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rerum et sacratissimorum sensuum cognitione consistit'.¹ Cassian clearly implies the greater value of this last condition; and the distinction appears designed to mark contemplation as an ultimate stage in the religious life separate in time from man's struggle against sin and habitual imperfection. 'Theoretica puritas' is bestowed 'quasi in praemio . . . post multa operum ac laborum stipendia'.²

Yet, as soon as one turns to passages in which Cassian makes use of more varied terminology, it becomes clear that the distinctions in his mind were far from simple. Take for example *Conference ix*, in which he attempts to clarify the relation between 'orationis perfectio' and the 'structura virtutum', the laborious programme of self-improvement implied by *πρακτική*. 'Est inter alterutrum', he says, 'reciproca quaedam inseparabilisque coniunctio'.³ This seems definite; and it is striking that not only is the link made in the course of a discussion on prayer, but the terms of this distinction also are taken from Evagrius.⁴ In the passages following, where Cassian implies that the asceticism of a virtuous life should be seen as a preparatory 'disciplina', the force of 'reciproca' is somewhat weakened. Yet the preparation advocated is no mere emptying of the self, nor even an opening of the soul to God's activity. It is a task, a labour, that is at once 'practical' and dependent on an attitude of mind: 'quamobrem quales volumus inveniri, tales nos ante orationis tempus praeparare debemus'.⁵ There is a qualitative continuity at the root of this advice. Cassian wished to assess the feasibility of St Paul's command, 'pray constantly'; and he continues, 'alias namque mandatum istud perficere non valebimus, nisi mens nostra ab omni vitiorum purificata contagio virtutibus tantum velut naturalibus bonis dedita iugi omnipotentis dei contemplatione pascatur'; and he implies that contemplation in some sense—a discipline of mind, a capacity to concentrate—would form part also of this preparatory activity.⁶

There is, therefore, a certain complexity in Cassian's language, if not subtlety; and it is necessary to search for a passage in his work that does more than declare a contrast or distinction: that discusses the relationship

¹ Cassian, *Conferences*, ed. E. Pichery (Sources chrétiennes, xlii, liv, lxiv; Paris, 1955-9), xiv. 1.

² *Con.*, xiv. 9.

³ *Con.*, ix. 2.

⁴ Evagrius, *De oratione* (PG., lxxix), 2: see Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano*, 97. It is probably rash to suppose that Evagrius was appreciably neater or more consistent than his pupil: see, for example, *Nonnenspiegel und Mönchsspiegel des Evagrius Pontikos*, ed. H. Gresmann (Texte und Untersuchungen, xxxix, iv; Berlin 1913), *Mönchsspiegel*, 121—*γνωστικός και πρακτικός υπήρξαν ἄλλήλοις, μέσος δὲ ἀμφοτέρων ἐστήκει κύριος*; or *De oratione*, 124—*μοναχός ἐστιν, ὁ πάντων χωρισθείς, καὶ πᾶσι συνηρμοσμένος*. So I would question the judgements of Chadwick in this regard, *John Cassian*, 1st. ed, 83; 2nd ed., 88. (Those less familiar with the literature on Cassian should be warned that these two editions are really two different books: the second is more sympathetic but less incisive).

⁵ *Con.*, ix. 3.

⁶ The same point is made in *Con.*, x. 14. I would agree with Peter Munz that 'prayer was the Christian's full-time occupation and time spent in prayer in the strict sense was merely its most concentrated phase': 'John Cassian', in this *JOURNAL*, xi (1960), 20; but that need not imply that less concentrated phases excluded 'work' or 'social virtue'.

