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'is qui adhuc in profectu positus est'.¹ At an earlier stage, the monk will be content with 'illa theoria quae prius in paucorum servatur consideratione sanctorum', when his spirit is inspired by the 'sanctorum actus ac ministeria mirifica'. It is a degree of insight that springs from community experience, whereby the vision of God, like the will of God, is mediated through fellow-ascetics.² Moses is willing to broaden even further the spatio-temporal basis, so to speak, for this knowledge of God, showing how contemplation means not only to reflect upon the example of holy men, but also to cultivate a reverent awareness of God's providence, as it is revealed within the individual and within the world.³

The ambiguities involved in contemplation are matched by others in Cassian's work, not least in his use of the word 'interior'. It was supposedly an interior quality that marked the *Conferences* (where most is said of contemplation), in contrast to the *Institutes*, which concentrated on the 'exterior cultus' of monks.⁴ Yet the invisible element in man, according to Cassian, was that which governed discipline and determination—the element of motive; and this was precisely the basis of his drive and activity, not some remote perfection. Again, it was the inner man that lay open to God's judgement, because it was he that was ultimately responsible for the pattern of his life as a whole.⁵ A hidden will to perfection, therefore, had to be acted out in the visible life of the monk. This is the conviction that emerges, for example, from Cassian's advice on chastity: 'Nec enim de exteriori castimonia et circumcissione manifesta, sed de illa quae in occulto est diligenter inquiritis, scientes in hac visibili carnis continentia perfectionis plenitudinem non inesse, quae haberi vel per necessitatem vel per hypocrisin etiam ab infidelibus potest, sed in illa cordis voluntaria et invisibili puritate'.⁶ Cassian was not suggesting that one could be pure in secret, as it were: the life-spring of chastity was an unseen commitment; but its results, its daily fulfilment, had to be seen by all.

Yet it was not enough for Cassian to suggest that visible asceticism was the flower of some inner strength: there was a spiritual vigour that flowed in both directions. 'Sedulitas operis', by which the elders measured a monk's vitality of heart, was more than a useful, visible guarantee that all was well in his interior life: it contributed in a positive way to the state of inner perfection. Cassian was attracted by the obvious benefit that a community could gain from the hard work of its monks; but it was an

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid. I feel sure in contrast to Marsili (*Giovanni Cassiano*, 47) that the 'pauci' of 'contemplatio paucorum' must refer to persons: hence 'sanctorum actus'. There seems no reason for Chadwick to speak of 'the contemplation of angels or saints' (italics mine), as if to suggest that these holy men are not *living* companions of the ascetic: *John Cassian*, 1st ed., 148.

³ *Con.*, i. 15. Passages like this must qualify the assertion of Peter Munz, that 'Cassian aimed at taking to pieces the world of sound and form': 'John Cassian', op. cit., 5.

⁴ *Con.*, first preface.

⁵ *Con.*, xvi. 18.

⁶ *Con.*, xxi. 36.



