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Présentation de la fiche

Coteb022_f0504

SourceBoite_022-14-chem | Cassien

LangueFrançais

TypePhotocopie

RelationNumérisation d'un manuscrit original consultable à la BnF, département des Manuscrits, cote NAF 28730

Références éditoriales

Éditeuréquipe FFL (projet ANR *Fiches de lecture de Michel Foucault*) ; projet EMAN (Thalim, CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne nouvelle).

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Notice créée par [équipe FFL](#) Notice créée le 21/10/2020 Dernière modification le 23/04/2021

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in general, as Theonas would have it, but specifically seeking to escape 'a flagitiis atque criminibus carnis huius'. The state that caused St. Paul such pain was one in part of his own making, an element in his personal history, and—for that reason—an experience all the more bitter.

Briefly, then, Theonas regards the contemplation of God as the Christian's ultimate goal: longed for by man, even in his fallen state; guaranteed and effected by the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. Germanus regards it rather as the fruit of conversion, the term of an ascetic endeavour: dependent on God's grace, no doubt, but characteristic of Christ's athletes in a stricter sense.¹

This possible distinction, between contemplation as a theological ideal and contemplation as an ascetic practice, is important only because it finds its echo in other parts of Cassian's work. This is particularly true of those passages in which contemplation is given an eschatological flavour. In the opening sections of the *Conferences*, the abbot Moses emphasises the importance of contemplation, and in exalted terms, speaking of the ascetic's progress towards a state of ever greater simplicity, the vision of God.² Cassian and Germanus propose an inevitable objection: deeds gain merit, and eternal salvation is linked in some way with 'laudabile opus et multis fructibus abundans'.³ This Moses does not deny. Fasting, works of mercy and the study of the scriptures will not go unrecognised, nor lose their reward in that final union with God: transition to a mere perfect state will merely bring to an end the economy of action upon which that reward will be based.⁴ There is an admission, therefore, that contemplation will acquire full meaning and become more than a possible ideal only after death. This impression is immediately strengthened by phrases in the passage like 'quanto magis ergo haec in futuro cessabunt', and by the reflection that if in this life one is prevented (for instance, by sickness) from pursuing an active life, one's luck is exceptional. The point is hammered home in a later statement of Moses, 'inhaerere quidem deo iugiter et contemplationi eius quemadmodum dicitis inseparabiliter copulari impossibile est homini ista carnis fragilitate circumdato'.⁵ Contemplation in this sense, therefore, has been forced out of the ascetic's immediate experience, and has become an image of paradise, the rewarding vision of God that follows upon a life of virtue. It is seen, in other words, in theological terms, as the ultimate goal that gives a Christian life its meaning and its sense of purpose.

There are, however, other passages in Cassian that draw away from

¹ I am not entirely sure that this distinction matches that of Marsili between contemplation as a state and contemplation as an act, *Giovanni Cassiano*, 26-7: particularly since he qualifies the distinction by referring later to 'lo stato contemplativo' as 'un atto continuato', 41.

² *Con.*, i. 8.

³ *Con.*, i. 9; the phrase is that of Moses himself.

⁴ *Con.*, i. 10.

⁵ *Con.*, i. 13.



