peaceful relations with those who supported the Council of Chalcedon. There is nothing manifestly Monophysite in his works. Nonetheless, Patriarch Sophronius subsequently regarded him negatively. St. Theodore the Studite, who was attacked for using Isaiah's "heretical works," was of the opinion that this was another Isaiah.

Strictly speaking, Isaiah was not a Monophysite. His non-acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon signified merely a one-sided loyalty to local Alexandrian traditions. In his addresses he virtually ignores dogmatic themes – however, see his discussion about Adam's nature and Jesus' nature. The basic idea of his ascetical thought was cutting off the will. He wrote primarily for hermits and those who lived in secluded cells.

It is difficult to determine when Hesychius lived. He was a monk from Sinai who wrote *On Becoming Sober* and *On Virtue*.

In any event, this is not Hesychius of Jerusalem, the famous exegete and preacher of the fifth century. Hesychius the ascetic wrote much later – he refers, although vaguely, to the *Heavenly Ladder* by St. John Climacus and to St. Maximus the Confessor.

His work is extremely interesting as one of the early experiments to set forth systematically a doctrine about the Lord's Prayer. It is in it that he sees the goal of the "ordeal." Healing of the soul lies in its freedom from tempting "intentions" and opinions – that is, in an inner freedom, in its "vigil" and "sobriety" – *προσοχή καὶ νῆψις* – in other words, in silence – *ἡσυχία*

Silence signifies a total overcoming of any discussion and freedom from all images, both perceptible and mental – the soul must become "imageless." This silence cannot be attained except through incessant prayer which is not even distracted by the variety of petitions and words of prayers. This must be a "monosyllabic prayer" – *εὐχὴ μονολογιστός*, one simple "summoning of Jesus" – *ἐπίκλησις*. This prayer has its own stages, and gradually the soul rises to contemplation and is illumined by light. Through "elevation in love" it attains visions equal to the angels and the seraphim. Hesychius partially recalls Diadochus.

It is also necessary to note the works of John of Carpathia. Nothing is known about his life. Even the time he lived remains unclear. It would be too hasty to conclude from the fact that St. Photius names him alongside Diadochus and Nilus that he was their contemporary. A number of edifying addresses which are set forth in short "chapters" are known under John's name. First of all are the *Comforting Chapters to the Monks in India*. Then there are the moral "chapters," the "physiologo-ascetic" chapters, and the "gnostic" chapters.

Dating back to the sixth century are the conversations of Simeon the New Stylite. Among the writers of the seventh century it is necessary to name the venerable Antiochus from the *lavra* of the venerable Sabas, the author of the popular *Pandects*, and the venerable Thalassius, who wrote *On Love, On Abstinence and the Spiritual Life*, and who was a friend of St. Maximus. Thalassius' theology of love and of self-love summarizes quite well the view of St. Maximus on the subject. For him self-love is the mother of all sin and it leads to the path of passions.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CORPUS AREOPAGITICUM

THE NATURE OF THE CORPUS

The body of works collected under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite is one of the most enigmatic literary efforts of Christian antiquity. There is no reason to doubt its pseudo-epigraphic character, and there is no way one should see as its author "Dionysius the Areopagite" who was converted by the apostle Paul's sermon in *Acts* 17:34, and who, according to ancient tradition, became the first bishop of Athens (see Eusebius, IV, 23, 4). Testifying against this is not only the total lack of any mention of Dionysius' works before the sixth century, but also the very nature of the text or *corpus*, which is too far removed from the artless simplicity of the earliest Christian epoch both in terms of language and way of thinking. *This was self-evident even before the Areopagiticum's dependence* – both ideologically and literary – on the Neo-Platonic teacher Proclus (410-485) had been unquestionably established. Moreover, the unknown author evidently wanted to create the impression of a man of the apostolic epoch – a disciple of St. Paul, a witness to the eclipse which occurred on the day of the Savior's death, a witness to the Holy Virgin's Assumption, and an associate of the holy apostles. The claim to authentic antiquity is perfectly obvious, and the question of a premeditated "forgery" arises.

However, right up to the Renaissance, no doubts as to the antiquity of the *Areopagiticum* arose either in the East or in the West, with the exception of Hypatius of Ephesus and later that of Patriarch Photius. "The works of the great Dionysius" enjoyed undisputed authority and rendered a strong influence on the development of theological thought in the late Patristic epoch, in the Byzantine epoch, and in the West throughout the Middle Ages. *It hardly seems possible to suppose that the patent anachronisms of the document could have remained unnoticed for all that time* . It is not very likely that people in the sixth century unhesitatingly ascribed the whole developed liturgical rite, including the taking of monastic vows, to the apostolic era – historical memory at that time had not grown *that* weak. In any case, one must not try to explain the fact that the *corpus* was held in such high regard in antiquity merely by claiming that people were convinced it belonged to an authoritative writer of the apostolic era. Its great merits would

sooner have led them to conclude it was ancient than the other way around.

Perhaps it is possible to compare the *Corpus Areopagiticum* with the collection of the so-called *Apostolic Canons* and the so-called *Apostolic Constitutions*. In their final form they date back to a fairly late time. But this circumstance was noted at that time, and its authority repudiated because of extremely late unorthodox interpolations. People had no such reservations about the *Areopagiticum*. Questions about the *Areopagiticum* were first raised only with the beginning of the new philological criticism in the sixteenth century! The first to raise such questions were Gregory of Trebizond and Theodore of Gaza in the East, and, in the West, Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus. After them came Sirmond, Petavius, and Tillemont. These men showed the late origin of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* with perfect clarity. However, not everyone immediately agreed with this conclusion by any means, and one encounters belated defenders of the authenticity and apostolic antiquity of the *Areopagiticum* - even recently. In any case, the collection's origins remain mysterious and unclear to this very day, and to this very day no one has succeeded in saying anything of substance about its real author, where it was written, or the goals of this "forgery." Attempts to identify the imaginary Dionysius with some Dionysius known to us from among the statesmen and writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, or with some other historical figure, particularly with the famous monophysite patriarch Severus of Antioch, *must be regarded as resolutely unsuccessful and arbitrary*.

THE HISTORICAL INFLUENCE OF THE CORPUS AREOPAGITICUM

The significance of the *Areopagiticum* is primarily determined by its historical influence. These works were already in circulation in the early sixth century. The famous Severus of Antioch refers to them at the Council of Tyre in 513, and St. Andrew of Caesarea mentions them in his exegesis on the *Book of Revelation*, a book he wrote between 515 and 520.

Sergius of Resaina, who died about 536, translated the *Areopagiticum* into Syriac. This translation received a wide circulation, especially in Monophysite circles, even though Sergius himself – originally a Monophysite presbyter and at the same time a physician – occupied a rather ambiguous position in the dogmatic disputes, and was even close to the Nestorians. He studied in Alexandria and was Aristotelian in his philosophical sympathies. In

any case he translated Porphyry's *Introduction to the Categories of Aristotle – Εἰσαγωγή* – and, in addition, wrote a number of his own books on logic. His translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian *On the World* is especially characteristic - here he managed to attain great precision and strictness. What is more, Sergius was a mystic, which is evident from the preface to his translation of the *Areopagiticum*. Sergius' name is very characteristic as an indirect indication of the milieu in which the *corpus* primarily circulated.

At the famous talks between the orthodox and the Severians which took place in Constantinople in either 531 or 533, the question of the merits of these works came up. The Severians refer to them but the leader of the orthodox, Hypatius of Ephesus, rejected this reference and declared the *Areopagiticum* to be apocryphal – something which not one of the ancients knew.

But very soon the orthodox began to utilize the *corpus* also. The first interpreter of the *Areopagiticum* was John of Scythopolis (ca. 530-540). Apparently it is his *Scholia* which are known under the name of St. Maximus the Confessor. Later copyists brought together the *Scholia* of different interpreters but the diacritics disappeared with the passage of time. The *corpus* of *Scholia* known under the name of St. Maximus presents us with a rather homogeneous whole. Not many *Scholia* at all display a style reminiscent of the venerable Maximus. The *Scholia* of John of Scythopolis were translated into Syriac in the eighth century by Bar-Sergius of Edessa. Even earlier in the seventh century Joseph of Hadzaia, "the Contemplator," who is better known under the name of Ebed-Jesus, undertook the interpretation of the *Areopagiticum*. An Arabic translation of the *Areopagiticum*, which also received Church approval, was made from the official Syriac text. An Armenian translation was made in the seventh century. The remnants of a Coptic translation should also be mentioned. All of this bears witness to the wide circulation and authority of *corpus*. Leontius of Byzantium, and later Anastasius of Sinai and Sophronius of Jerusalem are some of the orthodox theologians who make use of the *Areopagiticum*. These documents rendered a strong influence on the venerable Maximus the Confessor, who worked on an explanation of the "difficult passages" in the *Areopagiticum* and in the works of St. Gregory of Nazianzus. For St. John of Damascus, the "great Dionysius" is an undisputed authority. Also relying upon the *Areopagiticum*, as upon a reliable foundation, are the defenders of the veneration of icons, the iconodules, particularly St. Theodore the Studite (759-826), who come forth at the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 and following the Seventh Ecumenical Council when the controversy over icons

still raged. With St. Theodore the Studite, all the metaphysics of icons are tied up with Dionysius' thought and he sings the praises of the profundity of Dionysius' theology. St. Cyril, the Apostle to the Slavs and a disciple of St. Photius, speaks of the *corpus* with respect. According to Anastasius the Librarian, St. Cyril would quote "the great Dionysius" by heart. Later countless persons in Byzantium were engaged in interpretation of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* and the work became a sort of reference book for Byzantine theologians. These interpretations have not yet been collected and remain unstudied to this day. We must make special note of the interpretations of the famous Michael Psellus (1018-1079) and George Pachymeres (1242-1310). The paraphrases of the latter, like the *Scholia* ascribed to St. Maximus, have adhered to the text itself in the manuscripts. Further evidence of the *Areopagiticum's* popularity in the fourteenth century, in the era of a new mystical renaissance in Byzantium in the age of St. Gregory Palamas, is the Slavic - Bulgarian - translation which was commissioned by Theodosius, the Metropolitan of Serres in southern Macedonia and done by the Athos monk Isaiah in 1371. From the Euthymian group in Bulgaria it was transported to *Rus*, probably by the metropolitan Cyprian - a manuscript copy in his hand has been preserved, along with other texts of ascetic and mystical literature.

The *Areopagiticum* was taken to the West very early. The first to refer to them in the West is Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604), who popularized the mystical doctrines in the corpus, especially the angelology. Pope Martin I appealed to the writings as authentic at the First Lateran Council in 649. Pope Agatho (c. 577-681) refers to the *Areopagiticum* in a letter which was read at the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680/681) in Constantinople. Anastasius the Librarian translated the *Scholia* of John of Scythopolis and St. Maximus the Confessor.

The *Areopagiticum* became particularly well-respected in France, thanks to the erroneous identification of the pseudo-Dionysius with Dionysius of Paris. In 757 a copy of Dionysius' works was sent by Pope Paul I (pontificate from 757-767), along with some other books, to Pepin the Short, the Frankish king. In 827 the Byzantine emperor Michael II (820-829) gave an excellent copy to king Louis [Ludwig] the Pious. Not many people among the Franks knew Greek at this time. In the monastery of St. Denis the abbot Gilduin (d. 840) translated the *Areopagiticum* into Latin but his translation did not receive a wide circulation. It was forced into the background by the translation by the famous John Scotus Eriugena about 858, at the request of Charles the Bald. By his own

admission John Scotus Eriugena used for his translation the works of St. Maximus the Confessor which he also translated. John Scotus Eriugena's knowledge of Greek was not above reproach and there are quite a few gross misunderstandings in his translations. But the influence of Dionysius and St. Maximus the Confessor on Eriugena's own system of thought – he was one of the most remarkable thinkers of the early Middle Ages – was exceptionally strong.

The *Areopagiticum* was very influential in the West throughout the Medieval period. This is already evident in Anselm (1033-1109). Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141) occupies himself with an interpretation of the *Celestial Hierarchy* (using Eriugena's translation). In general, Hugh of St. Victor's mystical theories are very closely connected with the mysticism of the pseudo-Dionysius. Peter Lombard (c.1100-1160) regarded the *Areopagiticum* as an unquestionable authority. John the Saracene in the twelfth century, and Thomas of Vercelli and Robert Grosseteste in the thirteenth century translated the *Areopagiticum* and added commentaries. Albert the Great (d. 1280) comments on all the works of pseudo-Dionysius.

Thomas Aquinas also regards these works with great respect. In Thomas Aquinas' *Summa* there are 1,700 quotations from the *Areopagiticum* – this *corpus* and the works of St. John of Damascus were his main sources from eastern patristic thought. To Aquinas also belongs a special commentary on the book *On the Divine Names*.

Bonaventura, too, was greatly influenced by the *Areopagiticum*. He wrote a special interpretation of the book *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. In general, in the Middle Ages pseudo-Dionysius was the most powerful and most respected authority for representatives of all schools of thought in all centuries. People also go back to pseudo-Dionysius in debates about the objective reality and properties of God; in teaching about cognition and contemplation of God; in questions of ascetics; and in interpretation of the liturgy. The influence of the *Areopagiticum* is felt throughout liturgical literature and in the monuments of medieval art. The famous Dionysius the Carthusian (1402-1471), *Doctor Ecstaticus*, sums up the medieval literature on this topic in his extensive commentaries.

The influence of the *Areopagiticum* is very strongly felt among the German and Flemish mystics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, especially on Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1327) and Jan van Ruysbroeck (1293-1381), and on the unknown author of the famous book *On the Imitation of Christ*, often ascribed to Thomas à

Kempis (c. 1380-1471). In the new mystical and speculative experience, the traditions of the mysterious contemplation of ancient times are once again reviving. In his philosophical constructions Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) is connected to the *Areopagiticum*. The famous Florentine Platonic philosopher Marsilius Ficinus (1433-1499) was working on a translation of the *corpus*.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) raised sharp questions about pseudo-Dionysius - he considered the *Areopagiticum* apocryphal and saw in its author a dangerous dreamer. About the same time Erasmus (c. 1469-1536), following Lorenzo Valla, came out with proof of the late origin of the *corpus*. But the *Areopagiticum's* influence did not abate. Roman Catholic theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries continued to argue that the text was authentic – see, for example, Leonhard Lessius (1554-1623); Cardinal Cesare Baronius (1538-1607); and the famous publisher of the *Areopagiticum*, Corderius.

Mystics such as Angelus Silesius (1624-1677) and to some extent the Quietists continued to take their inspiration from it. It would not be an exaggeration to say that without the influence of the *Areopagiticum* the entire history of medieval mysticism and philosophy would be incomprehensible. The *Areopagiticum* was a lively and important source, though not the only one, of Platonism; that is, Neo-Platonism, in the Middle Ages.

IN QUEST OF THE AUTHOR

One is forced to form a judgment about the author of the *Areopagiticum* through his works alone. The *Corpus Areopagiticum* consists of the following: (1) *On the Celestial Hierarchy – Περὶ τῆς οὐρανίας ἱεραρχίας* – which is a description of the celestial world; (2) *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy – Περὶ τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱεραρχίας* – which is a description and interpretation of the Church liturgy; (3) *On the Divine Names – Περὶ θείων ὀνομάτων* – which is a work about God's properties; (4) *The Mystical Theology – Περὶ μυστικῆς θεολογίας* – which is a discussion about the ineffability and unknowableness of God's essence; and (5) a set of ten letters to various persons, primarily on dogmatic themes. In addition, the text contains references to a whole series of other works by the same author; however, this is most probably a simple literary fiction. Letters signed by the Areopagite which have been preserved only in Latin translation and

letters which were discovered in Syriac and Armenian translations, belong to other authors.

The *Areopagiticum* bears the stamp of late Neo-Platonism, especially in its language. The author uses an especially original and very refined theological terminology. However, the Neo-Platonic influence does not swallow it up entirely and does not overwhelm it. The author is not so much a thinker as he is a contemplator, and speculative audacity is curbed in him from within by the pathos of ineffability and a keen liturgical sense. Speculation is there only in a preliminary stage. There are some grounds for viewing the author as a monk – in any case he is a very enthusiastic supporter of monastic intellectual activity, and a defender of hierarchic authority. *One should seek his homeland in the East, and in Syria rather than Egypt.* The author lives in an era of intense Christological disputes but does not dwell on Christological topics in any detail – it is as if he is avoiding these themes. This explains why the *Areopagiticum* was so popular among the Severians.

The author of the *Areopagiticum* is not so much a theologian as a contemplative observer and liturgist. He transfers the center of gravity in Christian life to the liturgy and the sacraments. The influence of the *Areopagiticum* was felt strongest of all in the mystical and symbolical explanation of the liturgy and liturgical actions, both in Byzantine and Latin medieval liturgical literature. However, this interpretation does not begin with Dionysius – he is continuing and systematizing a tradition which had already taken shape. One cannot but agree that his terminology recalls the usage of the Greek mysteries. However, this language was openly and consciously mastered and transformed in the Church at the very beginning – in any case, second century Alexandrians spoke this language, as did fourth century theologians.

The author of the *Areopagiticum* is very well read – both in Hellenistic philosophy and Church literature. He apparently knew the works of the Cappadocians well; he also knew well the works of Clement of Alexandria, not just Proclus. These patristic connections of the pseudo-Dionysius deserve special attention. In his Neo-Platonism he is by no means an innovator – he attaches himself to the already developed Christian tradition, and he primarily summarizes it with a genuine systematic scope and great dialectic vigor and poignancy.

THE THEOLOGICAL VISION

The Ways to Knowledge of God

In his doctrine on the knowledge of God the author of the *Areopagiticum* follows the Cappadocians – primarily St. Gregory of Nyssa. In His transsubstantial existence, "through his own principle or property," God is unknowable and inscrutable. He is above any idea and any name, above all definitions, "above mind, essence and knowledge." It is impossible to feel, imagine, comprehend, or name him. The inner Divine Life is entirely concealed from created scrutiny and exceeds any measure which is accessible to or can be accommodated by created reason. But this does not mean that God is far removed from the world or that he conceals himself from reasoning spirits. God is revealed and acts and is present in creatures – a creature exists and abides and lives by virtue of this Divine omnipresence. God is present in the world not in hiss own essence, which always remains unattainable, unknowable, and ineffable, but in his "works" and his goodness, which come from the incommunicable God as an abundant current and which gives communion to that which exists. He abides in the world in his "creative emanations" and "beneficial providences," *in his powers and energies*. In his self-revelation to the world, God is cognizable and comprehensible. This means that God is comprehensible only through revelation. "In general," warns Dionysius, "one should not think, or say, anything about the transsubstantial and hidden Godhead except that It is revealed to us in the Logos of God." There is, however, another revelation. This is the world itself, for in a certain sense the entire world is a certain image of God and is entirely permeated with Divine energies. And in God there is a "creative prototype" of the world, through participation in which the world has objective reality. God is cognizable and comprehensible in that visage which is open to the world. In other words, God is cognized and comprehended in his relationship with the world or with all creation – precisely in this relationship, and only in this relationship. Cognition never penetrates to the hidden and ineffable depths of Divine life. God can be comprehended and described in two ways: either by contrasting him sharply and resolutely with the world; that is, by denying all phrases and definitions referring to him which are proper and fitting for creation – which means each and every one; or by elevating all definitions applied to creation – and again, each and every one. Thus there are two ways open to cognition of God

and to theology: *the way of positive or cataphatic theology*; and *the way of negative or apophatic theology*. The apophatic way is higher – only it can lead into that Divine darkness which is how the Light unapproachable appears to creation.

The way of contrasting God with the world demands negation. It is impossible to say anything affirmative about God, for any affirmation is partial, thereby giving rise to limitations. In any affirmation something else is silently excluded and a certain limit is supposed. In this sense it is possible and necessary to say that He is Nothing, *ἀυτὸ ὃ μὴ ὄν* – for he is not something particular or limited. He is above everything definite and every individual thing. He is above every limitation, above every definition and affirmation, and therefore above every negation as well. The apophatic "not" should not be misinterpreted and consolidated cataphatically – it is synonymous with "above" (or "beyond" and "besides"); it signifies neither limitation or exception but elevation and superiority. "Not" is not in the system of created names but is opposed to this whole system, and even to the very categories of cosmic cognition. This is a completely original "not," a symbolic "not" – a "not" of incommensurability, not of limitation. The Godhead is not subject to perceptible and spatial definitions; it does not have an outline, or form, or quality, or quantity, or volume. The Godhead is above all speculative names and definitions. God is not soul, nor reason, nor imagination, nor opinion, nor thought, nor life. He is neither word nor idea – and therefore he is not perceived by either word or idea. In this sense God is not a "subject" of cognition. He is *above* cognition. He is not a number, nor order, nor magnitude, nor a trifle, nor equality or similarity, or inequality or dissimilarity. He is not power, nor color, nor life, nor time, nor an era, nor knowledge, nor truth, nor a kingdom, nor wisdom, nor unity. God in this sense is God the Nameless, *Θεὸς ἀνώνυμος*. He is above everything – "nothing which exists and nothing which does not exist," "everything in everything, and nothing in nothing." Therefore the way to cognition is the way of abstraction and negation, the way of simplification and falling silent, so as to cognize God "as something removed from that which exists." This is the way of the ascetic. He begins with a "purification," *κάθαρσις*. Pseudo-Dionysius describes *catharsis* ontologically, not psychologically. This is a liberation from any kind of admixture – that is, a "simplification" of the soul or, to put it differently, a "*gathering of the soul*," a "uniform gathering" or concentration, an "entry into one's self," an abstraction from any cognition, from all images, perceptible and intellectual. This is also

a certain soothing of the soul – we cognize God only when the spirit is at rest, the repose of ignorance.

This apophatic ignorance is rather supra-knowledge – not the absence of knowledge but perfect knowledge and therefore *incommensurate* with any partial cognition. This ignorance is a contemplation, and it is something greater than merely contemplation. God is cognized not from afar, not through meditating *about him* but through an incomprehensible union *with* him, ἕνωσις. This is possible only through *ecstasy*, through *stepping beyond* all limits, through a kind of spiritual frenzy. This means entering a certain sacred darkness, the "darkness of ignorance," the "darkness of silence." This "stepping out" is true cognition, but it is cognition without words and ideas and therefore an incommunicable cognition, which is accessible only to him who has attainted it – and not even entirely accessible to him, for no one can even describe it to himself. Higher cognition is revealed "in the darkness of ignorance," which the soul enters at high levels: "the highest cognition of God is that which is attained through ignorance, by means of a union which transcends reason, *when reason*, having separated from everything which exists and then abandoning itself, *combines with rays* which beam on high, whence and where it is enlightened in the incomprehensible abyss of wisdom." It is not the mind, a word, or wisdom because it is the *cause* of the mind, words, and wisdom. This is the region of mysterious silence and speechlessness. The region in which thought is inactive and the soul touches God, feels the Godhead. It is drawn to him in love and prays and sings – ὑμνεῖ. One has to climb higher and higher, pass all the sacred summits, abandon all heavenly sounds, lights, and words – and enter into "the mysterious darkness of ignorance" where truly that One resides Who is above and beyond everything. Such was the path of the holy Moses.

Pseudo-Dionysius cites the same exemplary model of ecstasy as St. Gregory of Nyssa (following Philo). In such mystical contemplation Dionysius sees the source and goal of any genuine cognition of God. On the heights the mind has to fall silent, and it will never have the power to relate the ineffable words it has heard there. This does not mean that logical attempts at reflective cognition are impossible or iniquitous. It is not the final cognition – and for it a higher measure lies in revealing and acknowledging its dynamic approximateness. All human notions or definitions of the Godhead are rather an attempt to reason. However, they are not empty and not unfounded. God is comprehended through ecstasy,

through leaving and going beyond the world. But this "beyond" does not have a spatial meaning.

Therefore, cognition of God *beyond* the world does not exclude cognition *within* the world and through the world. The Divine mystery and inaccessibility of the Godhead do not signify concealment. On the contrary, God *is revealed*. Mystical and apophatic theology ("mystical theology") does not exclude revelation. This is "ascension" because it is possible that God "descends," is revealed, *appears*. One can define the basic theme of the theology of the *Areopagiticum* as a theme about God and Revelation, a theme about "appearances of God," about *theophanies*. Hence the shift to cataphatic theology.

According to Dionysius cataphatic theology is possible because the whole world, everything that exists, is a kind of image or depiction of God. "We cognize God not from his nature, which is unknowable and transcends any thought and reason, but from the order of all things which he has established, which contains certain images and similarities to Divine prototypes – ascending to him who is found far above everything by a special way and order, through abstraction from everything and elevation over everything." This is not inferring the cause of the effect; *nor is it judging about God through the world*, but rather contemplation of the prototype in the images: *contemplation of God in the world*. For everything which creation has, it has through its "communion" with Divine acts and energies which descend and pour out into the world. Everything which exists, exists only to the extent that this communion exists. In cataphatic cognition or knowledge of God we ascend to God as to the Cause of everything. But for pseudo-Dionysius the Cause is revealed or appears in that which has been created. God's creative or causal act is the *Divine appearance – the theophany*. Any Divine revelation is a *theophany*, a presence, an appearance. Therefore, there is something direct and intuitive in cataphatic cognition or knowledge of God.

Cataphatic definitions and judgments never reach the very transsubstantial essence of God. They speak of God in the world, about the relationship of God to the world, about God in revelation. This does not weaken their cognitive realism. The basic concept of cataphatic theology is providence – *πρόνοια*. As Dionysius understands it, "providence" is a kind of movement or "stepping out" of God into the world – *προόδος* – a descent into the world, and returning to himself – the Divine *ἐπιστροφή* – a kind of rotation or movement of Divine love. Providence is a certain completely real Divine omnipresence – with his providence, God is present in everything and, as it were, becomes everything for the

sake of universal salvation and good. God, as it were, *steps out of himself* – immutably and continually he steps into the world, although in this constant action of his, he remains motionless and immutable. He remains in the perfect identity and simplicity of his own reality – *the same and different*.

In Divine providence abiding and mobility, motionlessness and motion – στάσις καὶ κίνησις – mysteriously coincide. This is expressed by the Neoplatonic symbol of the circle, in the center of which all rays come together – the "image of the mind," according to Proclus. God eternally steps down, abides, and returns. For Dionysius, God's abiding and motion do not signify any mixture or dissolution. It does not signify, Dionysius explains, any "change" or "transformation" but only that God created everything, brought it into being, and contains it, mysteriously enveloping and embracing everything with his multifarious providence.

In its descent to its communicants God's goodness does not leave its essential immutability. The Godhead is supra-essentially separated, "withdrawn" from the world – this is the final and definitive boundary, the last gap – *hiatus* or *trans*, uncrossable – ὑπὲρ

The Divine powers and energies are many and varied, and Dionysius simply calls them distinguishing marks – διακρίσεις. But the great number of Divine gifts and acts do not violate the unity and identity of Divine existence. In his acts God has many names, but in the immutable and inalterable simplicity of his objective reality, he is above every word and name, and the closer one gets to God himself, the more the human tongue pales and words become scarce.

Among the Divine names Dionysius places *goodness* – τὸ ἀγαθόν – in the first rank. Because of his goodness God creates, establishes, gives life, and accomplishes everything. Doing good is a property of the good. Just as a light's life-giving rays extend in all directions from its source, so does the Supreme Good illumine everything that exists with its unchanging radiance, and gives off its supra-essential and life-giving rays – the "rays of complete goodness" in all directions. The sun is only the visible and remote image of the Divine and Spiritual Light. The Light is the image of Good. Everything that exists strives for this resplendent light and gravitates towards it. Everything exists and lives only through communion with this resplendent illumination, and to the extent that it accommodates it – that is, insofar as it is permeated by the rays of the spiritual and intelligent light. Moreover, these light-bearing rays can be called "the rays of Divine Darkness," for they blind with the

force of their uncontainable light – the "inaccessible light" of the Godhead is a darkness which is rendered impenetrable by the excessiveness of the imparted illumination.

Here Dionysius is even literally close to Proclus and is reproducing the Neoplatonic metaphysics of light. However, these metaphysics and the language connected with the metaphysics were assimilated by Church theology much earlier. After all, it was St. Gregory of Nazianzus who said that "God in the intellectual world is like the sun in the perceptible one." All Christian symbolism is permeated with these metaphysics of light – the roots and beginnings of which are much deeper than Neoplatonism.

Good, as an intelligent and all-penetrating light, is the beginning of unity. Ignorance is the beginning of division. The spiritual light, which dispels the darkness of foolishness, gathers everything together, and brings fragmenting doubts to unified knowledge which is true, pure, and simple. The light is unity and begets unity. The rays create unity. God is unity, or better, supra-unity – a unity which brings everything together into one, which unites and reunites everything. Divine unity first of all signifies the perfect simplicity and indivisibility of Divine existence. God is called "simple" or "single" because in his indivisible simplicity he abides above any multitudinousness, even though he is the Creator of all things. He is above not only multitudinousness, but also singleness, as well as any number in general. Moreover, he is the beginning, and the cause, and the measure of any numeration, for any numeration presupposes unity and multitudinousness can exist only within the bounds of a higher unity. The world exists through the perfect unity of Divine providence. All objective reality gravitates towards a single focus, from which radiate the Divine powers which contain it – and here lies the basis of it stability. This is not external dependence or forced attraction but the attraction of love. Everything heads for God as for its cause and goal, for everything proceeds from him, everything returns to him, and exists through him and in him. Everything rushes towards him, for everything proceeds from his love, for he is Blessing and Beauty – and it is fitting that Blessing and Beauty be the object of attraction and love. Divine love envelops the lovers like a kind of ecstasy – *ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐκστατικὸς ὁ θεῖος ἔρως*. This love is kindled by God himself – with the tender breath of his goodness. Blessing is given off in love. Blessing attracts and is revealed as the object of love. This love is also the beginning of order and harmony – a simple and self-propelled force which draws everything towards unity, towards "a certain unity-creating dissolution." As Blessing, God is Love, and therefore he is also Beauty, for Blessing and

Beauty coincide in the single cause of all existence. The stamp of Divine Beauty is on all of creation. Flowing forth to us from the Father of lights is a unity-creating force which elevates us to simplicity and union with God.The Divine Light never loses its unity in its fragmentation "in order to dissolve with mortals in a dissolution which raises them on high and unites them with God." Being simple and single in his motionless and lonely identity, God also creates unity for the illumined, although he shines forth under multifarious sacred and mysterious covers.

God is perfect Beauty, Supra-Beauty, Omni-Beauty, without beginning and end, without any defect or flaw – the source and prototype of every beauty and all beauties. As Blessing, God is the beginning of everything. As Beauty, God is the end of everything, for everything exists for his sake and receives from him its beauty; that is, its proportion and measure. Following Plato (and Proclus), Dionysius produces *κάλλος* from *καλοῦν*, "to call, summon," and repeats the Platonic idea of beauty as the object of attraction. It is precisely beauty which kindles love. Dionysius describes self-existing beauty with the same words that Plato puts into Socrates' mouth in *The Symposium*. This is beauty which exists in and of itself, and has existed eternally, "something which has always existed, which is not born and does not perish, does not grow larger or smaller, is not here sublime and there ugly," something which "as existing in and of itself, has always had the same appearance and is eternal."

The beginning of every existence and order lies in this supreme beauty, for a single beauty attracts, unifies, and coordinates everything. Hence, all connections, all similarity, and all agreement in objective reality. Hence, measure and movement, heterogeneity and simplicity. Being above any division or multitude, God brings everything to himself as a higher, longed-for beauty and blessing.

In Dionysius' thought such a tight connection between beauty and love is another Platonic and Neoplatonic motif which has been assimilated by all of Christian asceticism, particularly in the later period. In addition, the metaphysical "sensuality" of Hellenism fuses with the Biblical – as it is expressed in the *Song of Songs* – in this symbolic epitome of religious love. Here Dionysius is a successor of St. Gregory of Nyssa, who in turn is repeating Origen. This is a long-standing idea which had already become traditional. In Dionysius, it was reinforced by another typically Hellenistic doctrine – the doctrine of the cosmic force of love and the cosmic significance of beauty.

Love is the force of connection and unity and, as love and beauty, God is the Provider, Creator, and Prototype of the world.

God is everything, since he is not any particular thing, for everything is contained in God within its "created foundations" and "prototypes." God is the highest Beginning of everything real, the implementing Cause, the supporting Force, and the final Goal of everything" – *ἀρχή καὶ τέλος, Α καὶ Ω*. The creative and determining bases of everything – *ὑποθέτικοι λόγοι* – preexist *indivisibly* in God, concordant with which the Supra-Real predetermines and produces everything. These "predeterminations" are "prototypes" – *παραδείγματα* – which, moreover, are Divine and All-Good predeterminations. According to the interpretations of the scholiasts, these are the "perfect and eternal thoughts of the eternal God." According to St. John of Damascus' explanation, this is "everlasting Divine advice." This is an image of the world in God, as well as God's volition about the world. This is a certain world of ideas, although it is not a self-existing, self-sufficient world. Rather, it exists within God and reveals him to the world. It is the face of God, as it were, which is turned towards the world. And it shines brightly, and these "rays" or "energies" enter the very world, penetrate it, create and preserve it, and give it life. These "prototypes" are the living and life-giving providence of God, the "creative energies" of God.

This is not an intellectual world dreamily contemplated in the inaccessible distance, but a world of forces, a living, Almighty force. *Here lies the essential difference between Dionysius and Plato.* On the other hand, these "prototypes" are not things themselves but precisely the prototypes of things or paradigms. In some sense the things are connected with and similar to them, but only as to something higher and different – *μέθεξις, μίμησις. In this lies the difference between Dionysius and Neoplatonic emanation.* What is more, in a certain sense the Divine "definitions" of things are tasks – not only "prototypes" but also "goals." Therefore, movement in the world, attraction, and striving are both possible and necessary. The world does not only reflect or represent the Divine "prototype," it *has* to reflect it. The prototype is not only a "paradigm" but also a "*telos*" – an "end" or "completion" – *ὡς τελικὸν αἴτιον*. Implementation or "fulfillment" – *τελείωσις* – presupposes co-participation, "imitation" – *θεοῦ συνεργὸν γενέσθαι*. The beginning does not fully coincide with the end – between them is a dynamic interval. "Reflection" and "imitation" do not coincide.

For Dionysius the main thing is that all definitions and qualities of that which exists go back to God – otherwise, how could they exist? In his relation to them, God is not only the external cause but

also a kind of prototype, so that to a certain extent ("analogically") everything is his "image." Therefore, one can and must shift the ontological definition of that which exists to the Supra-Real, as to the end, the purpose, the goal, the limit. The world exists and *is* because God is objective reality – in it the objective reality of the world is a Divine image. The world lives because God is Life, and the world's life is a kind of communion with Divine Life. Existence is a Divine gift from God, and the first of his gifts. All qualities are also Divine gifts. They all reflect God to a certain extent "for otherwise it would not exist if it were not connected with the essence and beginning of everything that exists." "The objective reality of everything lies in the objective reality of the Godhead." To a certain extent, everything is connected with the Godhead. Therefore it is possible to affirm everything about God, for he is the beginning and the end, the purpose and endless foundation of everything.

Nothing, however – neither the temporary nor the invariable – reflects God entirely. God is above everything. Therefore all names taken from his "providence" are only metaphorically fitting for him. God is essence and the Real – rather, the Supra-Real. God is life, for he is the source of life. But he is Supra-Life, for he is Life itself, and all life flows from him. God is Wisdom, Reason, Intellect, Truth. God is the Energy or Power and Source of all power and energy – the Power which maintains everything, and affirms, and therefore saves everything. By virtue of his providential presence in everything, God is the salvation of everything. Along with that God is Truth, the Truth of everything and about everything because all order and structure go back to him, and God relates to everything in conformity with its worth.

Everything is connected to the Godhead, but to a different extent and in different ways. Inanimate things are connected insofar as they *are* – to the extent of their *objective reality*. Living things are connected to the extent of their life. Reasoning beings are connected to God's All-Perfect *Wisdom*.

All these multitudinous names taken from Divine providence are inadequate by virtue of their very multitudinousness, for God is essentially One. All things speak of God, and not one says enough. All bear witness to him, and not one reveals him. All cataphatic names speak of his "energies" and "providence" but not of his essence. In the multitudinousness of his theophanies and his "going out of himself," God remains invariable. The multitudinousness of the Divine names signifies the multitudinousness of his deeds, without violating the essential simplicity and supra-multitudinousness of his Existence.

Here cataphatic theology shifts back to the apophatic. One can and must deny everything that can be said about God because nothing is commensurate with him, and he is above everything. But he is above not only affirmations but negations as well, for he is the *fullness* of everything. Being all-named, God is nameless as well. Being everything in everything, he is also nothing in nothing.

Dionysius makes a distinction between general Divine names, which he applies to the entire Holy Trinity, and *hypostatic* names. All the definitions of apophatic and cataphatic theology are general names. All providential names designate the indivisible activity of the Supra-Essential Trinity. All these names speak of the Unity of the Godhead. Dionysius draws a distinction between these general names and (1) the names of the Trinitarian Hypostases, which designate special properties of the Divine Persons; (2) all names connected with the Incarnation. Dionysius speaks briefly and fleetingly of the Trinitarian dogma. It is not difficult to see, however, that the sharp emphasis on the generality of all Divine names is a concealed profession of complete consubstantiality. The Persons of the Holy Trinity are distinguished from one another, and the Father alone is the *essential* source of Divinity. The personal names of the Divine Hypostases are apophatic because Divine Fatherhood and Sonship are incommensurately higher than that birth which we know and understand. The Holy Spirit, the source of any deification of spiritual existence, is higher than any created spirit. The Son and the Spirit are like two miraculous fruits of the Father's fecundity – but all of this is above speech and thought. It should be added that Dionysius emphasizes that the Trinitarian nature and unity of God are of a supra-numerical nature, for God is beyond measure and number.

The Structure and Order of the World

Cataphatic theology, as a doctrine about Divine Providence, is at the same time a cosmology. Dionysius defines the image of the world, first of all, as an idea of order and harmony, or *εὐταξία*, as an idea of Divine peace. The basis for this peace is to be found in the ineffable tranquillity of Divine Life, which is revealed in world harmony and order. God is the God of peace. Everything in the world is well-structured and harmonious, and everything is made and coordinated; and for all of that, nothing loses its originality but is composed in living harmony. This peace is the Divine stamp on the world. It is proclaimed first of all in "hierarchy," in the hierarchical structure of the world. A hierarchy, according to Dionysius' definition, is "a holy rite, a knowledge and an activity,

which as far as possible becomes like Divine beauty and which, when illumined from on high, leads to possible "imitation of God." The aim of the hierarchy is "possible comparison with God and union with him." "It imprints the image of God within itself and makes its communicants Divine likenesses, the clearest and the purest mirrors, so that they begin to reflect and impart to those below them the Divine radiance they have received." This is what the Divine hierarchy consists of.

Divine Beauty is highest of all – it is higher than everything sacred and is the cause of any sacred rite. Everything strives for this as much as possible so as to become assistants of God, and "as much as possible to reveal in themselves Divine activity," through imitation of God. The rite of the hierarchy demands that some enlighten and perfect, and others be enlightened and perfected. The higher must impart their illumination and purity to the lower. The Beginning of the hierarchy is the Holy Trinity, the source of life and unity. The hierarchy is the graded order of the world. There are levels in the world, gradations which are defined by the degree of proximity to God. God is everything in everything, but not equally in everything. According to its nature, not everything is equally close to God. But among these entities, which seem to be constantly receding, there is a living, unbroken connection, and everyone exists for others, so that only the fullness of everything realizes the goal of the world.

Everything strives for God but strives through an intermediary, through a means of narrower entities. The lower entities can not ascend to God except with the assistance of the higher ones. Dionysius is quite strict about maintaining this stairway principle. Thus order is rendered by a path and action. The goal of the hierarchy is to love God and commune with him.

God created everything for himself; that is, for blessing and bliss, for peace and beauty, so that everything would strive for him and, in joining with him, communicate with him, unite together inwardly. One can observe this reciprocity, this attraction, roused and moved by love and beauty, all throughout the world, right up to non-existence. It is proclaimed both in the external world and in the inner life of the soul. Everything gravitates to a single focal point; all lines converge in a single center like opposite radiants.

However, does not a false harmony arise in this process? Have not we overlooked the existence of evil? Perhaps Dionysius has too brief an answer to this question. God cannot be the cause of evil. Good always begets good. Therefore, evil "is not any sort of objective reality." It has a completely deprivative significance. Evil exists not in and of itself, but in another; evil is something

incidental for objective reality, something extra which does not enter into its essential definitions. Evil only destroys and therefore presupposes objective reality and good. Evil does not create anything and is not the authentic beginning of origins.

Therefore there can be no pure, unadulterated evil; there can be no "self-evil." Evil always presupposes good as its foundation and support. As creations of God, the demons themselves are not evil by nature; there is something positive in them – reality, movement, life. Evil cannot be an independent principle, for then it would have to be invariable. However, invariability and self-identity are properties only of good. Evil is a wasting disease and similar to darkening, but light always remains light and also shines in the dark without turning into darkness.

Nothing which exists is evil as such – neither is matter evil. Evil is disharmony, disorder, *ἀταξία* But pure disharmony is impossible and a total absence of form and order is tantamount to non-existence. Matter is not total chaos – it is connected with order and forms. It has the power of birth and preservation.

Not matter as such, but an attraction for what is lower, is the reason for evil in the soul. By itself, matter cannot hinder souls from striving for good. The beginning and end of evil things lies in good. In other words, evil does not so much exist as "be present"; it exists in and upon something else. Evil is parasitical; its cause is impotence – *ἀσθένεια*. In all evil deeds and phenomena we see primarily feebleness. Evil is a certain stepping out of the measures of nature and objective reality, a "defection from true goodness," an unjust and improper action, a certain "blending of the dissimilar."

In his discussion of the existence and causes of evil, pseudo-Dionysius follows Proclus almost literally. Proclus' book on evil has come down to us only in the Latin translation by William of Moerbeke, the Latin archbishop of Corinth in the thirteenth century – *De malorum subsistentia*. However, one should not forget that the Neoplatonic point of view about evil was already customary for theological thought – it is enough to recall St. Gregory of Nyssa. Pseudo-Dionysius' definitions, which he took from Proclus, coincide with St. Gregory's at least in terms of meaning.

In the thought of Dionysius the final fate of evil remains unclear. Will the impotence of evil improve at some time? Will the harmonic fullness of existence, which is violated by evil as if by deprivation, be fulfilled? Or is evil paradoxically entering into harmony and order, even though it is a false face and a semi-illusory accident which exists by virtue of good and for the sake of good? Dionysius does not argue here to the end. But it is very

characteristic that he speaks of evil only in passing, in, as it were, parentheses.

Above the ladder of creatures stand the celestial ranks of angels – "the innumerable blessed host of supra-terrestrial minds." Their perfection is determined by a high and preferential degree of communion with God, which is accessible to them and characteristic of them. Through the pure spirituality of their nature, they are closest of all to God and are therefore the intermediaries of his revelation to the world, the heralds of his will and his mysteries.

The name "angels," which is applied to the whole celestial world, expresses this service. In the strict sense of the word it is only the name of one of the heavenly ranks, the lowest one. By their very nature, not only because of their perfection, angels are higher than men. It is for this reason that God's revelation is accomplished through them, and only through them. "The work of any hierarchy is divided into sacredly receiving true purification, the Divine light, and perfecting knowledge themselves and then imparting it to others." The angels were the leaders of the righteous men of the Old Testament; the law was given to Moses through the angels; the archangel Gabriel brought the mysterious news to Zechariah and Mary; the angels gave the news to Joseph and the shepherds of Bethlehem.

The celestial world itself has a hierarchical structure, and not all the angelic ranks possess Divine enlightenment to an equal extent. Here the lower ranks receive from the higher. As Dionysius sees it, the angelic world is a united whole and also a stairway. He mentions that knowledge and perfection "gradually weaken as they pass to the lower ranks." To a certain extent, all angels are privy to the Godhead and the Light imparted therefrom. Even so, however, the higher ones are intermediaries and leaders of the lower; they constantly take part in the providential power, and they themselves have the light and powers of the lower ones. But the lower ranks do not have what belongs to the higher ones. The mysteries of the supra-celestial minds are not accessible to them – only to the extent that "God is revealed to us through these angels themselves as those who know themselves" – that is, to the same extent as the angelic appearances "which were made before the holy theologians."

We recognize angels in certain prototypical symbols from which we must ascend to what is meant – from perceptible images to spiritual simplicity. The images are not similar to what is meant – they are coarse, and this sets off the high level of what is meant.

The images precisely conceal the holy object from carnal minds as if with a sort of sacred curtain.

Our life is not constrained by necessity, and the Divine rays of heavenly enlightenment are not obscured by the free will of the beings governed by Providence; but the non-identity of the spiritual glance leads to the fact that there are different degrees of enlightenment, and that communion with the abundant enlightenment can even cease entirely. However, "the source-ray is alone and simple, always the same, and always abundant."

Dionysius brings into this system the already developed Church doctrine of the nine ranks of angels, redistributing them into three triple groups. The first and highest triad is the Cherubim, Seraphim, and Thrones who stand "as if on the thresholds of the Godhead," at the very sanctuary of the Trinity, "around God," in the closest direct proximity to him. They have access to direct knowledge of the Divine mysteries. They live and are permeated with the ineffable light, and contemplate God in the brightness of that light.

These are the blazing or burning seraphim and cherubim who are rich in knowledge and wisdom – these names are the names of their God-like properties. The blaze of fire of the seraphim signifies the ardor of their love; they are governed by God himself. They transmit Divine knowledge to the lower ranks and "are the rivers of wisdom."

This first hierarchy, which is united, which is the most God-like, which is closest of all to the first illumination from the Original Divine light, transcends any created force, visible or invisible. This is "the hierarchy which is God's own and which is similar to him in every way." Their love for God is completely invariable, and they "keep the foundation of their God-like nature always unshakeable and immobile." They possess "perfectly simple knowledge of the highest light" and "have the closest communion with the Divine and human properties of Christ."

They are blessed directly by God, are "illumined by simple and direct illuminations," and learn the wise reasons for his Divine acts from Good Itself. And the lower ranks learn from them. They participate in original knowledge of the "radiant mysteries" and are purified, illumined, and perfected through this. This is the "God-like hierarchy," "God's Divine places of tranquillity." They have "a more concealed and clearer illumination," which is simple, unitary, the first given and the first to appear, and the most complete.

The second hierarchy consists of Dominions, Virtues, and Powers. They have access only to secondary illumination, which comes to them through the ranks of the first hierarchy. "Even lower

is the third hierarchy - Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. The rank of angels concludes a ladder of celestial minds. They are the closest to the earth – they are the "angels of the world," as it were. Angels are appointed to look after all peoples of the earth, and they are the leaders of the terrestrial hierarchy. The celestial and terrestrial worlds close ranks here, as it were, and a descending ladder of illuminations and revelations obtains. God decreases his illuminations and makes something of his mysteries unknowable according to the decreasing capacity of the beings.

As Dionysius understands it, this is an immutable order. "Every rank is the interpreter and herald of the ranks above it, and the highest are interpreters of God." In essence, the angelic world shields God for man. A direct path is not realized, and this reveals a certain vagueness in Dionysius' Christological ideas. He speaks of Christ comparatively rarely. True, in the Incarnation of the Logos he recognizes the completeness and fulfillment of a theophany – but he overemphasizes the ineffability and mysteriousness of this manifestation. The Godhead stays hidden after this manifestation and even in the manifestation itself. The image of the God-Man is not the focal point of Dionysius' spiritual experience.

Dionysius continues the old Alexandrian tradition, clearly expressed in Clement of Alexandria and especially in Origen, which is harshly colored by the late Judaic and Hellenistic motive of mediation. Perhaps there is even a certain echo of Gnostic "genealogies." In any case, the hierarchical idea receives features from Dionysius which are too sharp. He even corrects Holy Scripture in the name of principle - thus he does not agree to see a real seraphim in the seraphim which appeared to the prophet Isaiah. Either this was an angel, who is called seraphim because of his fiery service, or else a seraphim was acting through the angel who is granting him his activity as the most qualified performer of Divine mysteries.

Dionysius concludes his sketch of the "celestial hierarchy" with a rather detailed critique of the symbolic images under which angels are described and appear in the Scriptures. He stresses the mysteriousness of the angelic world and its inaccessibility for human understanding.

The goal of life lies in communion with God, in deification. The hierarchy is established for this goal. Deification is comparison to and union with God. Comparison, but not a blending or a mixture – the immutable boundary of Divine inaccessibility always remains inviolate. This comparison extends to the whole world, not only to reasoning and speaking beings – it is for every type of

being to an appropriate degree. "The first and pre-eminent deification" is accessible only to the higher celestial ranks.

The concept of deification in Dionysius at times almost dissolves in the concept of peace, harmony and unity, and almost merges with the concept of the natural God-like quality of everything which exists.

The Liturgy

Dionysius' mysticism is liturgical or sacramental mysticism. The path to God leads through the Church and through the sacraments. The liturgy is the path of deification and consecration. For Dionysius, the Church is primarily a world of sacraments; it is in the sacraments and through the sacraments that communion with God is realized.

Jesus, the Supra-Essential Mind, which begins in God, calls us to the perfect unity of Divine Life and elevates us to holiness. Jesus is the beginning of any hierarchy – celestial, terrestrial, and ecclesiastical. One could say that the Church hierarchy or priesthood is the highest step in the perceptible world and is directly contiguous with the celestial world of pure spirits. In this sense, the terrestrial Church is an "image" of the celestial; this comparison had been made already by Clement of Alexandria.

The essence of the terrestrial hierarchy lies in revelation, in the "words handed down by God." These do not consist exclusively of the Scriptures, but also include the oral, clandestine legacy of the apostles – here Dionysius is reminiscent of the Alexandrians. The hierarchy preserves and transmits this legacy in perceptible symbols, as if to conceal Divine mysteries from the unsanctified. Dionysius emphasizes the motive of the mystery. It is demanded not only by the mystery of the Godhead itself, and not only by veneration of the object of worship – "the holy things for the holy" – but also for the benefit of the unsanctified, unprepared, and the novice. What is more, the hierarchy's principle demands that knowledge be revealed at varying degrees and at different levels. Even the most external symbols - the *disciplina arcani* - must be inaccessible to outsiders. After that, knowledge and enlightenment increase by stages.

In the Church Dionysius distinguishes two triple circles. The first consists of the sacred ranks, the hierarchs or ordained. The second consists of the "ranks of those being completed." Knowledge is transmitted from top to bottom. The highest rank is that of the bishops. Dionysius calls it simply the "rank of hierarchs." This is the crowning rank, the summit of the hierarchy,

the source of power and religious rites. The act of enlightenment is the responsibility of the priests. Deacons officiate at "purification." It is they who commune with the still unenlightened. They prepare them for baptism and guide those being baptized, developing them for a new life. They stand on the boundary between the priestly and secular ranks.

Presbyters - priests - have greater leadership. They explain the symbols and rites to the enlightened. The bishop alone has the right of the religious rite, in which the bishop is assisted by the presbyters.

In the worldly circle Dionysius again distinguishes three ranks, which correspond to the three degrees of the priesthood. The lowest rank are those still needing purification: the proclaimed, the penitent, the possessed. The second rank is the "contemplative" rank, the "sacred people," ἱερὸς λάος. They contemplate "the sacred symbols and their hidden meaning."

The highest category is reserved for the monks. They are guided by the bishop himself, but are ordained by the presbyters. According to Dionysius' interpretation, the name of a monk shows that integral and indivisible "unitary" or monadic life which he has to lead. Monks must direct their spirit to a "God-like monad," must overcome any dissipation, and gather up and unite their spirit so that the Divine monad be imprinted there.

Dionysius calls the ordination or "completion" of monks a sacrament, and consequently the taking of monastic vows in Byzantium was usually considered a sacrament. However, Dionysius stridently emphasizes that monasticism is not a degree of the priesthood and that monks are ordained for personal perfection, not the guidance of others. They have to obey the priestly ranks, the presbyters in particular. Therefore, monks are not ordained through the laying on of hands, and without genuflection before the altar of faith. The priest reads a prayer (the "*epiklisis*"), and the person becoming a monk renounces vice and "imagination" ("*fantasy*"). The priest makes the sign of the cross over him, calling on the name of the Holy Trinity, tonsures him, robes him in new garments, and kisses him. Such was the ancient rite. The most important place in it is taken up by the vow.

Dionysius speaks of three sacraments – Baptism, the Eucharist, and Anointing. Baptism opens one's way into the Church. Dionysius calls it "enlightenment"; "Divine birth"; or "rebirth." Baptism is performed by the bishop, but along with all the presbyters and among the sacred people, who ratify the sacrament of Baptism with their assent of "amen." To begin with, Baptismal enlightenment gives self-knowledge. Everyone who is

baptized, as a person entering into communion with God, needs an integral and gathered life and a striving for immutability. Baptism is completed by Anointing, which is also performed by the bishop. Dionysius connects the "sacrament of Chrism" with the idea of Divine Beauty, which is symbolized by the Chrism's fragrance.

Dionysius gives a detailed interpretation of the symbolic actions of the sacraments, and his interpretations frequently call St. Cyril of Jerusalem to mind. It is possible to think that he is giving the generally accepted interpretation, but at the same time he is striving for symmetry and parallelism – hence the sometimes violent comparisons. One's attention is drawn to his constant use of expressions taken from the usage of the mysteries, often instead of names and words sanctified by Church custom. This could hardly have been accidental – there was probably the intention to juxtapose the true "mysteries" of the Church to the false pagan "mysteries."

The focus of sacramental life is the Eucharist – "the sacrament of participation or communion," as Dionysius calls it. This is for the most part a sacrament of union with the One, the completion or fulfillment of any perfection, the "completion of union." The outward sign of unity is receiving communion from a single cup and a single loaf of bread – those who receive the same food have to be united. Dionysius sees precisely this motive in the symbolism of the communion service and tries to emphasize it.

The last chapter of the book *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* is devoted to a description and symbolic explanation of the funeral rite. Dionysius first speaks of the fate of the faithful beyond the grave – the "life without night," the eternal youth, full of light, radiance, and bliss. This joy is recompense for one's struggle and faithfulness, and for this reason bliss is not in store for everyone equally. The path of death is the path of a holy rebirth, the path of "palingenesis," for resurrection is prepared for everyone. In fulfilling the faith, even the body will be called to a blissful life. This hope determines the joyful nature of the burial rite. It is curious that the proclaimed, as people who are still outside the Church, are not allowed to be present during the concluding prayers of the funeral service, during the reading of the prayer of absolution. The reason is that the burial is an intra-Church prayer, a fraternal prayer and activity. A prayer for the deceased, particularly the prayer of absolution, is an impulse of sacramental love, and it is offered by the bishop, the supreme hierarch of the community, the "herald of Divine vindications." The final kiss is a symbol of fraternal ties and love. Finally, the deceased is anointed

with unction, as he was anointed at the beginning of his Christian journey, at his baptism.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN

St. Isaac the Syrian, also known as Isaac of Nineveh, was at first a monk of Bethabe in Kurdistan. There is much that is unclear in St. Isaac's biography. Most important is a story about him by the eighth-century Syrian writer, Jesudenas, in the latter's *Book of Purity*. It is a collection of short notes about Syrian saints and founders of monasteries. Under number 124 Jesudenas speaks of St. Mar-Isaac, the bishop of Nineveh, "who rejected the episcopal throne and wrote books about the lives of ascetics."

St. Isaac the Syrian was a native of a town on the Indian border. He was appointed bishop in the Bethabe monastery by Patriarch Georgios (660-680). He spent only five months on the patriarchal throne and then left for the mountains of Kurdistan to "contend" there in spiritual battle among the hermits. Later he settled in the monastery of Rabban Shapur. Here he studied Holy Scripture and lost his eye-sight through his intensive work. "He knew the Divine mysteries profoundly and wrote remarkable works about the lives of monks." However, he confused many people with his views. He died at a very old age and was interred in the monastery where he had worked. Other biographies in Syriac and Arabic add that as a youth Isaac lived in the Mar-Mattai monastery near Nineveh. All this time we are in a Nestorian milieu, and here Isaac stands somewhat apart.

It is unclear why he left Nineveh. One may guess that it was because of disagreements with the local clergy. He lived in isolation in the monastery, but all the same his doctrine was alluring. In it he deviates a great deal from Antiochene traditions – however, he refers to the "Exegete" more than once - Theodore of Mopuestia.

Alexandrian influence is felt much more strongly in him – especially in his exegesis. He usually interprets the Scriptures symbolically, trying to uncover its deep spiritual meaning. Characteristically, in his lifetime he was called "the second Didymus."

In many ways St. Isaac is close to the Areopagite, and he refers directly to the "great Dionysius." He strives for a catholic synthesis. It is not surprising that very early on his works were acknowledged by and became widely circulated in Orthodox – even in Monophysite – circles. Curiously, St. Isaac also rendered an unquestionable influence on later Moslem mysticism.

St. Isaac's ascetical book – which is normally without a specific title in the manuscripts – became available in the Syriac original only relatively recently and it seems to be still incomplete. Until then, only the Greek translation was known – and the Greek had been translated from the Arabic. It was translated in St. Sabas' monastery, probably in the ninth century. The translation is frequently inaccurate, and the very order of the chapters or articles is changed.

In the Syriac text there is less order, more inconsistency. This is more a collection of fragments or sketches than an integral book. This corresponds to the author's design – he did not even write down his spiritual reflections, but rather dictated them. Their power lies not in the logical development of thought but in the brilliance of their contemplations and in the profundity of their insights. St. Isaac wrote not so much for novices as for those who had already succeeded. He speaks most of all about the last and highest stage of the spiritual "ordeal," about the goals and end of the spiritual path.

It is possible to distinguish three stages or moments in the spiritual process: *repentance*, *purification*, *perfection* – repentance for one's sins, purification of one's passions, and perfection in love and ecstasy. That is how the venerable Isaac himself divides the spiritual path.

Repentance is the mother of life. It is the highest gift for man, the "highest grace," the possibility of conversion and return, the "door of mercy." Repentance is the "second birth from God." At the same time it is not only a moment but the constant motif of genuine life, for no one is yet above temptation, and repentance can never be final. "Repentance always befits all sinners and righteous men – whoever seeks salvation. And there is no limit to perfection, so that even the perfection of the most perfect is properly imperfection. Therefore, there are no limits to repentance, neither in time or deeds, right up to death itself." One should always "beware of one's own freedom."

Repentance is a certain trembling of the soul before the gates of paradise: how will I enter this ineffable entrance? It is precisely tears and repentance which pave the way to true joy and consolation, "for through lamentation man arrives at spiritual purity." For the sake of repentance the monk goes into seclusion, chooses silence, repudiates the world, detaches himself from people, and shuns the throng.

Silence and repentance are inseparably connected with one another. Silence seeks seclusion, and seclusion is the soul's

solitude before the face of God. "He is blessed who has withdrawn from the world and from its darkness, and *listens to himself alone*."

Being a hermit is first of all an inner exodus or retreat from the world. This is first of all an inner adjustment of the soul – "to bare one's self and leave the world." The world is also a kind of inner reality. "From the speculative point of view, the world is a collective name which embraces everything which is called passion" – *τὰ πάθη*. The world is composed of passions as its composite elements. "The passions are part of the successive course of the world, and where the passions cease, there the world stops in its succession. Where the passions cease their course, there does the world die," for man leaves the ties of the world. "To put it briefly, the world is a carnal apparatus and an understanding of flesh."

Leaving the world is first of all a *new adjustment of the mind*. The world is dissipation and diffusion, the course of passions. Rejecting the world is concentration, mustering and self-discipline, strength and steadfastness or the constancy of soul. "The passions are something additional," something secondary. By nature the soul is impassive, and is drawn into the midst of passions. It leads itself into them, and then "it is outside of its nature."

Passion is a kind of frenzy, the soul's falling away from its "original rank." Then the soul is drawn into the world – but it can leave it. For the soul this is a return to itself – and liberation "from the laws of the world," from the necessity of the world.

Repentance is this constant exodus, an alteration of the form of thought – *μετανοία*, a new setting of mind or thought. Man is connected to the world through his senses, through sensual impressions – not so much through the body itself as through sensuality. The soul's impurity is in this dependence on sensual impressions – in the liveliness of sensual impressions lies death and the deathliness of the heart. Sensual images blind the soul's vision and prevent genuine perception – the passions burn the soul's knowledge.

Therefore purification consists of overcoming and even extinguishing – or "locking up" – the senses. Then genuine, trustworthy vision becomes possible. The soul begins to see clearly into the true world and recovers its sight in this insight. Thus St. Isaac iterates a Platonic motif. The world is a deception of the senses, and genuine knowledge is not realized through the senses. Sensual perception is rather something anti-natural. "The natural condition of the soul is knowledge – *gnosis* – of God's creation, perceptible and mental. Movement of the soul into those disturbed by passions is an anti-natural state," for the only thing which is

genuinely trustworthy is cognition of creation in its existing foundations – cognition of that which exists precisely as a creation of God, "spiritual knowledge" of it – that is, contemplation of God's wisdom which operates in creation, a "sense of the Divine mysteries hidden in things and in their causes." Only cognition of that which is genuine can be genuine – that is, cognition of that which is genuine in things of that which genuinely *is*. Again, this is a Platonic motif.

Rejection of the world in cognition is first of all a distraction from everything *transitory* and "accidental" – unnatural – in things, and insight into the *non-transitory*. It is leaving the *false* world and *oblivion* in what is false, and is therefore finding *one's self*. Here is the sense of *purification* – "*catharsis*." "Silence mortifies the external senses and resurrects the inner movements." This is its cleansing power and significance.

Genuine cognition – knowledge or *gnosis* – begins in silence. "And the silent one's cell is that cleft in the rock where the Lord spoke to Moses." Cognition has its own stages. The first is carnal cognition, "bare knowledge," which is locked up in existence. This is a false and dangerous stage, and one must leave it.

At the second stage man is occupied with psychical desires and recognizes what the very nature of the soul is. He then comprehends wisdom and providence in the structure and nature of things. But there is not enough of this.

Only at the third stage does man acquire spirituality and does his knowledge become spiritual and rise over all that is earthly. "Now it can fly up into the region of incorporeal beings, touch the depths of the intangible sea, imagining the Divine and miraculous workings of providence in the nature of beings perceptible and mental – and it investigates the spiritual mysteries which are comprehended by subtle and simple thought."

One must remember that all this time we have been talking about *cognition of the world.* There is yet another, higher stage where the measure of nature is exceeded – the mind is purified by the inspiration of the Spirit, and is carried away to Divine contemplation. This, however, is something greater, something different, not only *gnosis*. This is the beginning of perfection. "The ladder of that kingdom is within you – it is concealed in your soul. Plunge deeper than the sin within yourself, and you will find the ascent along which you can rise up."

St. Isaac persistently talks of freedom. Freedom is the source and a kind of crossroads of good and evil. Evil is realized through freedom, and good cannot be realized any other way than through freedom – that is, through exercise and "ordeal." God himself

works on the soul "in the mystery of freedom." The life of the future age is the "fatherland of freedom." "Ordeal" is possible only through freedom, but freedom is possible only through "ordeal" – it is realized and secured in "ordeal."

The "ordeal" is a struggle and the inflexibility of the will. The struggle is tolerated by God for the sake of trial. Every weakness and untruth is revealed by the fall. "For God is almighty and stronger than everyone and is always the victor in the mortal body, when he goes to battle along with the ascetics. And if they are conquered, it is clear that they are being conquered without him. This means that through the folly of their willfulness they have divested themselves of God." This means that zeal has gone out in them, and that resolution has grown weak. Again it is necessary to court God's mercy with humility and renunciation.

God's power is always revealed only through man's quest. "This world is a competition and this time is a time of struggle." And he is blessed who does not go to sleep the whole way to the haven of death.

The moving force of the "ordeal" is prayer, and prayer engenders and inflames love. St. Isaac defines prayer very broadly: it is "any conversation held secretly – inwardly – and any consideration of a good mind about God, and any reflection on the spiritual." In other words, any appearance before God – in thought, deed, and word.

The task of the "ordeal" is for prayer to become continuous, for one to always pray – that is, to keep vigil and consciously appear before God. This is given by the Spirit. Therefore, continuous prayer is a sign of perfection, and it shows that a man "has risen to the height of all virtues and has become an abode of the Holy Spirit." For only through the power of the Holy Spirit is such constancy possible. This is the apogee of prayer, and is almost no longer prayer.

Prayer begins with petition: "there is petition and care about something." But first of all this is the *movement* of the soul, its complete striving for God – in this is the *theocentrism* of prayer. It is possible to say that prayer is the *theocentric* organization of the soul. In true prayer "the contemplation of the mind is directed at God alone – the mind directs all its movements to him."

However, it is just this dynamism or tonality of prayer – the prayerful *tonos* of the soul – which holds its limitedness. For, "when the mind is in motion, it is still in the psychic region." This is still the lower, preliminary plane – the spiritual level has not yet been reached. "And as soon as one enters this spiritual region, prayer ceases."

Movement, activity, or intensity cease. An ineffable peace and tranquillity set in. "Everything prayerful ceases, and a kind of contemplation sets in – and it is not by prayer that the mind prays. All the same, one may ascribe the word "prayer" to this higher state, for it is the fruit of prayer and the goal to which the whole prayerful impulse strives.

"Bowing prayer" – that is, a pleading prayer, consequently one that is anxious about something – is a necessary preliminary of spiritual prayer. This is the "ordeal," the cause of freedom. And then, the workings of the Spirit are suddenly revealed in the soul. "The soul's impulses, through its strict chastity and purity, become privy to the workings of the Spirit. And one out of many is honored with this, for this is a sacrament of a future condition and life. For the soul ascends and nature remains ineffective, without any impulse or memory of the here and now."

This is a kind of frenzy or rapture of the soul, through the power of the Spirit – or ecstasy. This is "silence of the mind" – and "silence is the sacrament of the future age. It is the tranquillity of contemplation, and it is above any deed. It is the revelation of God in the pure mind, and in it the kingdom of God – and the new heaven – light and Spirit – are prefigured." "For the saints in the future age, when their mind is absorbed by the Spirit, will not pray with prayer, but will settle themselves with amazement in joyous glory. Thus it is with us. As soon as the mind is honored to feel the future bliss, it will forget itself and everything in the here and now, and will have no impulse in itself for anything. And freedom will be paralyzed, and the mind will be guided, but will not guide."

In its incomprehensible union the soul becomes like God and is illumined with a higher light, as in the thought of the Areopagite. But the gift is given in response to "ordeal," usually during a state of prayer when the soul is particularly mustered and focussed, and is getting ready to listen to God, when it keeps vigil at the gates of the kingdom.

At the heights of this experience the synergism of "ordeal" and gift, of freedom and grace, is simply not abolished. But the search stops when the Master of the House comes.

Man begins to pray out of fear, and by necessity, and he prays about deliverance or about the proffering of blessings. But words grow scarce in proportion to the "ordeal." Divine providence, which embraces everything, becomes too clear, and individual requests cease. The mind prays not about any individual thing, but gives itself over entirely to Divine will. It is touched as it experiences Divine Providence.

Thus the mind no longer asks but waits and longs to see. "Contemplation is a vision of the mind which is astounded by God's economy in every possible thing." In this contemplation the Spirit reveals the connection and the totality of time. The mysterious eon of the future is already visible in its ineffable light, and moreover the present earthly life seems miraculous. Thought ascends to the first creation when by a sudden command everything was brought forth from non-existence to being "and everything appeared before God in perfection."

The totality of destiny is revealed in insight, and in this contemplation hope is fortified and all fear and distrustfulness are dispersed. All anxiety ceases, and every individual desire stops. "And they do not see the hardships of the journey. There are no hills or streams before them – and what is sharp in their path shall be smooth."

"Their attention is unceasingly directed to the bosom of their Father. Hope itself at every moment seems to point them to the distant and invisible, and the desire for the distant ignites the whole soul like some fire, and what is absent is imagined as being present."

Contemplation of Divine life inflames the heart and kindles love in it. And love smells the fragrance of the coming resurrection. "The heart burns and flares up with fire day and night." At this time *the gift of tears* is given. These are tears of joy and tenderness – an unceasing stream of involuntary tears. They are no longer tears of grief, no longer voluntary lamentation, but an abundance of tears, not sobbing and sorrow, but tears of love. "For even love is capable of causing tears through memory of the beloved one."

These tears are a presentiment of a new birth, a presentiment and a pre-sensation of a new life which has already been engendered. "And this is a precise sign that the mind has left this world and has sensed that spiritual world." And if a man goes back and these tears run dry, then that means the person is once again interred in passions.

The way of "ordeal" and prayer is the way of renunciation and distraction from the external world, the way of retreat and alienation. However, in no way does this mean oblivion and indifference towards one's neighbors and to creation. Quite the contrary. Only love is the legitimate door to contemplation. Without love the heart shuts itself up.

What is understood here is not only love for God, but first of all love for one's neighbor in which it is possible to become like God. "Such is the sign of those who have achieved perfection: if

they were to be committed to the flames ten times a day because of love for people, they would not be content with this."

The apex of love is the "ordeal" of the cross. "And the saints covet this sign – to be like God in the perfection of their love for their neighbor. "But this love is not of this world." And what is a pardoning heart? The inflaming of the heart for all creation, for men, for birds, for animals, for demons, and for all creatures. When recalling them, when gazing upon them, the eyes water from a great and strong compassion, which envelops the heart. And the heart grows mild, and it cannot bear either to hear or to see a creature experiencing any harm or the slightest sorrow. For this reason it offers a prayer every hour for the speechless ones and for the enemies of truth, a prayer that they be kept safe and cleansed. And through great compassion the heart prays for the nature even of reptiles. This compassion is aroused in the heart without measure so as to be like God in this. It is in this pardoning love that purity is discovered. The mind's rapture combines with the heart' s fiery enthusiasm.

Truth is contemplation. "He who focuses the sight of his mind within himself sees there the dawn of the Spirit. He who scorns any soaring of the mind sees his Master within his heart. And if you are pure, then heaven will be inside you – and inside you, you will see the angels and their light, and with them and in them the Master of the angels," for the celestial secrets are reflected in a pure soul as in a clear mirror.

But no one can see this inner beauty if he does not disdain external beauty, if he does not turn away and tear his passions away from the visible world. There are two stages in Divine revelations. First, are visions – revelation in images – perceptible visions, like the Burning Bush, or spiritual visions, like Jacob's Ladder. Sometimes they come in the rapture of the Spirit, as happened with the apostle Paul. Such are the insights of the prophets, and the wisdom about which the apostle speaks in *Colossians* 1:9 and *Ephesians* 1:17-19. And finally, prophetic dreams.

In the characteristics of these revelations St. Isaac cites Theodore of Mopsuestia directly – see Theodore's exegeses of the *Acts of the Apostles* and of *Job*. All of these revelations have a pedagogic significance, and do not contain precise knowledge and truth. These are merely signs and symbols which are shown as a separate inspiration.

Second, are revelations of the mind. They have no images, are above any image or word, and are incommensurate with understanding. Such are precisely prayerful contemplations.

"There is no direct and proper name for objects of the future age. Only a certain simple knowledge of them is possible – higher than any word, any element, image, color, outline, and any complex name." There follows a direct reference to the Areopagite. The mind enters the Holy of Holies, the darkness which dulls even the vision of the sêraphim. "This is that ignorance which is said to be higher than knowledge."

St. Isaac always stresses that this is a forewarning of the future age. In other words, the beginning transformation of the soul, its passing into the image of the future age. That is why there are these revelations within – they are not shown as something external, but are perceived and experienced within one's self.

Those who succeed begin to contemplate the beauty of their own soul – and it is one hundred times more brilliant than the light of the sun. The cleansed soul enters the "region of pure nature" and reigns in the glory of the Father. Here is where it is allowed to feel "the change which the inner nature accepts during all sorts of renewal. Therefore, the ascetic does not know whether he is still in this world or not. This is ecstasy, frenzy. The soul is as if intoxicated on Divine Love. Thought is astounded and the heart is in Divine captivity. The cloud of God's glory descends, and man sees God because he is already in him, and God's power acts in him.

The journey has ended, and all mediation falls away. Prayer ceases, and the Scriptures are no longer needed. "The commandments of the Spirit take root in the heart in place of the law of the Scriptures. And then one studies secretly with the Spirit and has no need for the help of sensual matter." This is a "perception of immortal life. Moreover, it is the realization and revelation of eternal immortality in man's very existence.

Following the Areopagite, St. Isaac repeats the discussion about the angelic hierarchy. With St. Isaac, however, the Christological motif is much more sharply noted. Divine contemplation is inaccessible to the angelic powers as well. Before the coming of Christ the secrets of the Kingdom were hidden from the angels. "But when the Logos became flesh, the door was opened to them in Jesus." Even now the gates are still locked for them until universal renewal, until man's rehabilitation from decay – until the final apocalypse. "Because for our sake, entry has been prohibited to them as well, and they await the one-time opening of the doors of the new age."

In the future age the hierarchy will be abolished as an intermediary, "for then no one will receive the revelation of the glory of God from another, to the glorification and joyfulness of

his soul, but everyone will be given what he merits directly by the Master, in proportion with his valor. And he will not receive the gift from another, as is the case here and now. For there is no teacher there, no student, no one who has a need, so that somebody else must fill the deficiency. There the Giver is one, the Giver who gives directly to those capable of receiving. And those who find heavenly joy receive it from God. The ranks of teachers and those taught will cease there, and the swiftness of any desire will rise to the One."

There will be many abodes there, but one country, and in it everyone will live inseparably – under a single mental sun. "And no one sees the measure of his friend as higher or lower, so that there is no reason for grief and sorrow if he sees the superior grace of his friend and his own deprivation. This will not be there – where there is neither sorrow nor complaint. But everyone, according to the grace given him, will rejoice inwardly in his measure."

St. Isaac mentions the lot of sinners only in passing. Sin has a beginning and an end. And there will come a time when there is no sin. This does not mean, however, that all will enter the kingdom, for hell and Gehenna have a beginning but do*not* have an end. Not everyone can enter the kingdom, for they will not be ready for it – and the kingdom is within.

He who does not enter will be in Gehenna, in deprivation and torment. However, in no way is it permissible to think that sinners in Gehenna are deprived of God's love. It is precisely this love, however, which is the source of the torment and grief. "Those tormented in Gehenna are struck by the scourge of love." Love illumines all. But it works two ways. The righteous rejoice, intoxicated with love, while sinners grieve for their sin against love. "And I think torment in Gehenna is repentance."

Within the limitedness of this life there is nothing final – that which is true will be carried out there. Six days pass in the work of life, without repose, and only in the parable is the secret of the Sabbath known. "That is, repose from passions. Our Sabbath is the day of interment. Then our nature really Sabbatizes." And still ahead is resurrection, the eighth day – departure from the grave. "The day of resurrection is still a mystery of true knowledge which is not for us to receive as long as we are with flesh and blood, and it exceeds thought. There is no eighth day, no Sabbath in the true sense, in this age."

This is the age of deeds. "And the mind will not be glorified with Jesus if the body does not suffer with and for Christ." The way of the cross in this life includes both crucifixion of the body

and purification of the mind, but it is also the way of transformation. Humility changes to glory here. In those undergoing the "ordeal" one senses, even now, the fragrance of the new life, the "vernal power" of immortality.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ST. JOHN CLIMACUS

THE PAUCITY OF FACTS OF HIS LIFE

The biography of St. John – *ὁ τῆς κλίμακος* – must rather be called an encomium. This is a description of him as one who prays and contemplates: "For John approached the mystical mountain where the uninitiated do not enter, and, elevated along the spiritual steps, he received the statute inscribed by God and a vision." He was some newly-appeared Moses.

Few facts are given in the biography. He was also called "Scholasticus" – *σχολαστικός* – but he is not to be confused with John Scholasticus, the patriarch of Constantinople (d. 577). It even remains unclear when St. John lived and where he was from. From circumstantial data it is possible to hazard a guess that he died in the mid seventh-century. His life is usually given from about 570 until 649. He came to Sinai in his early youth and spent his whole life there. However, it seems that he spent some time in Egypt, in Scete, and in Tabennesis. For many years he contended in obedience to a certain elder. After the latter's death, St. John withdrew into seclusion and lived as a hermit in a cave, which was not far off but was secluded.

St. John was already an extremely old man when he was chosen the abbot of Mt. Sinai. He was not abbot for long, and again went into seclusion. In seclusion he composed his famous and extraordinarily influential work entitled *Heavenly Ladder* – *κλῖμαξ τοῦ παραδείσου* – "a book called the Spiritual Tablets," "for the edification of the new Israelites, the people who have just come out of a mental Egypt and from the sea of life."

This work is a systematic description of the normal monastic path, by the stages of spiritual perfection. The basic thing here is precisely the system, the idea of a regular sequence in the "ordeal," the idea of stages. The *Heavenly Ladder* is written in a simple, almost folk language – the author loves the similes, proverbs, and "sayings" of everyday life. He was writing from his own personal experience.

In addition to his personal experience, however, he always relies upon tradition, upon the teachings of the "divinely inspired fathers." Directly or indirectly, he refers to the Cappadocians, Nilus, Evagrius, and to the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. Among the westerners he refers to St. John Cassian and Gregory the Great.

The *Heavenly Ladder* concludes with a special "word to the pastor," in which St. John speaks of the duties of the abbot.

THE *HEAVENLY LADDER* AND ITS HISTORICAL INFLUENCE

The *Heavenly Ladder* was a favorite book for reading not only in monasteries. Testifying to this fact first of all is the multitude of manuscript copies – frequently with miniatures. *Scholia* testify to the same thing – even John of Raitha, a young contemporary of Climacus, composed *scholia* to this work, a work which had been dedicated to him. Later, the famous Elias of Crete interpreted the *Heavenly Ladder*, and later still St. Photius. The *Heavenly Ladder* was translated into Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Church Slavonic, and many modern languages. The work had a profound influence on the life and thought of St. Simeon the New Theologian, was very influential with the Hesychasts, and very popular in Slavic monasteries. It exerted a powerful influence in the West right up to the end of the Middle Ages – one example is the commentary by Dionysius the Carthusian (1402-1471), also referred to as Denys van Leeuwen and Denys Ryckel, whose mystical experiences gained him the title in the West of "*doctor ecstaticus*." Its influence on the Hesychasts is not difficult to explain. "Hesychia is a continuous prayer to and service of God. Let the remembrance of Jesus be one with your breathing and then you will understand the useful importance of hesychia," writes St. John Climacus.

The plan of the *Heavenly Ladder* is very simple. It is defined more by the logic of the heart than the logic of the mind. Practical advice is fortified by psychological analysis. Every demand has to be explained – that is, for one contending in the spiritual struggle, in the "ordeal," it must be clear why this or that demand is made of him, and why they are developed in precisely such an order and sequence. One has to remember that St. John is writing only for monks, and always has in mind the conditions of monastic life and its environment.

THE ASCETICAL THEOLOGY OF THE *HEAVENLY LADDER*

The first demand of monasticism is rejecting all that is worldly. Rejection is possible only through freedom, through "absolute power" – this is the basic merit of man. Sin is the free defection or

estrangement from God, and a defection from life – a willful death, a kind of suicide through self-will.

The "ordeal" is a free and volitional turning to God, a following and imitating of Christ – in other words, the customary exertion of the will and a turning to God. The apex of the "ordeal" is monasticism. "The monk's calling and "ordeal" is the compelling of nature and the unremitting keeping of feelings."

The rejection of the world must be total and decisive – *a repudiation of nature* in order to receive those blessings which are *higher than nature*. This is a very important contrast – the "natural" is abolished for the sake of the *supernatural*, and is not replaced by the *anti-natural*. The task of the "ordeal" lies in *sublimating* natural freedom, not in a struggle with its original laws. Therefore only correct motives and a true goal justify renunciation and the "ordeal."

The "ordeal" is the means, not the end. And the "ordeal" is completed only when Jesus himself comes and rolls the stone of bitterness away from the doors of the heart. Otherwise the "ordeal" is fruitless and useless. The task is not renunciation itself, but that union with God which is realized through genuine renunciation – that is, liberation from the world, liberation from passions and weaknesses, from attachments and worldly inclinations for the sake of courting and finding *apatheia*.

In the "ordeal" itself the most important thing is its driving motive – love for God and conscious choice. However, even an involuntary ordeal, renunciation due to circumstances and even out of necessity, can prove to be beneficial, for the soul can suddenly awaken. "And who is a monk, faithful and wise? Who kept his zeal inextinguishable, and who even to the end of his life does not cease one day to apply fire to fire, zeal to zeal, diligence to diligence, desire to desire." In other words, *indifference* to the world is not so important as an *ardent aspiration for God*.

Renunciation is completed through spiritual wandering. The world has to seem and become alien. "Wandering is an irrevocable abandoning of everything which in our native land opposes us in our striving for piety." This is the way to Divine longing. And the only way for this estrangement to be justified is to "make one's thought inseparable from God." Otherwise, wandering will prove to be idle.

Wandering must not feed on hatred for the world and those left in it, but only on direct love for God. True, this love is exclusive, and extinguishes even love for one's own parents. Renunciation must also be unconditional. "Go from your country, and your kindred, and your father's house" (*Genesis* 12:1). However, this

"hatred" for what is left in the world is "impassive hatred." Monasticism is a way out of the "fatherland" – that is, those social conditions and systems in which every person finds himself necessarily by birth. This is also a withdrawal from temptation and dissipation. One has to create a new milieu and a new circumstance for one's "ordeal." "Let him be your father who can and wants to labor with you to overthrow the burden of your sins."

This new life order is created freely. However, one must renounce one more time – this time one's own will – *not* freedom. This is the stage of obedience. Obedience is not a cancellation of freedom, but a transformation of the will, an overcoming of passion in the will itself. "Obedience is the coffin of one's own will and the resurrection of humility." It is "life devoid of curiosity," or "activity without trial."

The monastic "ordeal" begins through the selection of a mentor or spiritual father – it is necessary to entrust one's salvation to someone else. However, a mentor must be chosen with reason and circumspection "lest we come upon a simple oarsman instead of a helmsman, a patient instead of a physician, a man possessed of passions instead of an impassive man, lest we end up in an abyss instead of a haven, and thus find certain perdition for ourselves." Once made, however, the choice is binding, and one is not allowed to judge or test the words and actions of the mentor he has chosen.

The mentor's counsel must be heard out with humility and without any doubt – "as if it came from the lips of God, even if it be contrary to your own opinion." "For God is not unjust, and he will not tolerate those souls being tempted who have submitted to the judgment and counsel of their neighbors with faith and forgiveness. Even if those being questioned do not have spiritual reason in them, the Immaterial and the Invisible speaks through them." In other words, obedience is justified by faith in and hope for God's help. "Unshakeable hope is the door to *apatheia*," or even to the "lack of cares."

It is very important that obedience itself be an act of freedom, of free reasoning and choice. Further, renunciation of one's own will is accomplished for the sake of liberation. Through obedience the will is liberated from the chance of personal opinion, and escapes from under the power of passions. In this sense obedience is the anticipation of genuine *apatheia*. "The obedient one, like a dead person, does not contradict and does not judge, either for good or pseudo-ill."

This is the path to true freedom, through voluntary slavery – as always, resurrection through death, rebirth through dying. The inner struggle begins with repentance. Rather, repentance or

distress over one's sins is the very element of the struggle. With repentance is connected mortal memory, mortal remembrance. This is the spiritual anticipation of death, and even a kind of "daily death." Genuine "mortal remembrance" is possible only through total *apatheia* and complete severance of the will. There is no fear in it. It is a gift from God.

The next step is crying, joy-producing weeping. "Repentance is a renewal of baptism but weeping is greater than baptism." "The source of tears after baptism is greater than baptism," however paradoxical that may seem. For weeping is a continual cleansing away of the sins one has committed. There is crying from fear, crying from mercy, and crying from love. It certifies that one's prayer has been received. "We will not be indicted, brothers, because we have not performed miracles, because we have not theologized, because we have not achieved vision, but without a doubt we will have to answer to God for not continually weeping over our sins."

The goal of the inner struggle, the interior "ordeal," is the courting of *apatheia*. The task of inner organization comes down to constantly extinguishing the passions. One has to try to stop, and indeed to stop entirely, the movement and excitation of the passions within one's self.

First of all one must overcome rage – the "stirring up of the heart." One must court angerlessness and meekness, peace and quiet. As St. John Climacus understands it, rage is connected with pride. Therefore he defines anger as the "insatiable desire for dishonor," and meekness as the "immovable organization of the soul which abides alone both in honor and dishonor."

Even higher is the total absence of vindictiveness, which imitates Jesus' forgiving nature. One must refrain from any kind of censure. Pray for sinners in secret – "this image of love is pleasing to God." To judge and condemn is not something which befits the penitent. "To judge means to impertinently try to appropriate God's office for one's self." After all, the omniscience without which judgment will always prove hasty is unavailable to man. "Even if you see somebody sinning with your own eyes, do not condemn. For often your eyes are deceived."

St. John Climacus has much to say about the carnal temptations and about attaining purity. The source of purity is in the heart. It is beyond man's powers but is a gift from God, if only through "ordeal."

Avarice is extinguished in the total "putting aside of concern for the terrestrial." This is a kind of quality in life which is freedom from care, through faith and hope.

Even more dangerous is the temptation of pride – he who is proud is tempted without demonic seduction. He has become a demon and an adversary to himself. Pride is overcome in humility. Humility does not give way to literary definition – it is a land of "unnameable grace of the soul," which is comprehensible only in one's own experience.

One can learn humility only from Christ himself – "*learn* not from an angel, not from man, not from a book, *but from Me*; that is, from My settling in you, and my shining and working in you because I am meek and lowly in heart" – *ὅτι πραΰς εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ* (*Matthew* 11:29). In a certain sense humility in ascetics is a kind of blindness to their own virtues – a "Divine cover which does not allow us to see our improvements."

St. John Climacus discerns the followings motifs in the development of passion. First of all comes the addition, the "strike" or attack – *προσβολή* – a certain image or thought, a "foray of thoughts." There is still no sin here, for the will is not yet participating in this. The will proclaims itself in the combination – *συνδυασμός*. This is a kind of "conversation with the image that appeared," and in this interestedness or attention is the beginning of sin – "not entirely without sin." However, more important is the attraction of the will, "*co-composition*" – *συγκατάθεσις* the "soul's agreement with the represented intent, combined with *delight*."

Further, the intent – the tempting idea or image – takes root in the soul. This is the captivity – *αἰχμαλωσία*, a stage in the ordeal which is a land of possession of the heart. Finally, skill in vice is established – this is *passion* in the proper sense – *τὸ πάθος*.

It is evident from this that the root of the passions is first the will's permissiveness. Secondly, temptation strikes through thought. Therefore the ascetical task bifurcates under an image of thought or intention – *λογισμός*. On the one hand, one must fortify the will through obedience and by severing arbitrariness. On the other hand, one must cleanse one's thoughts.

Temptation comes from without. "By nature – *κατὰ φύσιν* – there is no evil and no passions in man, for God did not create the passions." This does not mean that man is pure now. But he is pure by virtue of baptism, falls again through the will, and is cleansed by repentance and "ordeal." In nature itself there is a certain power – a possibility – of virtue, and sin is *opposed* to nature, and is a perversion of natural qualities.

However, for all that, man's task is not only to fulfill natural measures but also to exceed it, to become *higher* than nature. Such

is purity, humility, vigilance, and the constant emotion of the heart. Therefore, one needs the synergism of free "ordeal" and Divine gifts which raise man over the limitedness of nature. The struggle with evil and temptation must begin as early as possible, before temptation has hardened into passion. But it is the rare person who is not late. That is why the "ordeal" is so long and difficult, and why there are no shortcuts in it. Moreover, the path is endless. There are no limits to God's love. Rather, this limit is itself endless. "Love does not cease. And we will never cease to be successful in it – not at the present time, not in the future – always receiving in the light the new reasoning light. I say that even the angels, these incorporeal beings, do not exist without success, but always receive glory for glory, and reason for reason."

The goal of the "ordeal" is holy silence – *ἡσυχία* the silence of body and soul. "Silence of the body is decency and being well-equipped with morals and corporeal feelings. Silence of the soul is the decency of intentions and thought that cannot be robbed." In other words, *peace and harmony* , the composedness and proportion of life – internal life, and therefore external life as well.

Silence is the vigilance of the soul. "I slept but my heart was awake" (*Song of Songs* 5:2). This internal silence is more important than external silence alone. This strict watchfulness of the heart is important. True silence is the "unworried mind." In other words, the "keeping of the heart" and "the keeping of the mind" – *φυλακὴ καρδίας καὶ νοὸς τήρησις*.

The power of silence lies in continuous and undistractible prayer. "Silence is uninterrupted service to God and appearing before him." Otherwise, silence is beyond one's strength, for prayer is appearing before God and then uniting with him. Or, conversely, genuinely appearing before God is prayer.

In the variety of prayer thanks must come first, then confession with repentance, and finally petition. A prayer must always be simple and terse. The highest of all is the "monosyllabic" invocation of Jesus. Prayer must be more like the inexpert prattle of a child than a wise and intricate speech. Verbosity in prayer distracts. It introduces reverie into the mind, and the most dangerous thing in prayer is "sensual day-dreaming." Thought must always be held and confined in the words of the prayer. One must vigilantly cut off all "intentions" and "images" – all "fantasies." One has to control one's mind. "If it is freely wandering everywhere, then it will never abide with you."

Prayer is a direct striving for God – "alienation from the visible *and invisible* world." In its perfection prayer becomes a spiritual

gift, a kind of inspiration of the Spirit who works in the heart – then the Spirit is praying in the one who sought prayer.

In a certain sense silence and prayer coincide. The same spiritual condition could also be defined as *apatheia*, for *apatheia* is precisely a striving, a devotion of self to God. "Some people still say that *apatheia* is the resurrection of the soul before the resurrection of the body." However, by courting *apatheia* the body itself becomes imperishable, or rather, incorruptible.

This is seeking the mind of the Lord (see *I Corinthians* 2:16). The ineffable voice of God himself sounds in the soul, proclaiming his will, and this is already "higher than any human doctrine." That is why the thirst for immortal beauty flares up. "He who comprehends silence has recognized the depth of the mysteries."

St. John Climacus contemplates and feels the intense dynamism of the spiritual world. In the angelic world, too, there is striving for the heights of the seraphim. In the human "ordeal" there is an attraction for the angelic heights, for the "image of the life of intelligent forces."

Apatheia is both the goal and the task. Not everyone reaches this limit, but even those who do not can be saved, for the striving is the most important thing. The moving force of the "ordeal" is love. But the fullness of the "ordeal" is the courting of love. Love has stages, and love cannot be known. After all, this is the very name of God. Therefore, in its fullness it is ineffable. "The word of love is known to the angels but only to the extent of their enlightenment." *Apatheia* and love are different names for a single perfection. Love is the path and the goal. "You wounded my soul, and my heart will not endure your flame. I go, singing of you."

In St. John Climacus' fragmentary and restrained aphorisms about love, one senses a closeness to the mysticism of the Areopagite, especially in the closing of the angelic and human planes. Characteristically, St. John says less about the higher stages or degrees, and here becomes stingy with words. He is writing for beginners and for people with an average level of experience. Those who are successful no longer need human edification and leadership. They already have inner attestation and testimony. Besides, at the higher stages words themselves become powerless and insufficient. They are hardly describable.

This is an earthly heaven which opens wide in the soul. It is God's residing in the soul. "The prayer of a man praying sincerely is the bench, the court of law, and the Judge's chair before the final judgment." In other words, a forewarning of the future. "And this blessed soul carries the Everlasting Logos within itself, and it is its

secret guide, its mentor, and its enlightenment." This is the top of the ladder which disappears in the celestial heights.

ANDERS NYGREN'S NEGATIVE EVALUATION OF THE *HEAVENLY LADDER*

From the theological perspective of Anders Nygren in his *Agape and Eros* , St. John Climacus' *Heavenly Ladder* is an excellent target. Hence, one is not at all surprised by his comments on this work. But even if one casts the question in the manner of Nygren, Nygren is still only partly correct – even when granted his premise, which cannot be granted. He is theologically incapable of understanding the two sides of synergy, incapable of understanding that when the monks speak about the side of man – if one takes these statements without qualification, which one cannot do – then they do often speak in language which may sound Pelagian, may sound as though it is seeking the favor of God, may sound as though it neglects totally the Divine initiative of everything, including *Agape. But that is simply not the case* . Even within this language from the side of man, there is constant reference to the Divine Gift, constant reference to everything coming from and returning to *Agape*. But the inner spirit of the "ordeal" is missed by Nygren. He reduces the entire "ordeal" to nothing more than self-assertive*Eros*." There can be no doubt as to the motif under which this 'Ladder of Paradise' must be placed. The gist of it all is the elevation of the human to the Divine; it is the usual Eros ladder of Hellenistic piety, the ladder of virtue and the mystical ascent. The goal reached by this ladder is the usual goal of Eros piety, *ἡσυχία* and *ἀπάθεια*, the soul's rest and exaltation above all passions. In apathy the hesychast has taken the 'leap over the wall' and landed in the heavenly world, 'in the bride-chamber of the royal palace – *δράμωμεν, ἀδελφοί, τῆς ἐν τῷ νυμφῶνι τοῦ παλατίου εἰσόδου τυχεῖν . . . ἐν τῷ θεῷ μου ὑπερβήσομαιτεῖχος*."

Nygren's complete inability to understand the Christianity of the Gospels, the Christianity of the Epistles of the New Testament, the Christianity of the Christian writers from the beginning, becomes explicit when he fails to understand the entire meaning of *Agape* for early Christianity and monastic spirituality. "But there is still one stage left. Above the 29th rung with its apathy stands the 30th, where all centres round *Agape*. One cannot help asking: what is the reason for the addition of this last step? The goal was already reached; the hesychast had come to the point on the heavenly ladder where he could make the transition to the heavenly existence. Why

then this new stage? The answer is simple enough. At the top of Jacob's Ladder stands God Himself, of whom primitive Christian tradition says 'God is Agape' (*I Jn.* iv. 8, 16). If a man is to come to full fellowship and *ἕνωσις* with Him, he too must become Agape, and this happens at the topmost step. The hesychast is said to be an angel on earth, but 'the status of angels is Agape' – *ἀγάπη ἀγγέλων στάσις*. The result of this is the peculiar idea that *at the top of the Eros ladder Agape is enthroned.* But naturally this is not primitive Christian Agape, as John Climacus' own definition of it shows. Agape is by nature 'godlikeness', and its chief effect on the soul is to produce a certain 'inebriation of the soul' – *ἀγάπη κατὰ μὲν ποιότητα ὁμοίωσις Θεοῦ, καθ' ὅσον βροτοῖς ἐφικτόν, κατὰ δὲ ἐνέργειαν μέθη ψυχῆς*. Now this already points in the direction of Eros, and shows that John Climacus does not know Agape in the primitive Christian sense, but has simply taken over the word from Christian tradition. And he himself is aware that the 30th Agape stage really adds nothing new to what is already given at the 29th. 'Agape' and 'apathy' are merely different names for the same thing – *ἀγάπη, καὶ ἀπάθεια, καὶ υἱοθεσία, τοῖς ὀνόμασι, καὶ μόνοις διακέκριται. ὡς φῶς, καὶ πῦρ, καὶ φλὸξ εἰς μίαν συντρέχουσιν ἐνέργειαν, οὕτω καὶ περὶ τούτων νόει*. When the hesychast has reached the stage of apathy he has really reached his destination. It should be added that even at the top step John Climacus uses the words Agape and Eros indifferently as if synonymous. But it is interesting that Agape is the chief name for the highest stage and the formal conclusion of the ladder. It is clear that Pseudo-Dionysius' efforts to extirpate the word 'Agape' had entirely failed." (pp. 597-598).

It is not as if Nygren does not "understand" the content of what St. John Climacus has written. From an external perspective, Nygren "understands" it well. It is that inner spiritual perspective which he cannot accept, which he is incapable of understanding in its wholeness, in its totality, in its completeness, and – what is more, in all the shades and nuances of its implementation of a wholly evangelical, a totally Christian life of spirituality which has been with the Church since our Lord. Dom Germain Morin has correctly remarked in his *L'idéal monastique et la vie chrétienne des premiers jours* that it is not so much the monastic life which was a novelty at the end of the third century. It was rather the accommodation to the life of the world by the mass of Christians which was new. "The monks actually did nothing but preserve intact, in the midst of altered circumstances, the ideal of the Christian life of early days." Louis Bouyer correctly observes that

"there is another continuous chain from the apostles to the solitaries and then to the cenobites, whose ideal, less novel than it seems, spread so quickly from the Egyptian deserts at the end of the third century. This chain is constituted by the men and women who lived in continence, ascetics and virgins, who never ceased to be held in honor in the ancient Church. . . It was the Gospel alone, heard and taken literally by simple souls in Egypt and in quite different places as well, that caused anchoritism to arise." Louis Bouyer describes St. Antony's vocation as of a "purely evangelical character."

Nygren approaches the origin and history of early Christian thought, spirituality, and life from the principles of the sixteenth-century Reformation. Hence, his very presuppositions are foreign to the soil of original Christianity. That he "understands" externally is clear. Nygren writes that the "particular interest" of the *Heavenly Ladder* "for our purpose is the remarkable clarity with which it shows how the way to salvation and fellowship with God was conceived in these circles [of eremitic and monastic piety] about the year 600." He quotes very representative texts from the work. "We are not, says John Climacus, called by God to a wedding-feast, but to grieve over ourselves – *οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν, ὦ οὗτοι, ἐνταῦθα ἡ τοῦ γάμου κλῆσις, οὐκ ἔστιν, οὔκουν· πάντως δὲ εἰς πένθος ἑαυτῶν ὁ καλέσας ἡμᾶς ἐνταῦθα ἐκάλεσε.* 'There is no rejoicing for the condemned in prison; nor is there for true monks any festival on earth' – *οὐκ ἔστι καταδίκοις ἐν φυλακῇ χαρμονή, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι μοναχοῖς ἀληθινοῖς ἐπὶ γῆς ἑορτή.* Only mourning can really root out all love of the world from the heart and set man free from earthly things – *πένθος ἐστὶ κέντρον χρύσεον ψυχῆς πάσης προσηλώσεως καὶ σχέσεως γυμνωθέν.* The 'gift of tears' is therefore a glorious blessing. 'Truly, he is free from the eternal perdition, who always thinks upon his death and upon his sins, and who ceaselessly wets his cheeks with living tears'. " Nygren even confronts the text in which St. John states "that such tears" are prompted by "all-holy Agape." And he acknowledges St. John's belief that "it is faith that gives wings to prayer; without faith no one can fly up to heaven" – *πίστις προσευχὴν ἐπτέρωσε· χωρὶς γὰρ ταύτης εἰς οὐρανὸν πεταθῆναι οὐ δύναται.* But it is clear from the very presuppositions that Nygren brings into the text that he cannot interpret it other than in a negative way, and this is thoroughly consistent with his theological perspective – moreover, with the entire theological perspective of the theology of the Reformation. And herein lies a tragedy in the ecumenical dialogue – the

understanding of our Christian heritage, and the authentic form of monastic spirituality within Christianity.