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## **Philip Rousseau. 'Cassian, Contemplation, and the Coenobitic Life', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 26. [photocopie]**

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## CASSIAN, CONTEMPLATION AND THE COENOBITIC LIFE

y regnum paramus in corde'.<sup>1</sup> 'Scopos', on the other hand, is clearly a  
 n means to an end, and represents to that extent an ascetic programme,  
 y rather than a permanent achievement: indeed, Evagrius had spoken of the  
 h σκοπὸς τῆς μὲν πρακτικῆς.<sup>2</sup> To use, in addition, the translation 'destinatio'  
 f makes this act of concentration and this search for purity of heart seem  
 r more extended in time, if not more visible in effect. Cassian develops his  
 t argument along precisely these lines. Since a complete union with God is  
 e impossible 'homini ista carnis fragilitate circumdato', the monk will be  
 t more concerned in this life with establishing a sense of direction, coming to  
 a terms with a feeling of dissatisfaction, an absence of fulfilment.<sup>3</sup> Cassian  
 e insists, further, that to acquire purity of heart involves considerable effort,  
 i and should not be confused with a passive opening of the self to the in-  
 2 fluence of God: 'quidquid ergo nos ad hunc scopon, id est puritatem  
 f cordis potest dirigere, tota virtute sectandum est, quidquid autem ab hac  
 i retrahit, ut perniciosum ac noxium devitandum'.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the link  
 ) between visible practice and the purity of heart for which prayer strives is  
 t emphasised further by Cassian's avowal that the normal exercises of  
 ) professional asceticism constitute a preparation of the heart, and help to  
 ) preserve it from harm. They also represent stages by which the monk  
 ) mounts ever higher 'ad perfectionem caritatis'.<sup>5</sup>

v When, in the discourse of the abbot Isaac, Cassian fulfills his promise  
 v in the *Institutes* to provide an exhaustive treatment of prayer, these earlier  
 v points are recalled; and, as in previous passages, it is the analysis of prayer  
 v that provides a bridge between terms of contrast. Isaac brings to mind  
 v again the 'finis' of monasticism, and the desire for 'cordis perfectio', both  
 v of which, he says, must be directed 'ad iugem atque indisruptam orationis  
 v perseverantiam'.<sup>6</sup> There is a passive note in his description of prayer—the  
 v ascetic will strive to achieve an 'immobilem tranquillitatem mentis'; but  
 v this is heavily qualified by the accompanying phrase, 'quantum humanae  
 v fragilitati conceditur'.<sup>7</sup> It is not a quality of mind that one should expect  
 v to possess to perfection in this life. Not even its partial attainment need be  
 v regarded as predominantly interior, but calls for a continuous striving on  
 v the part of the whole man. Inspired by desire for this perfection, 'omnem  
 v tam laborem corporis quam contritionem spiritus indefesse quaerimus et  
 v iugiter exercemus'.<sup>8</sup>

v When Cassian presents the fullest possible picture of his spirituality in  
 v action, many contrasts reappear. The coenobite lives a practical life.

) <sup>1</sup> *Con.*, i. 13. Evagrius made more precise distinctions between βασιλεία τῶν ὀυρανῶν and  
 ) βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ: see Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano*, 108.

) <sup>2</sup> See Marsili, 38–40; and, for Evagrius, 93. I am less convinced by his assertion of  
 ) Stoic parallels, 38 n.1.

) <sup>3</sup> *Con.*, i. 13.

) <sup>4</sup> *Con.*, i. 5.

) <sup>5</sup> *Con.*, i. 7.

) <sup>6</sup> *Con.*, ix. 2.

) <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

) <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



DEKLEIN, CONTINUATION AND THE CORRECTIVE LINE

regime (action in form) "pays," on the other hand, is clearly a means to an end, and represents to that extent an active programme, rather than a permanent adjustment: indeed, Paganini had spoken of the "corrective line" as "the line of the mountain," "the line of the mountain" as the act of concentration and the search for purity of heart were more important to him, it was more visible in others. Paganini develops his argument about purity from this point: since a complete union with God is impossible, Paganini can only reach perfection (transmute), the most will be made consistent in his life with establishing a sense of direction, coming to rest with a feeling of disintegration, an absence of selfhood. Paganini means, further, that to acquire purity of heart involves considerable effort, and should not be confused with a passive opening of the self to the influence of God: "Paganini's ego was not a pure ego; it was a purified ego, the result of purification; not a passive opening of the heart, but a purification of the heart, as a purification of the heart." Finally, the link between visible practice and the purity of heart for which Paganini strives is emphasized further by Paganini's belief that the natural reaction of professional artists and composers is a purification of the heart, and help to purify it from down (and the rest) things by which the work becomes a thing, a thing, an artistic expression.

When, in the distance of the silent forest, Paganini tells his promise in the distance to provide an extensive treatment of purity, then enters into his world, and, as in previous passages, it is the subject of prayer that provides a bridge between terms of common, these things to mind again the line of concentration, and the distance from Paganini's point of view, he says that he directed, and again upon individual systems. Paganini is a passive note in his description of purity—the basic will arise to achieve an "absolute" (transformation music), but this is heavily doubted by the accompanying phrase, "quantity is human perfecting conductor." It is not a quality of mind that one should expect to possess in perfection in this life. Not even in perfect attainment need be regarded as mindlessly inferior, but calls for a continuous striving on the part of the whole man, inspired by desire for the perfection, "constant and laborious" (the conditions of the perfection, constant and laborious).<sup>1</sup>

When Paganini presents the final positive picture of his spiritual life, many contrast appear. The conductor lives a practical life.

<sup>1</sup> Paganini's words were: "I have never known a man who has not learned to live, but I have known many who have not learned to live." Paganini, op. cit., p. 102, as it was contained by the number of such passages in it.  
 \* Paganini, op. cit., p. 102.  
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