

“Abbot Holzherr’s *The Rule of Benedict* has not only brought forward the careful literal, symbolic, and moral imperatives embedded in the Rule but also raised up a clear and compelling mystical voice that gives meaning and significance to all of us who claim Benedict as teacher. The Rule prescribes spiritual journey for those of us in the monastic way of life. Holzherr lifts up the contemplative experience of this lifetime while we are on our way.”

—Meg Funk, OSB

“I heartily recommend the commentary of Abbot Georg Holzherr on the Rule of Benedict. Abbot Georg was abbot of Einsiedeln Abbey when he first published this commentary about 1980. Even as a busy abbot, he must have continued to keep abreast with the new research on the Rule, because after his retirement he published a new edition, which we have here. Holzherr is especially good on the patristic background of the Rule, but he is an overall judicious commentator.”

—Terrence G. Kardong, OSB
Assumption Abbey

“Georg Holzherr clarifies and deepens our understanding of Benedict’s Rule through his knowledge of many other monastic rules available in Benedict’s time. He shows Benedict’s intention to shape cenobitic life as an extension of baptismal vows, revealing why the Rule is a reliable guide to the Christian life not only for monastics but also for oblates and others. This is not a dry tome but rather a book evoking the love Benedict mentions so often. My heart leapt in me at times when reading Holzherr’s book.”

—Norvene Vest, PhD, Obl. OSB
Author of *Preferring Christ* and *What Is Your Practice:
Lifelong Growth in the Spirit*

“In his commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict Georg Holzherr combines contemporary, accessible language, long experience of monastic life, and an exhaustive grasp and judicious use of the ancient Christian sources of Benedict’s Rule. Holzherr’s interest is pastoral and spiritual. To those who wish to live a vibrant Christian discipleship, Holzherr presents the Rule as a *vade mecum* that breathes the always-fresh air of the ancient monastics. This exposition of the Rule is a welcome complement to the major critical commentaries. It is, in addition, an excellent tool for monastic formation.”

—Abbot Mark Scott, OCSO
New Melleray Abbey

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: NUMBER TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-SIX

The Rule of Benedict

An Invitation to the Christian Life

Georg Holzherr, OSB

Translated by

Mark Thamert, OSB



Cistercian Publications
www.cistercianpublications.org

LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota
www.litpress.org

A Cistercian Publications title published by Liturgical Press

Cistercian Publications

Editorial Offices
161 Grosvenor Street
Athens, Ohio 54701
www.cistercianpublications.org

This work was first published by Paulusverlag Freiburg Schweiz in German as *Die Benediktsregel. Eine Anleitung zu christlichem Leben. Der vollständige Text der Regel übersetzt und erklärt von Georg Holzherr, em. Abt von Einsiedeln.*

The text of the Rule of Benedict is from *RB 1980: The Rule of Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*, edited by Timothy Fry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981). Used by permission.

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Holzherr, Georg, translator. | Thamert, Mark, translator. | Benedict, Saint, Abbot of Monte Cassino. Regula. English. | Benedict, Saint, Abbot of Monte Cassino. Regula. German.

Title: The rule of Benedict : an invitation to the christian life / Georg Holzherr ; translated by Mark Thamert, OSB.

Description: Collegeville, Minnesota : Cistercian Publications, Liturgical Press, 2016. | Series: Cistercian studies series : 256 | "This work was first published by Paulusverlag Freiburg Schweiz in German as *Die Benediktsregel. Eine Anleitung zu christlichem Leben. Der vollständige Text der Regel übersetzt und erklärt von Georg Holzherr, em. Abt von Einsiedeln.*" | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016015655 (print) | LCCN 2016027156 (ebook) | ISBN 9780879072568 | ISBN 9780879077341 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Benedict, Saint, Abbot of Monte Cassino. Regula. | Benedictines—Rules. | Monasticism and religious orders—Rules.

Classification: LCC BX3004 .E6 2016 (print) | LCC BX3004 (ebook) | DDC 255/.106—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016015655>

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Preface

Benedict's Rule was written for monks, but it was composed long before there were groups called Benedictines, Basilians, or Augustinians. The spiritual teachings of the Rule, based in Scripture, were largely identical to the spirituality of the early Christian church as a whole. In our times the Rule should be accessible to all engaged Christians. For this reason, this commentary is focused mainly on the spirituality of the Rule. Even if a Rule for monks is not a textbook about spirituality, Benedict does emphasize spirituality with his use of directives, keywords, and stylistic devices. This commentary will also give some weight to the spiritual setting of the Rule and the history of monasticism before Benedict. In the past, the time of Benedict has often been dismissed in a vague way as the period of the migration of peoples, the *Völkerwanderung*. Today, the sociological setting is given more attention, since the effects of Byzantine-influenced late antiquity and of the Gothic era can be distinctly felt in the Rule.

My commentary, which appeared on the occasion of the year of Benedict, 1980, was based on the translation of the Rule done by Father Eugen Pffnner, deacon of Maria Einsiedeln.¹ For that translation and for the commentary I used the extensive work of Adalbert de Vogüé, La Pierre-qui-Vire Abbey, and the edition of the Rule done by Fr. Basilius Steidle, Beuron (d. 1982). In later editions I included some small changes. Especially helpful in this work were the following translations and commentaries: *Die Benediktusregel* (published by the Salzburg Abbots' Conference), the editions of Henri Rochais and Eugene Manning and of Don Anselmo Lentini (Monte Cassino), and *RB 1980*.

1. *Die Regel des heiligen Benedikt* (Einsiedeln/Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1947).

For the sixth edition, I thoroughly revised the introduction, Latin text, translation, and commentary. I gathered additional evidence, for example, pertaining to the monastic life of women. I also evaluated new publications. The bibliographies of these publications provide details about all the chapters of the Rule. I have intentionally kept my bibliography and in-text citations quite concise.

In this version, I have provided more depth on some spiritual topics. Certain additions and corrections stem from Vogüé's most recent research and from the publications of the monastic institutes of Salzburg and Sant'Anselmo, Rome.

For her good advice I thank Sr. Manuela Scheiba, OSB, Berlin/Alexanderdorf and Rome, who made available the resources of the monastery library of Einsiedeln.

+ Georg Holzherr, OSB
Former Abbot of Einsiedeln

Editorial Note

I am grateful to Mark Delcogliano, Fr. Columba Stewart, Emily Stuckey, and Fr. Terrence Kardong for their assistance with bibliographical questions. MLD

Abbreviations

Cod	Codex
Com	Commentary
d.	died
Ed	Edition, edited by
Ep	Epistle
Frag	Fragment
Hom	Homily
Inc	Incipit
Pr	Prologue
Pref	Preface
Prooem	Prooemium
Reg	Rule
S(s)	Sermon(s)
T	Title
Tr	Treatise
Trans	Translation, translated by
V(v)	Verse(s)

Journals and Series

CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
PL	Patrologia Latina
Rev Ben	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
SCh	Sources Chrésiennes

Patristic Works

Ad Dem	<i>Ad Demetriades</i> , Pelagius
Ad Don	<i>Ad Donatus</i> , Cyprian
Admonitio	<i>Admonitio ad filium spiritualem</i> , Ps-Basil

Apol	<i>Apologia</i>
CiprEp	Epistle, Cyprian
1 Clem	First Epistle on the Corinthians, Clement of Alexandria
Coll alph	Alphabetic collection of the <i>Apophthegmata of the Fathers</i>
Coll syst	Systematic collection of the <i>Apophthegmata of the Fathers</i>
Conf	<i>Conferences</i> , Cassian
Constit apost	<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>
De civ Dei	<i>De civitatis Dei</i> , Augustine
De viris ill	<i>De viris illustribus</i> , Isidore of Seville
Dial	<i>Dialogues</i>
En	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> , Augustine
Ep hort	<i>Epistola Hortatoria ad Virginem Deo Dedicatam</i> , Teridius
Ex hom	<i>Homily on Exodus</i> , Origen
Expo Ps	<i>Expositio Psalmi</i> , Ambrose
Gen hom	<i>Homily on Genesis</i> , Origen
GirEp	Epistle, Girolamo
Hist mon	<i>Historia monachorum</i> , Rufinus
Inst	<i>Institutiones / Instituta</i> , Cassian
Iud	<i>Iudicia</i> , Pachomius
Jes Nav Hom	<i>Homily on the Nativity of Jesus</i> , Origen
Judic Hom	<i>Homily on Iudicia</i> , Origen
Leg	<i>Leges</i> , Pachomius
Lev Hom	<i>Homily on Leviticus</i> , Origen
Lib	<i>Liber</i> , Horsiesus
Nov	<i>Novellae</i> , Justinian
Num hom	<i>Homily on Numbers</i> , Cassian
OM	<i>Ordo monasterii</i> , Augustine
Op mon	<i>De opere monachorum</i> , Augustine
Or	<i>De Oratione</i> , Cyprian or Evagrius
Praec	<i>Praecepta</i> , Augustine or Pachomius
Prakt	<i>Logos praktikos</i> , Evagrius
S de Quadr	Sermo de Quadragesima, Leo I
VAnt	<i>Vita Antonii</i> , Athanasius
VCaes	<i>Vita Caesarii</i>
VHonor	<i>Vita Honorati</i> , Hilary of Arles

Vir inl	<i>De viris inlustribus</i> , Jerome
VMart	<i>Vita Martini</i> , Sulpicius Severus
VPach	<i>Vita Pachomii</i> , Rufinus
VPatr	<i>Vitae Patrum</i>
VPJur	<i>Vita Patrum Jurensium (Lives of the Fathers of Jura)</i>
Zel	<i>De zelo et livore</i> , Cyprian

Monastic Rules

Pach Reg	<i>Pachomian Monasticism</i> , Jerome
2PR	<i>2. Regel der Väter</i>
3PR	<i>3. Regel der Väter</i>
1QS	<i>Rule from Qumrân</i>
RAurMon	<i>Rule for Monks</i> , Aurelian
R4P	<i>Rule of the Four Fathers</i>
RB	<i>Rule of Saint Benedict</i>
RBasRuf	<i>Rule of Basil</i> , Rufinus
RCaesMon	<i>Rule for Monks</i> , Caesarius
RCaesVirg	<i>Rule for Nuns</i> , Caesarius
RF	Rule of Ferreolus
RM	Rule of the Master
RM Th	Rule of the Master thema (baptismal catechesis)
RM ThP	Rule of the Master thema-pater (commentary on the Lord's Prayer)
RM ThS	Rule of the Master thema-servitium operis (commentary on two psalms)
RMac	Rule of Macarius
ROrient	Oriental Rule

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Introduction

1. The Spirituality of the Rule

a. The Rule gives a spirituality based in Scripture; Benedict wants to form people through the Beatitudes.¹ Christ is model and prototype for monks, Christians who are engaged in the church. The community in the Acts of the Apostles offers a model for living their lives.² The earlier monastic fathers and Benedict transfer this biblical orientation to the monastic way of life. Actual institutions were in flux, both before and after Benedict. Any interpretation of the Rule of Saint Benedict must start with this biblical and Christ-centered background. In the final chapter of his “small” Rule, which seems mainly to offer more asceticism and praxis than theology, Benedict refers to the “holy fathers,” making use of them, and especially of Eastern spirituality, which was being developed further in the West. Thus his Rule offers a profound synthesis of Eastern and Western spiritualities. Contact with these roots of Christian spirituality remains essential.

b. The Second Vatican Council pointed not only monks and other religious but also all Christians to the Eastern sources: “In the East are to be found the riches of those spiritual traditions which are given expression in monastic life especially. From the glorious times of the holy fathers, that monastic spirituality flourished in the East which later flowed over into the western world,

1. See Matt 5:1-12. The RB refers to the Sermon on the Mount directly or indirectly about twenty-five times; in addition, it refers to the Beatitudes another five times. The Rule, above all in its spiritual parts, wants to promote the attitudes presented in these gospel passages. Just as a watermark guarantees the quality of a sheet of paper while not being visible at first glance, the human stances praised by Jesus are a central theme of the Rule, even if this is not always expressly stated.

2. See Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37.

and there provided a source from which Latin monastic life took its rise and has often drawn fresh vigor ever since. Therefore, it is earnestly recommended that Catholics avail themselves more often of the spiritual riches of the Eastern fathers which lift up all that is human to the contemplation of divine mysteries."³

c. Jerome wrote in 404, "Whoever finds joy in the practice [of the life in] holy community should drink from the sources rather than from derivative streams."⁴ In this spirit this commentary illustrates the Rule with those texts that I have newly translated from the Latin, texts that Benedict himself may have known.⁵ Besides these, other writings important for monasticism are quoted, for example, the later description of Benedict's life by Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604). In this way, the spirituality of the older undivided Christianity can become fruitful for our times; forgotten or distorted spiritual knowledge can come to life again. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, new perspectives and dimensions have opened up to Christianity over the centuries as well as in the present. Contact with the spiritual past can pose questions to our fathers in faith as well as to us and can offer orientation for a way into the future.

2. A Meditative Reading of the Rule

a. In Benedictine monasteries the Rule is read daily, but only a small passage each day. The Rule is comparable to an old heavy red wine that is enjoyed in small sips. The one who exceeds the correct portion or consumes the wine without a feel for its qualities is to be pitied. Head and heart, soul and mind should taste the words of the Rule, just as the eye enjoys the color of the wine, while tongue, nose, and mouth take in the delightful gift of

3. *Unitatis redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism) 15, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations; The Basic Sixteen Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014).

4. Pref, in *Pach Reg* 9.

5. For the *Liber Horsiesi*, I used a German translation for purposes of comparison: Heinrich Bacht, trans., *Das Vermächtnis des Ursprungs* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag GmbH, 1972). For Origen, I consulted the edition of Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Origenes: Geist und Feuer*, 3rd ed. (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1938; Einsiedeln, 1991).

God, each in its own way. When people have tasted a saying of Benedict on their tongue by repeating it to themselves, they will meditate further, perhaps by following up with biblical passages, parables, and images that resonate, or by bringing to mind the person, mystery, and teachings of Jesus. That is the method of meditation of the ancient church of the East and the West, always resulting in spontaneous prayer and a change in one's behavior.

b. Benedict establishes a House of God in which the forgetfulness of God (a practical atheism widely spread both then and now) never appears. Equally important for Benedict are the monastic hours and *lectio divina* as well as the times for work (done to honor God) and the collected wisdom of the leaders of the monastery.⁶ The figure of Christ appears repeatedly at the center of things: the crucified and glorified Lord. For this reason Christian Schütz calls Benedict's work a "Rule of Christ."⁷ Nothing is to be preferred to Christ, in whom the Father reveals his love. In the monastery, understood as the "school of the Lord's service," the abbot is *only* a representative of Christ.⁸ Listening to and answering the call of the Lord, which is the basis of baptismal spirituality, characterizes the entire Rule.⁹ The one who listens to what "the Spirit is saying to the community" has heard and understood the Rule correctly.¹⁰ Even in specific instructions, the Rule refers to Christ, as it sometimes states clearly, sometimes makes discernible through word choice and allusions.

c. Similarly, the ecclesial dimension should not be overlooked. The monastery, a structure within the entire church (*ecclesiola in ecclesia*), was set up by Benedict according to the model predetermined by the Bible and by tradition, even in questions of how

6. See the index s.v. *House of God*.

7. Christian Schütz, "Grundsätze," in Michaela Puzicha, *Kommentar zur Benediktsregel* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 2002), 18–20; Christian Schütz, "'Christus, der Herr' in der Benediktsregel," in *Lebendiges Kloster. Festschrift für Abt Georg Holzherr*, ed. Magnus Löhner and Markus Steiner (Fribourg: Paulusverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1997), 125–45. See RB Prol.3; 4.21; 61.10; 72.11.

8. See RB Prol.45 and 2.1–6.

9. See RB Prol.1–3 and RB Prol.15–18 or Prol.23–28, where Psalms 34 and 15 are explained. These psalms were used in the ancient church for baptismal catechesis.

10. RB Prol.11 = Rev 2:7.

to understand community, positions of leadership, and the way monks are to serve. An insight into the Rule, which orders the lives of the monks, can be gained only when it is read against the background of the Bible as well as other ecclesial and monastic writings. Benedict wants the Rule to hand on the knowledge of traditions, spirituality, and discipline gained from experience. For that reason it is comparable—in the Christian context—to the Wisdom literature of the First Testament (*RB 1980*).

3. Monks and Their Writings before Benedict

3.1 *The Early Church*

a. In all religions and cultures there have been and are people who want to follow a spiritual path of greater depth. They stand out in the quality of their engagement, even if they are not always immune to shortcomings. From the beginning of Christianity there were virgins, widows, and ascetics.¹¹ They lived in the middle of villages or were isolated, though sometimes in communities.¹² In contrast to the clerical life, they usually were not involved in ministry but took on essential tasks of the locality, for example, catechesis or works of charity. With Christ as their guide, they cultivated reading the Bible, prayer, and asceticism, as well as sexual abstinence, poverty, and fasting. From the fourth century on these ascetics were increasingly replaced by monks.

b. An outstanding example from the early period is Origen (ca. 185–253). He was the son of a martyr and was himself tortured for his faith.¹³ He taught at the catechists' school of his home city, Al-

11. See 1 Cor 7: "virgins"; 1 Tim 5:3: "widows."

12. See VPach 2 (15): In the era of persecution the church grew and also included "a great number of monasteries of ascetics who forsook the world and thus became famous for their isolation and solitude." Around the age of twelve, Martin (born in 316), a catechumen living in Pavia, dreamed of a life in a hermitage or in "monasteries [*monasteria*] or churches" (VMart 2.4).

13. During a visit to the Church of Rome in 212, Origen got to know the local presbyter Hippolytus (d. 235), a student of Irenaeus of Lyon, from whom a lineage can be drawn back to his teacher Polycarp of Smyrna and to the apostle John. Especially some statements about obedience that

exandria, and then in Caesarea, encouraging knowledge of Scripture and devotion and urging people to battle against evil without denying the necessity of grace.¹⁴ Origen's spirituality became increasingly important for the church and for monasticism,¹⁵ especially his understanding of the interaction between divine grace and human asceticism. This ancient teaching about grace found its way into the Rule of Saint Benedict via the Master.¹⁶

c. The spirituality of ascetics and monks or of virgins was not based only on monastic writings but rather was influenced by all the Christian fathers and by the institutional church, for example, by the writings of the Jewish-Christian bishop and martyr Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258), especially his explanation of the Our Father,¹⁷ or by the *Didaskalia of the Apostles*, which was written in North Syria and influenced the penitential practices of Benedict.¹⁸

d. By way of authors of the early church or their influence on later writers, the spirituality of the church of the martyrs found its way into the Rule of Saint Benedict, where one can sense a kind of yearning for the era of the martyrs¹⁹ and the primitive church.²⁰

have parallels in the Master are reminiscent of Irenaeus. See RB Prol.5-7; 5.1-9. Irenaeus was already aware of the trichotomy of body-soul-spirit emphasized in the Master (e.g., RM thp.28; 1.80; 81.18-19), mentioned in 1 Thess 5:23, and familiar to the Fathers (*Adversus haereses* 5.6.1): "The fulfilled human being is the inner uniting of the soul, which absorbs the Spirit of the Father, with the flesh, which is created in the image of God."

14. Ascetic wrestling is perceived as an analogy to Jesus' battle against evil and to the martyrs' battle (see RB Prol.2, 3, 28, 29-32, 40, 45; 4.29-33, 61; 5.10-13; 7.42-43).

15. Origen extended his work, *inter alia*, beyond Didymus of Alexandria (d. 398) and Gregory the Miracle Worker (d. 270). The latter influenced the spirituality of Cappadocia until the days of Basil.

16. See RB Prol.48-49.

17. Benedict certainly read Cyprian, *De dominica oratione*, ed. Guilelmus Hartel, CSEL 3.1 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1868); 4.20-33, 55-58; 72.11.

18. This text was translated into Latin early on (Franz Xaver von Funk, ed., *Didascalica et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, 2 vols. [Paderborn: Schoeningh, 1905], vol. 1).

19. RB Prol.28, 47, 50; 1.2; 4.20-33, 62-73; 5.10-13; 7.35-43; 14.1-2; 58.1-4, 13-16; 72.7.

20. RB Prol.50; 9.8; 21.1-4; 33.6.

3.2 Monastic Spokespersons of the Fourth and Early Fifth Centuries

a. Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria wrote the *Life of Antony* in 357.²¹ The hermit had died shortly before that in the desert near the Red Sea. Soon the *Vita Antonii*²² was being discussed in all Christendom. In Milan Augustine found this *vita* in the hands of a businessman who had come in contact with monks in Trier (probably companions of the exiled Athanasius). He read it and immediately came to believe (in the garden experience reported in the *Confessions*). Antony, who had lost his parents, heard the advice of Jesus to the rich young man (Matt 19:16-26) and in his hometown allowed an elder to induct him into the ascetical life. He tried initially to lead a life of recollection and attentiveness, to test his resilience. He attended to work activities (for his livelihood and for charity), prayer, and spiritual reading. Finally, he exercised the ascetical practices of vigils, sleeping on the ground, and forgoing ointments. Formed as an ascetic, he moved to the desert as a hermit, mentored students there, and then moved further out into the desert to be alone once again.

b. Jerome (347–419), who came from Dalmatia and enjoyed an excellent education, was baptized in Rome and led a monastic life with friends. Then he moved to the desert of Chalcis (near Aleppo), worked at exegetical and literary²³ tasks, and became an admirer of Origen. From 382 to 385 he was secretary of Pope Damasus and improved the Latin translation of the Bible. A circle

21. The commentary in the following sections on the history of the monasticism broadly adheres to, while not specifically citing, Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire Littéraire du Mouvement Monastique dans l'Antiquité* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1991–2006), or Vogüé's shorter version of that work, *Il monachesimo prima di San Benedetto* (Seregno: Abbazia San Benedetto, 1998).

22. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, ed. G. J. M. Bartelink, SCh 400 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1994); *Vita di Antonio*, ed. G. J. M. Bartelink, trans. P. Citati and S. Lilla, 6th ed. (Mailand, 1998).

23. See *Epistulae*, ed. Isidore Hilbert, CSEL 54–56 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1910, 1912, 1918). For monastic interests, the following are particularly important: Letter 22 (to Eustochium), 125 (to Rusticus), 52 and 60 (to Nepotianus), and 53 and 65 (to Paulinus). Noblewomen were able to provide the material and personnel requirements for Jerome's Bible translation.

of noble Roman women, especially Marcella and Paula, were won over by Jerome to the ascetical life; he wrote exemplary biographies of several hermits for them. In 384 he wrote a guidebook for Paula's daughter Eustachium, who wanted to devote herself to God as a virgin (Letter 22). In it he describes Egyptian monasticism and condemns monks living in groups of twos and threes (*remnuoth* = separatists). In contrast, he admired large monasteries where monks lived under an experienced superior (even if in small hermitages where they could meditate). These cenobites met for prayer and instructive talks and had a particular amount of work to accomplish each day. Some of them started to live as hermits after their training in the monastery.

c. In 411 Jerome composed ascetic guidelines for the young Rusticus of Marseille, advising him against the hermit's life. His instructions for the monastic life are also contained in letters to various women and to Paulinus of Nola (353–431). Paulinus came from senatorial nobility. Having grown up in southern Gaul, he was married to the Spanish woman Theresia, was consecrated a priest, and lived simply, like a monk, even though he was rich. He had a good reputation. Jerome also outlined a "clerical" monasticism for the young priest Nepotianus, a kind of monasticism that already existed in the areas of Eusebius of Vercelli (283–371), Ambrose of Milan (339–397), and Augustine of Hippo (354–430). Jerome had in 404 already formed a community of Latin nuns, whom he supervised in Bethlehem. They lived in a cloister but attended the Eucharist in town each Sunday. They were divided into groups of nobility, slaves, and free women, probably so that the noble women would not depend on the services of the others. All of them wore the same clothing and together carried out the hours of Morning Prayer, Terce, Sext, and None, Evening Prayer, and a nighttime prayer. They made clothing and did this work even on the Lord's Day.

In 404 Jerome translated into Latin the writings of Pachomius (d. 347),²⁴ which had been written in Coptic and then made accessible in Greek. The four collections of "precepts" (*praecepta*) of

24. Amand Boon, *Pachomiana latina, Règle et épîtres de S. Pachome, épître de S. Théodore et "Liber" de S. Orsiesius. Texte latin de S. Jérôme* (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1932).

Pachomius, as well as his biography²⁵ and other writings such as the *Liber Horsiesi* (d. ca. 380), by Horsiesus, the third follower of Pachomius, paved the way for later monasticism, even if taking second place behind the *Vita Antonii*.²⁶ They were particularly influential because of including both practical regulations and exhortations that the community (*koinonia*) be centered in Christ. Near the Nile in Upper Egypt, Pachomius had founded Tabennisi and eight other monasteries, a kind of monastic federation for which he served as superior, spiritually even after his death. Life together in these *coenobia* was in need of extensive organization, not only to avoid overburdening the individual but also to give eager members latitude to do good. Pachomius gave the same rules to two women's monasteries, which emerged under the leadership of his sister.²⁷

d. Rufinus of Aquileia (345–411), a boyhood friend of Jerome, was also a major propagator of monasticism. He had gotten to know the monks of the Nitrian desert in Egypt and Palestine. Because Rufinus refused to follow the ecclesiastical-political condemnation of Origen, the fiery Jerome had a falling out with him. As a result of this controversy, the translations of Rufinus were seldom read in later years in the West. Beginning in 397, Rufinus translated an early version of the ascetic rules of Basil from the Greek. Benedict later expressly recommended this work as the *Regula sancti patris nostri Basilii* and was himself strongly influenced by it.²⁸

25. Henri van Cranenburgh, *La Vie latine de Saint Pachome, traduite du grec par Denys le Petit* (Brussels: Soci t  des Bollandistes, 1969). The text was already known in the West before Dionysius's Latin translation of 527.

26. Examples include Cassian (d. 432), Caesarius of Arles (d. 542), and Benedict (21.1-4; 38.5-9).

27. VPach 28–29.

28. RB 73.5. Rules in a question-and-answer style date back to Basil. Rufinus translated an original redaction of that asceticon (the Latin *Regula*, with which Benedict was familiar). See Klaus Zelzer, *Basilii Regula, a Rufino latine versa*, CSEL 86 (Vienna: F. Tempisky, 1986). Rufinus dedicated that rule to the abbot of Urseus, in Terracina. A Greek version of that asceticon is not available. There is a further development in the later editions in Greek called "Longer Rules" and "Shorter Rules."

e. Basil the Great (330–379), bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia,²⁹ is the only author whom Benedict mentions by name.³⁰ At first Basil identified with the ascetic movement surrounding Eustathius of Sebaste (d. after 377), which sought reform in the church and in Christians, not in the spread of monasticism. The Synod of Gangra (340) condemned the one-sided ascetic exaggerations of the movement. Basil then separated himself from Eustathius, with whom he had visited the ascetics in Syria, Palestine, and Lower Egypt. Basil avoided extremes and understood monasticism as an intensely lived form of Christianity for which love of God and neighbor and a life based on Scripture are essential. Benedict often uses the questioning and the core principles of Basil's declarations. For Benedict, Basil is the authority for life lived in common, especially regarding love for one's brother or sister, obedience, abstinence, and the testing of newcomers.

f. Rufinus made accessible to the Latins another work created in the East, the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* by an unknown author.³¹ In contrast to Basil, who was exclusively cenobitic in his way of thinking, different forms of Egyptian monasticism appear in this work: hermits, anchorite colonies (Skete, Nitria, Kellia),³²

29. Caesarea (today Kaysari), at that time a Greek town, is located in Turkey, east of Ankara. North of it lay Annisi, where Makrina junior, Basil's sister, began an ascetic life in 352. She was under the influence of Makrina senior, a student of Gregory the Miracle Worker, who dedicated his famous speech of thanks to his teacher Origen. Basil began an ascetic life on a family estate in Annisi in 357.

30. Basil remained uncontroversial among the clerical hierarchy as well as among the monks. Cassian (d. 432) also mentions Basil by name (Inst, Pref 5). By summarizing the *Admonition to the Spiritual Son*, which is ascribed to Basil, at the beginning of the Rule (RB Prol.1-4) and by specifically mentioning Basil in the final chapter, Benedict seems to subordinate his whole Rule to the patronage of Basil, perhaps in consideration of Byzantium. It nevertheless has to be pointed out, with reference to Vogüé, that Benedict also calls unknown monks of Egypt "our holy fathers" (RB 18.25; see VPatr 5.4.57). See Vogüé, "L'influence de S. Basile sur le monachisme d'Occident," Rev Bén 113, no. 1 (2003): 5–17, here 14.

31. Eva Schulz-Flügel, *Tyrannius Rufinus, Historia Monachorum sive De Vita sanctorum Patrum* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1990).

32. See Georges Descoedres, "Die Mönchsiedlung Kellia. Archäologische Erkenntnisse," in *Zu den Quellen: Die Spiritualität der Wüstenväter*

cenobites (like those of Pachomius), and a cloistered monastery (like that of the presbyter Isidore). Rufinus also made controversial works known in the West: the sentences of Evagrius Ponticus³³ and the *Enchiridion* of Sextus the Pythagorean.³⁴ The *Sayings of the Fathers* (*Verba Seniorum* or *Apophthegmata*) also deeply impressed Benedict.³⁵ These tell vividly how an experienced father (*abba*)

und des hl. Benedikt, ed. Jakobus Kaffanke, 2nd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Katholische Akademie der Erzdiözese, 1998), 27–41. The hermitages in Kellia are enclosed with a wall; they show an eastward-facing oratory (decorated with stylized motifs such as a cross, tree of life, and flowers of paradise), common rooms, and a vestibule. The buildings are dug one meter deep into the desert floor.

33. It is not clear which “sentences” of Evagrius Benedict read in Latin translation. Gennadius lists more titles than does Benedict of Aniane (*Codex Regularum Monasticarum et Canoniarum*, ed. Lukas Holsten and Marianus Brockie, 6 vols. [Augsburg: Augustae Vind., 1759; reprint: Graz, 1957], 465–69). See Jean Leclercq, “L’ancienne version latine des sentences d’Évagre pour les moines,” *Scriptorium* 5 (1951): 195–213. For a further partial list on *De oratione*, see *Das Geistesgebet*, ed. Gabriel Bunge (Cologne: Luthe Verlag, 1987); Evagrius Pontikos, *Der Praktikos (Der Mönch)*, ed. Gabriel Bunge (Cologne: Beuroner Kunstverlag, 1989); *Le Gnostique*, ed. Antoine and Claire Guillaumont, SCh 356 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1989); *Über die acht Gedanken* (known also as a work of Nilus: *Über die acht Geister der Bosheit*), ed. Gabriel Bunge (Cologne: Beuroner Kunstverlag, 2007). For other works, see Gabriel Bunge, *Drachenwein and Engelsbrot. Die Lehre des Evagrius Pontikos von Zorn und Sanftmut* (Würzburg: Der Christliche Osten, 1999); Gabriel Bunge, *Akedia. Die geistliche Lehre des Evagrius Pontikos vom Überdruss*, 4th ed. (Würzburg: Der Christliche Osten, 1995); Gabriel Bunge, *Geistliche Vaterschaft, Christliche Gnosis bei Evagrius Pontikos* (Cologne: Luthe Verlag, 1987).

34. CCSL 20:259. See RB 7.61 = Sextus, *Enchiridion*, trans. Eugene Dubarie (Videcocq, 1825), 134, 145.

35. PL 73:855–991, 991–1024. See Bonifaz Miller, *Weisungen der Väter: Apophthegmata Patrum, auch Geronikon oder Alphabeticum genannt* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Paulinus Verlag, 1965). The *Apophthegmata*, originally in Greek, are available in collections that are structured partly systematically, partly by authors’ names. They were translated, probably between 543 and 545, by the Deacon Pelagius and the Subdeacon John, and later by Pope Pelagius I (556–561) and Pope John III (561–574). Benedict was familiar with that translation. He considered his own Western practice as a flattening of the ideal of the Egyptian monk fathers. See RB 18.25 (number of psalms); 40.6 (enjoyment of wine).

or occasionally a mother (*amma*) is asked for advice by another monk or nun, often a novice: "Father, give me a word!" The sayings of the fathers are usually down to earth and powerful, sometimes naïve or idealistic as well. On the whole they are based on Scripture.

g. The West too has ideal monk figures. The highly educated Sulpicius Severus (363–420), who also wrote about the Egyptian monks, drew attention to Martin of Tours (316–397) as model monk and bishop. Sulpicius, born in southern Gaul, had himself been won over to the ascetic life by Martin and Paulinus of Nola. Martin occasionally stayed at the monastic island of Gallinaria, near Genoa. In his writings, Sulpicius made Martin known both during in his lifetime and after his death.³⁶ These edifying writings provide Martin, the monk and bishop who was born in Pannonia, with attributes from the *Vita Antonii*. The people wanted the less-refined monk Martin as bishop, to the dismay of the more cultivated episcopacies of the time.³⁷ The biography depicts Martin as a charismatic monk and bishop who performed signs and wonders. Attentive to evangelization of the country people, he lived alone, quietly and ascetically, not far from the diocesan center. Eighty followers gathered around him, living individually in wooden houses or in caves above the Loire. None of them held property, and none drank wine. Some of Martin's disciples became bishops. The monks following Martin devoted considerable time to prayer and liturgy, with a farmer hired for farm work³⁸ and only the younger men copying manuscripts. The monks, like the poor, received their livelihood from the church. In the long run, this exaggeration of the life of prayer and the attendant shying away from work endangered the existence of Martin's monastic practice in the West.

Among Syrian monks, some of whom appeared in the West, there were also "prayer brothers," *euchites*. Around 400 Augustine

36. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S. Martini* (with three letters and two books *Dialogi*): ed. Carl Halm, CSEL 1 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1866), 109–216; ed. J. Fontaine, Sch 133–35 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967–1969).

37. See Sulpicius Severus, VMart 9. On the monastic teaching of Martin, see Andreas E. J. Grote, *Anachorese und Zönobium* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2001).

38. VMart 21.3.

of Hippo had written the treatise *Of the Work of Monks*,³⁹ challenging the emphasis among the monks of Carthage on prayer to the exclusion of work. But Martin, as well as Bishop Victricius of Rouen (d. 409) and the monks under them who cooperated with the clergy, did much to Christianize the rural areas. According to Sulpicius Severus, two thousand monks were present at Martin's death.

h. A letter of Pope Siricus to the bishop of Tarragona in 385 encouraged him to exclude unworthy monks and accept good ones into the clergy, or even to make them bishops. Here too a connection between monasticism and clerical life was encouraged. In Spain the Council of Saragossa in 380 condemned all monastic practices adapted by the laity, such as quiet retreats before Christmas or during Lent. This condemnation happened in connection with the accusation of heresy against the hyper-ascetical Priscillianus, who was executed in 385 in Trier. As a result of this accusation, all who wore monks' clothing or who fasted or dedicated themselves to reading became suspect. There were also nuns in Spain. Egeria,⁴⁰ among the best known, made a pilgrimage (382–384) visiting monasteries and holy places in Palestine and in the East. For her sisters in Galicia she left behind a highly interesting travelogue proving that many men and women were leading a monastic life in the areas around the holy places.

3.3 The First Western Rules

In contrast to Martin of Tours, Augustine left behind a monastic rule. Impressed by the good example of Roman monasteries, he converted and began an ascetic life in Thagaste. Later he became a presbyter in Hippo. As bishop he wrote a rule for monks. In contrast to the organizational rules of Pachomius and the biblically based rule of Basil, the first Western rules, which originate from both sides of the Mediterranean—from Africa and from the island of Lérins in southern Gaul—seem very short.

39. *De opere monachorum*, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL 41 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1900), 529–96.

40. Egeria, *Itinerarium Reisebericht*, ed. Georg Rówekamp, 2d ed., *Fontes christiani* 20 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2000).

a. Among the Augustinian⁴¹ rules are

1. The *Ordo Monasterii*. This rule for monasteries was written in 395 by a friend of Augustine, Bishop Alypius, for a community in Thagaste. Alypius writes concisely, beginning with the dual commandment of love, from which emerges the requirement of a moderately structured Liturgy of the Hours, including Morning Prayer, three minor hours, the *lucinarium*, reading and prayer before bedtime, and night prayer. The horarium provided for six hours of work in the morning, reading from noon until three o'clock, a single mealtime at noon, and three more hours of work until the *lucinarium*. This rule came originally from the hermit colony in Kellia, Egypt, probably taken from there by Evagrius Ponticus to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, where Rufinus headed a monastery that had been visited by Bishop Alypius. After the horarium, with its reference to the early church, came a ban on private property, a warning about murmuring, a call for obedience to the father of the monastery, table regulations (including table reading), arrangements for fasting, and guidelines for punishment for offenses. This concise monastery order includes many of the known precepts of monastic life, especially the calls to obedience, poverty, and silence.

2. The *Praeceptum*. This rule comes from Augustine himself, who handed it over to his monastic community of laypeople when he moved into the bishop's house with the clergy. He begins with a biblically based principle: Live together and be intent upon God!⁴² The model of the early church provides the focus, with the superior allocating what is needed to each person. From this basic principle Augustine focuses on the way the rich and the poor are to live together. He also develops instructions of lasting validity such as the following: while praying, the brothers should be mindful in their hearts of what they speak with their lips, what is acquired by work goes to the community, one's demeanor should be reserved, especially when one goes out, and one obeys the lay superior (*praepositus*) like the father of a family and like

41. Luc Verheijen, ed., *La Règle de S. Augustin* (Paris: L'institut des Études Augustiniennes, 1967); George Lawless, ed., *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

42. See below on 1.2.

a church superior. However, Augustine designates a priest as the superior authority. In the conclusion he once again urges love. Augustine then adapted this *Praeceptum* for a men's monastery for the women's monastery of Hippo, which his sister had founded.⁴³ When the sisters, however, opposed her successor, Augustine reprimanded them and reminded them of the authority of not only the priest but also the bishop. This is also the context for Augustine's instruction regarding prayer, dedicated to the Roman noblewoman Proba.⁴⁴

b. Sometime between 400 and 410, the date of the Goths' conquering Rome, the monks of Lérins island, near Cannes, received the *Rule of the Four Fathers*⁴⁵ for ordering their lives. The four authors, who appear to be synodal, have Egyptian-sounding names: Serapion, Macarius, Paphnutius, and again Macarius, but these are probably pseudonyms. Because Lérins is known to have been influenced from the beginning by Egyptian or Eastern models,⁴⁶ some scholars say that the "Four Fathers" were first monks and later bishops of Lérins or its surroundings,⁴⁷ who gave the island monastery a "rule for life" based on writings inspired by the Holy Spirit. From this point on the monks were to live together under a single superior and to obey him. That superior was to act for Christ and to show both kindness and strictness (*pietas et severitas*). From their rule the superior received instructions for the reception of brothers (including those coming from other

43. Ep 211, in Augustine, *Epistolae*, ed. Alois Goldbacher, CSEL 57 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1911), 356–71.

44. Ep 130, *Epistolae*, ed. Alois Goldbacher, CSEL 44 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1904), 40–77.

45. R4P: *Les Règles des saints Pères*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, Sch 297 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982); Michaela Puzicha, *Die Regeln der Väter: Vorbenediktinische lateinische Regeltradition* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme-Verlag, 1990).

46. Faustus von Riez, Hom 72.13, in Eusebius "*Gallicanus*" *Collectio homiliarum: de qua critice disseruit Ioh. Leroy*, ed. François Glorie, 3 vols., CCSL 101A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970–71); see VPJr 174.

47. According to Vogüé's meticulous studies, the "Four Fathers" are probably the following persons: Paphnutius was probably Bishop Honoratus of Arles, earlier abbot and founder of Lérins; the first and second Macarius might both be the hermit Caprasius, the spiritual advisor of Honoratus; and Serapion was probably Bishop Leontius of Fréjus.

monasteries) and for the reception of guests. The rule of Lérins measures times for reading and work in the same way as in the Augustinian *ordo monasterii*, except that reading was to occur in the morning until Terce and work done until None. It also outlines a system of punishments.

c. Around the year 427 Lérins received the very short *Second Rule of the Fathers*,⁴⁸ probably by the same fathers whom the new Abbot Maximus had joined. This rule not only emphasizes the significance of the superior (in the beginning the founder) for the unity of the community, since he represents Christ among his apostles, but also calls for the superior and the community to be gathered in an atmosphere of mutual love and respect, an attitude reflecting that of the primitive church. It especially emphasizes silence. The Divine Office seems to last a very long time in this work. The term *meditation* now stands for reading and study, with the Bible to be assimilated in such a way that the monk can reflect on scriptural passages even while working, as Augustine points out to “prayer brothers” who are unwilling to do work.

3.4 Expansion in the Fifth Century—John Cassian

a. Monasticism was developing everywhere. Among the monastic writings of this period, those of John Cassian (360–432) stand out. He was probably a Scythian born in a part of today's Rumania where Latin was spoken, and he was well educated. He became a monk with his friend Germanus in a monastery in Bethlehem and visited the monks of Egypt during a trip that lasted fourteen years. During this time he became acquainted with the semi-eremitic colonies in Lower Egypt as well as with monks in Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. In the Nitrian Desert he got to know Evagrius Ponticus (345–399), who had been living there since 382. Evagrius was acquainted with the Cappadocians, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus. Cassian owed much to Evagrius, even if he did not mention him by name because of the controversies of the time. Evagrius handed on to Cassian the spirituality of the Cappadocians, especially of the mystic Gregory of Nyssa (d. 349) and the ideas of Origen, through whom the motif of the

48. 2PR = *Statuta Patrum*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, SCh 297 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982).

spiritual ascent became more developed. In Constantinople Cassian himself was consecrated deacon by John Chrysostom. After Chrysostom's removal in 404, the city's clergy sent Cassian and his friend Germanus to the pope in Rome to protest against actions of the emperor. Later Cassian again appears, as priest and abbot in Marseille, where he had founded two monasteries, for men and for women.

b. There, in 426, Cassian published the work *De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalibus vitiis*. The four books of the *Institutes* deal in a detailed way with questions concerning the monastic life. In this context Cassian shows his preference for the Egyptian-Basilian practice of monasticism: monks' clothing should be simple and uniform, and for liturgies he recommends a moderate number of psalms, like what he had experienced in Egypt and Palestine, in contrast to the heavy regimen of psalms that was the norm in Gaul. In the *Institutes* he also deals extensively with the education of those newly arrived in the monastery, saying that they should not want to go their own ways but rather open their hearts for an ascent to an attitude of humility, obedience, and finally love. Here he sets out the "manifestations" of love that become for Benedict the "degrees of humility." Cassian also mentions other monastic observances and then eight books of capital vices, among which are the false tendencies that can be the gateways to evil. He also names remedies for these vices, for example, work as a help against *acedia* (tedium).

The twenty-four books of Cassian's *Collationes Patrum* (*Conferences of the Fathers*) are lectures about real, freely modified conversations with desert fathers, exploring a wide spectrum of spiritual questions concerning the personal life and problems of a community. From the phase of mere fear, Cassian writes, for example, a monk should ultimately ascend to purity of heart and to love.

c. Many of Cassian's passages and ways of thinking became models for the Master and for Benedict himself. Despite not mentioning Cassian's name, Benedict recommends both of his works and is strongly dependent on him.⁴⁹ This dependence is particularly true of the first, "spiritual," chapters, in the development of

49. RB 73.5; see also RB 42.3.

the image of the abbot as teacher and the meaning of *discretio*, the ability to discern, and moderation. Thus Cassian shaped Western monasticism as no one else did, familiarizing it with the spirituality and practices of the East.

3.5 Development of Monasticism in Southern Gaul and in the Jura Region

Lérins

a. In chapters 9, 42, and 73 of the Rule of Saint Benedict Benedict recommends that monks read the *Lives of the Fathers*. Included among them are the biographies already mentioned (*Vita Antonii*, *Vita Pachomii*, and the biographies written by Jerome), the *History of the Monks in Egypt*, and the *Life of Honoratus* (d. 430).⁵⁰ Honoratus was the founder of Lérins and later bishop of Arles for several years. As a father and model for the monks, he ignited the charisma of the monastery of Lérins, a spiritual strength that continued for decades. Faustus of Riez (410–500) (now known as pseudo-Eusebius) should also be mentioned. Born a Briton, he later became a monk and abbot of Lérins, then bishop of Riez, as is known from synod records. In his teachings on grace he emphasized—against Augustine—the meaning of human freedom in relation to divine grace (semi-Pelagianism). In a eulogy for his predecessor Maximus, Faustus called Lérins a “school of Christ,” a term known by both the Master and Benedict, both of whom

50. *Vie de Saint Honorat*, ed. Marie-Denise Valentin, Sch 235 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1977). The author is Hilarius of Arles (d. 449), who was himself a student of Lérins. Many topics and phrases of the *Vita Honorati* resemble the spiritual-ascetical wording of the RB, especially no. 42, which highly praises Lérins, saying that the island brought forth outstanding monks and bishops and that it was the entry point of Egyptian monks heading to Gaul. After Hilarius’s return to the isolated island after a short stay at Honoratus’s place in Arles, Bishop Eucher of Lyon (d. ca. 450) dedicated the work *De laude Eremiti* (ed. Carolus Wotke, CSEL 31 [Vienna: F. Tempisky, 1894], 175–254) to the returnee. Eucher is also the author of the *Passio Acaunensium martyrum* (ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH.SRM III [Hannover, 1896], 20–24); this tale of woe about the Theban martyrs turns the focus from the Mediterranean Sea toward the Alps.

also emphasized the human quest for certain virtues, as did the semi-Pelagian Faustus in his sermons for the monks of Lérins.⁵¹

b. The spiritual energy of Lérins can also be seen in Bishop Caesarius of Arles (d. 542), who devoted himself to pastoral care of the rural population. He founded a woman's monastery under the leadership of his sister Caesaria. With fatherly benevolence inspired by Augustine, he wrote a rule for nuns for this emerging monastery,⁵² requiring the nuns to lead a common life, sleep in the same room (*schola*), and be cloistered. The provision for the extended liturgies, including hymns (not used at the time in Rome), gives an indication of the corresponding customs of Lérins. Caesarius later wrote another concise rule for an unnamed monastery.⁵³ In word choice and inflection, the sermons he preached for the monks often recall passages in the Rule of Saint Benedict.⁵⁴

In the sixth century various other monastic rules emerged in this area of southern Gaul, most of them directly connected to Lérins.⁵⁵ A particularly vivid portrayal of monastic life appears

51. *Homiliae ad monachos* (passed on under the pseudonym "Eusebius Gallicanus," Hom 36–45; ed. François Glorie, CCSL 101–101B [Turnhout: Brepols, 1970–71]).

52. *Regula Caesarii ad virgines*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé and Joël Courreau, SCh 345 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1988), 170–272. According to the definitive redaction, dated 534, Caesarius and other bishops signed this. It frequently refers to the local conditions at the monastery of St. John in Arles, probably the reason that unlike the RB, it never gained acceptance among the nuns. Caesarius's nephew drew a beautiful picture of the monastery in Arles: Teridius, *Ep hortatoria*, in Caesarius d'Arles, *Oeuvres monastiques*, vol. 1, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, ed. and trans. Adalbert de Vogüé and Joël Courreau, SCh 345 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1988), 410–11.

53. SCh 398:204–26. It appeared before 540.

54. Caesarius, *Sermones ad monachos* 233–238, SCh 398:60–146.

55. These rules have been analyzed and critically edited by Adalbert de Vogüé, in *Statuta Patrum*, SCh 297–298 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982). See also Puzicha, *Die Regeln der Väter*. Included are The *Regula Macarii* (RM; available in Lérins around 510), which features a further developed daily schedule as well as an attempt to maintain, against all resistance, at least fasting on Wednesdays and Saturdays if not daily fasting; and The *Regula Orientalis* (RO; around 514), which is largely an extract from the Rule of Pachomius and shows familiarity with the *Second Rule of the Fathers*. This rule introduces an abbot with two assistants, a *praepositus* (a position the

in the writings of Ferreolus, bishop of Uzès (d. 581), monastic founder and creator of a rule roughly contemporary to Benedict's Rule.⁵⁶ This rule too shows verbal resonances with the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Jura

c. Decades earlier the reputation of Lérins had already reached Jura. The *Lives of the Jura Fathers* (written before 515) reports on the beginnings of monasticism in the Jura region.⁵⁷ When a devout Christian, Romanus, wanted to found a monastery on his property in 435, he first became a monk in the Rhone monastery of Lyon in order to learn about the rule and the life of the monks there.⁵⁸ He took back with him the appropriate writings and led a hermit's life of withdrawal and silence in Condat.⁵⁹ Romanus later

Master rejects and Benedict reluctantly accepts), a cellarer, and a porter; *The Third Rule of the Fathers* (3RP), which originated around 535 (at a Council of Clermont); it takes up regulations of Gaulish councils: the Council of Agde in 506 reflects the councils of Angers in 453, of Vannes in 461 and 469, and of Venice in 465. These are followed by the Council of Orleans in 511 and 533 and of Epaon in 517. These councils focused on the stability of the monks (counteracting a widespread monastic migration).

56. *La Regula Ferrioli*, ed. E. Desprez, in *Revue Mabillon* 60 (1981–1984): 117–48. Aurelian, the second successor of Caesarius as the bishop of Arles (546–551), drafted a Rule for Monks and Nuns (PL 68:385–406), dated at the same time as the Rule of Benedict.

57. *Vitae Patrum Jurensium* (= VPJur; ed. François Martine, Sch 142 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968]). The author of this work is familiar with the *Regula Orientalis*. The biography of the fathers from the Canton of Jura was written for the monks John and Armentarius of Acaunum, probably shortly before the reform of Acaunum (515). Groups of monks from Lyon, Grigny, and Jura were brought together here at the joint initiative of the Genevan bishop Maximus and Sigismund, the king of Burgundy. Additionally, a “continuous praise of God” (*laus perennis*) based on the model of a monastery in Constantinople, was established (Vogüé). Sidonius Apollinaris (Ep 4.25.2) had already mentioned the monasteries in Jura in around 469/70.

58. *Monasterium Interamne (Insula Barbara)*. This monastery was later transferred to Benedict of Aniane (d. 821), who later collected old monastic rules.

59. A book containing the *Lives of the Holy Fathers* and the *Institutions of the Holy Abbots* (VPJur 11), which probably means the first work by Cassian.

joined his talented younger brother, Lupicinus, and two young clerics from Nyon; together they formed a monastery. A bit later Eugendus joined them. Lupicinus led the monastery of Lauconne, and a sister of Romanus and Lupicinus became the first abbess of the women's monastery of La Balme, which soon numbered one hundred nuns who lived a strictly cloistered life.⁶⁰ Bishop Hilarius of Arles, also a student of Lérins, consecrated Romanus a priest in 444. When the kind Romanus died (ca. 463), Condat had 150 monks. With Romanus, his energetic brother Lupicinus (d. ca. 480) initially introduced novices to the monastic life but had to tighten discipline because of the growing number of monks who had become freeloaders. These monks eventually left the monastery of Condat, which was led later by Eugendus (d. ca. 510).

d. At the instigation of the presbyter and abbot Marinus of Lérins, an unknown writer from Jura sent the *Lives of the Jura Fathers*⁶¹ to the monks John and Armentarius of Acaunum (Saint-Maurice) in order to acquaint them with the "institutions of the fathers, their records, their lives and their rule."⁶² There are certainly similarities between these writings and the Rule of the Master, but the Rule of the Master (to be discussed later) comes not from Jura⁶³ but apparently from Italy.⁶⁴ There seems to be a

60. The monasteries were to be found in Franche-Comte (the most important one in Condat, St. Claude) and in the Swiss Canton of Jura (Romainmôtier?).

61. VPJur 1-2.

62. VPJur 4, 59.

63. François Masai, a Belgian researcher, assumed that a certain editing stage of the *Rule of the Master*, in which similar phrases are to be found, is announced here (RM 1 Incipit; 10 Explicit). A short summary of Masai's theses are to be found in *Règle de Saint Benoît*, introduction and notes by François Masai, 2nd ed. (Rochefort: Éditions la Documentation Cistercienne, 1980). His assumption has not, however, been confirmed. See Karl Suso Frank, *Das Leben der Juraväter und die Magisterregel*, *Regulae Benedicti Studia* 13 (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1986), 35–54. Frank contests the idea that the Rule of the Master originated from the Jura, but he admits to striking similarities between those two texts. See Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire*, 8:41–129.

64. See, in particular, Adalbert de Vogüé, "Les recherches de François Masai sur le Maître et Saint Benoît," *Studia Monastica* 24 (1982): 7–42, 271–309. Vogüé assumes that the origin of the *Regula Magistri* is Italian, both because of its descriptions of typical Roman customs (e.g., fasting

close relationship between the fundamental concerns of the monasticism of Lérins, of the institutions or the rule of the Jura monasteries, and of many aspects of the monastic way of life in the Master. There are on the one hand astonishing agreements in terminology and customs, and on the other, considerable differences. In those times the rule of life that was practiced and the known written rules did not have to coincide completely. Geographically distant monasteries maintained contact when it came to written documents, travels, or a relocation of a house (as in the case of the monastery of Saint Severin).⁶⁵ Thus it is possible that a monasticism rooted at first in the provinces of southern Gaul later found a new home near Rome or further south, a notion that seems to be expressed in the Rule of the Master.⁶⁶

on Saturdays) and because the oldest preserved manuscripts are of Southern origin. It can be assumed, however, that high-ranking Romans who moved to properties in the provinces because of conditions of the time took with them their own customs and preferences (e.g., for *passiones*). Additionally, the Rule of the Master contains linguistic peculiarities that are typical for southern Gaul (see n. 66). It is possible that a Gaulish author could have been active in the South.

65. Eugippius, abbot of the Monastery of Severin Lucullanum near Naples (d. 533), drafted a rule (Isidore of Seville, *De viris illustribus*, ed. C. Codoñer Merino [Salamanca, 1964], 26.34). Vogüé identifies this rule with a collection of excerpts from the Augustian Rules, the *Rule of the Four Fathers*, shortened excerpts from the Master, and further excerpts from monastic rules. This collection is to be found in Cod. 12634 in the National Library of Paris. Additionally, Paris Cod. 12205 contains the *Rule of the Four Fathers* and subsequently the whole Rule of the Master. Eugippius is the author of the biography and successor of Saint Severin (d. 482), who founded monasteries in the Noricum (i.e., near Krems and in Passau). These monks retreated to southern Italy, where Abbot Eugippius became acquainted with Eastern monastic spirituality (PL 62:1167–70). He was also connected to Dionysius Exiguus (PL 67:345–408), who had translated the *Vita Pachomii*. According to certain hypotheses the aforementioned Abbot Marinus of Lérins was identical with a person called Marinus mentioned by Eugippius in a cover letter about his “excerpts from the works of Saint Augustine” (see François Martine, ed., *Vie des Pères du Jura*, SCh 142 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968]). A monastic culture interested in monastic writings of foreign origin is found not just in Gaul, but also in Italy (Vogüé).

66. Assumptions of that kind, even referring to certain “founders,” are to be found in M. Bozzi and A. Grilli, *Regola del Maestro*, 2 vols. (Brescia,

e. Abbot Eugendus of Condat in the Jura region, son of a presbyter, understood Greek. The *Lives of the Jura Fathers* transmitted to Acaunum give an image of the dossier of writings (translated into Latin) that would have been available to a monastery of the sixth century:

We do not want to lay aside—with improper arrogance—the “Institutions” composed by the great Basil, bishop of the capital city of Cappadocia, by the holy fathers of Lérins, by the holy Pachomius, an earlier abbot of the Syrians, and more recently by the venerable Cassian. We do read their rules daily, but we want to follow this rule, which has been introduced with an awareness of our climate and the exigencies of work here. We prefer this rule to the eastern ones, because this rule can be carried out more efficiently and easily given the temperament and weaknesses of the Gauls.⁶⁷

The events show that even the monks of Acaunum (Saint-Maurice) were interested in monastic literature. In 515, on the occasion of the dedication of the church, the Burgundian king Sigismund together with Bishop Avitus of Vienne instituted the *laus perennis*, the uninterrupted praise of God at the grave of the Theban martyrs, which was celebrated by five clusters (*turmae*) of monks who were to come from different monasteries of the region. Here again appears the tendency to confer a kind of pre-eminence on liturgy, even if the five clusters rotated in this service, leaving room for other activities.

1995), 2:25–29. Patricius Liberius—an ecclesiastically influential *praefectus praetorio* for Gaul (which was politically connected to Italy at the time) and a friend of Benedict (Gregory, Dial 2.35.1) and of Caesarius of Arles (VCaes 2.10–15)—founded a monastery in the southern Italian Campania and engaged Deacon Servandus, who was not of Italian but probably of Gaulish ancestry, as its abbot. Vogüé conjectures that the young Benedict may have drafted the *Regula Magistri* by the time he founded twelve small monasteries in Subiaco (each with a “deanery” and two *praepositi*). See Gregory, Dial 2.3.13; Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire* 8:349.

67. VPJur 174. This text does not quite succeed in showing that the addressed “rule” in this excerpt is identical with the *Regula Orientalis*. The word *orientalis* may be used quite often in connection with writings of Egyptian origin; Pachomius, however, whose rules are excerpted, is erroneously referred to as a “Syrian.”

Other Western Monasteries

f. Until now the main focus has been on the region of southern Gaul, but numerous hermitages and monasteries also existed elsewhere in the West. Italy contained the basilica monasteries in Rome as well as many other monasteries mentioned by Gregory the Great in his *Dialogues*. In Africa monasteries existed even outside of the area around Augustine, including Noricum (Severin) and Serbia. The greatest number of monastic writings by far were produced in southern Gaul, where Lérins was the important point of reference for the monks of the Alpine region.⁶⁸ It is, of course, unknown whether and how many of these writings have gone missing and whether the existing pieces of evidence completely coincide with the originals.

3.6 The Rule of the Master (RM)⁶⁹

a. The question of the authorship and origins of the Rule of the Master has already been discussed without a clear answer. According to Vogüé, this rule emerged before 530. Earlier it was thought that a verbose, at times pedantic or quirky imitator based it on the Rule of Saint Benedict but tripled its length.⁷⁰ Actually,

68. Ennodius of Pavia (d. 521), originally from Arles, wrote a biography, the *Vita S. Antonii monachi* (ed. G. Hartel, CSEL 6:383–93). Born in Valeria on the Danube around 470 and coming from a good family, Antonius became an orphan at the age of eight. He first lived with Severinus and later on with the bishop of Lauriacum. After having fled from murderous Franks, Heruls, and Saxons, Antonius stayed with the Presbyter Marius in the principal place of the Valtellina valley; however, he refused to become a clergyman. Afterward, he joined two hermits in the Alps and devoted himself to work, vigils, fasting, and lectures, with students eventually joining him. Then, however, Antonius moved on to a remote area with only bears for company. When people started to take notice again of him, who had always avoided being the center of attention, he eventually retired to Lérins, where he lived for another two years before he died sometime before 520.

69. Adalbert de Vogüé, ed., *La Règle du Maître*, 3 vols., Sch 105–7 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964–1967).

70. Taking an older point of view is Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism* (Oxford: John Wiley, 2000). Her explanations have been convincingly rejected by Vogüé in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 97 (2002): 190–96.

a quarter of the Rule of Saint Benedict was taken from the methodically structured Rule of the Master, and two quarters were strongly influenced by it. Only one quarter shows no relationship to the Rule of the Master.⁷¹ The anonymous author is called *Master* because the titles of the chapters of this rule are usually framed by the rubric, “The students’ question,” followed by the title and then, “The Lord answers through the Master.”

b. In the Prologue, the Theme, and the first chapter, the Master introduces the rule, the monastery, and the abbot. The rule, declared to be divinely inspired, is described at the end of the Prologue. The monastery appears at the end of the passage titled “theme” as “school of the Lord’s service.” This passage deals with baptism and offers two points of baptismal catechesis, one about the Lord’s Prayer and the other about Psalms 33 and 14, customary catechetical texts at the time. The phrase “Thy will be done” in the Lord’s Prayer is developed as the basis for a teaching about obedience. In the first chapter of the Rule, the Master describes the kinds of monks,⁷² partly agreeing with Cassian and partly with his own endless satire on gyrovagues. For the first kind of monks, the cenobites, a rule and an abbot are characteristic. The master treats the abbot extensively at the end of the first chapter and in the second, saying that the abbot is primarily a teacher who represents Christ. As such, he teaches the tools of the spiritual art and the virtues of obedience, silence, and humility (RM 3–10).⁷³

71. Taken word for word from the RM: RB Pro1.5-45, 50; 1.1-10; 2.1, 18b-25, 30, 35-37; 4.1-7, 9-59, 62-74; 5-7. Without analogy to the RM: RB Pro1.46-47, 49; 2.26-29, 31-36; 3.12-13; 13.12-14; 16.5; 18.1-19.2; 20.4-5; 21.1, 5-6; 22.2; 25.4; 27.2-3, 5-7; 29.1-2; 31.6-7, 10-14, 16-19; 34.1-7; 36.4-10; 38.5-7; 40.1-2; 41.2-5; 42.2-7; 44.5; 45.1-2; 46.1-4; 48.14-21; 49.1-3; 51.3; 52.1; 53.1-2, 8-9, 12, 15-17, 23-24; 55.1-3, 7-12, 20-22; 57.1-3; 58.5-7; 59.7-8; 60.8-9; 61.11-62.11; 63.10-19; 67.5-70.2; 70.4-7; 71.6-9; 73.1-9. See Adalbert de Vogüé, *La Règle de S. Benoît*, SCh 181 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972), 174-85.

72. In the title of RM 1 the following appears: *actus et vita monachorum*. See VPJur 1-2.179.

73. This part of the Rule concludes with *Explicit actus militiae cordis*.

c. Then comes the “order of the monastery” with the sections “structures, observances, hierarchy, ascetic discipline, supervision, way of living.”⁷⁴ In fact, these are passages about the superiors (*praepositi*) and their duties, for example, in the dormitory, regarding punishments, the cellarer, the kitchen workers and the table, the wake-up call, and the liturgies (the moderate psalmody corresponds to Roman practice; after each psalm there is a period of silence during which the brothers prostrate themselves). These passages also deal with special questions about prayer (for example, its relation to travel), about readings and work, about rules for fasting,⁷⁵ and about other issues, for example, the reception of guests or newly accepted members, the abbot’s successor (and the abbatial blessing), and the porter.⁷⁶

d. One cannot say with absolute certainty that Benedict had access to the edition of the Rule of the Master known from codex BN 12205.⁷⁷ Although Benedict relies on the Rule of the Master, he does not follow it slavishly. In contrast to the Master, he does not see himself as a theologian, although he does not lack a theological approach. Benedict does not imitate the Master’s tendency to use longwinded deliberations, joy in ritualistic details, and penchant for being pedantic. Benedict not only shortened his prototype but also complemented it with concepts he took from other “holy fathers” and with his own insights, which demonstrate a sense of proportion and of church orientation.

74. RM 11 (*incipit*). Those terms are not clear.

75. RM 51–53 (with its own *incipit* and *explicit* of this *Regula Quadragesimae*). The subsequent chapters are not clearly arranged.

76. The closing is reminiscent of the rules of Lérins: *Explicit Regula sanctorum Patrum*.

77. Is it to be assumed that the text of the Master, which Benedict read, lacked certain sections about spirituality of baptism and the belief in the Trinity, both issues of high importance for Benedict? Why of all things should he, who admittedly liked to shorten, have omitted the parable of the spring (RM Th.8-20) and the trinitarian creed (RM 3.1) from his draft? He probably cut the introduction of the Master because it contained semi-Pelagian thinking (see RM Prol.3). Benedict avoids theological bickering.

4. Benedict and His Times

4.1 A Biography as Spiritual Message

a. In around 593 Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604) wrote his four books, the *Dialogues*.⁷⁸ Gregory wanted to show that one could be a spiritual person not only in the East or in Gaul but also on Italian soil. He reports about the “signs and wonders” of numerous bishops and monks who were “men of God.” The first three books make up a trilogy; in the first and third books numerous Italian fathers appear, while in the second book Benedict (the “blessed one”) takes a prominent place as the central figure of this literary mosaic, in which Gregory “tells about the miracles of the honorable man Benedict as a song of praise to the savior.”⁷⁹ The fourth book then shows “that the soul continues to live after death”⁸⁰ and constructs the firmament over the entire mosaic as a Paradise narrative.

b. With this goal one should not expect the style of modern historiography in Gregory’s biography of holy Benedict. In the manner of late antiquity, Gregory artfully winds a bouquet of *fioretti* around the life of the saint. He uses popular miracle storytelling to proclaim a teaching with moral and ascetic themes, conveying an astonishingly diverse psychological, spiritual, and mystical experience. Many of the deep insights that Gregory may have brought with him from Constantinople were included in this commentary, although they emerged only decades after the Rule of Saint Benedict. Gregory always places Benedict in the ranks of the apostles and prophets, whose “spirit and power” filled him through and through. Thus Benedict, after inadequate first attempts by others, led an authentically church-oriented, Scripture-based monastic life. His path from the cave of Subiaco to the mountain of Montecassino was a multistage ascent to

78. Adalbert de Vogüé, ed., *Grégoire le Grand. Dialogues I–III*, Sch 251, 260, 265 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978–1980). See Adalbert de Vogüé, “Benedikt von Nursia,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 5 (Berlin, 1980), 538–49; Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire*, 10:139–97. Many miracles are also mentioned in many of Gregory’s letters. The miracle stories in the *Dialogues* do not militate against their Gregorian authenticity; they are comparable to the concurrent works by Gregory of Tours.

79. Gregory, Dial 1.12.7.

80. Gregory, Dial 3.38.5.

God. Toward the end of the chapter on Benedict, Gregory notes that “he wrote a monastic rule in luminous language that stands out for its sense of proportion.”⁸¹ The high praise of this abbot and his Rule from the mouth of Gregory the Great contributed significantly to the fact that the Germanic peoples preferred this rule of a “Roman abbot”⁸² over others.

c. Pope Gregory’s rhetorically developed narrative contains a long list of verifiable facts, including places (Nursia, Rome, Subiaco, Montecassino, Terracina) with their archeological ruins; persons known by the pope or his sources (whose existence is documented),⁸³ and events like the famine of 537–538 in Campania. Gregory is not a modern historian. But he would have come across as unreliable if he had freely invented the historical framework of Benedict’s biography. His readers personally knew the persons, places, and situations he wrote about.⁸⁴

4.2 Life of Benedict⁸⁵

Youth and Education

a. Benedict was born before 500⁸⁶ in the austere mountain valley of Nursia (Norcia) in Umbria. The serious manner of life of this province, reminiscent of an ancient Roman ethos, was proverbial.⁸⁷ His father belonged to the circle of aristocrats and

81. Gregory, Dial 2.36.

82. In an eighth-century codex from Verona Benedict is called a Roman (*romense*) abbot.

83. See Gregory, Dial 2, Inc. 2. His successors in regard to the management of the monasteries were Constantinus, Simplicius, and Honoratus. His student Valentinus later became an abbot in the Lateran.

84. The contemporary Procopius of Caesarea in Palestine (d. after 562), historian (*De bello Gothico*) under Justinian I, accompanied the Byzantine military leader Belisar (d. 565) in Italy. He mentions various Italian clerics, but not Benedict. Marilyn Dunn contests the Gregorian authenticity of the *Dialogues*, using the arguments that Francis Clark previously advanced.

85. For this section, see especially Mariapaola Carpinello, *Benedetto da Norcia* (Milan, 1991).

86. The traditional dating of Benedict’s birth (480) and death (547) is too early.

87. *Nursina durities, austeritas Sabina*. In his *Dialogues*, Gregory the Great demonstrates his familiarity with the ecclesial circumstances in

landowners who no longer lived in Rome with all its decadence but rather in small provincial centers; it is said that he worked as administrator in the province of Valeria. The young "Benedict"⁸⁸ met Christians in these circles who believed that a misfortune meant that God was punishing them, but beyond that belief they were not deeply religious.⁸⁹ Folk piety in Umbria was characterized by belief in magic.⁹⁰ But Benedict may have become acquainted in the vicinity of Nursia with an exemplary kind of monasticism that may have included Eastern characteristics.⁹¹ He may have become familiar with the Bible and the writings of the fathers

the province "Valeria," from where he often receives visits (according to the tradition, he had family relatives there), and fondly describes local bishops and monks. Gregory entrusted the monastery of Saint Andrew, the "Clivus Scauri," to Abbot Valentio (d. ca. 583) from "Valeria."

88. The title *blessed* has always been prevalent and corresponds to the Hebrew *baruch*. Jews had once been deported to Umbria. A benevolent relationship between Jews and Christians in this area was common (Gregory, Dial 3.7). Jews and Syrians also lived near Capua. See Giancarlo Bova, "Per una storia della fondazione delle basiliche paleocristiane di Capua antica," *Benedictina* 47 (2000): 221–32, here 221.

89. See Adalbert de Vogüé, "La foi et le monde au temps de saint Benoît," in *Le Maître, Eugippe et Saint Benoît* (Hildesheim, 1984), 455–67; Adalbert de Vogüé, "Un contemporain de S. Benoît regarde les moines: le témoignage de Procope. Études sur la Règle de S. Benoît," *Vie monastique* 34 (1996): 125–46, esp. 140–44.

90. Gregory's *Dialogues* attest a kind of religiousness that was intense, on the one hand, and on the other hand showed many magical aspects, especially an exaggerated belief in miracles. See Dial 1.12.7.

91. According to Gregory the Great (Dial 3.14–15), "in the first years of the Goths' reign" (Theoderich lived from 493 to 526), the hermits Spes, Eutitius, and Florentinus lived in the province of "Valeria," about ten kilometers away from Norcia in a parallel valley (Valle Castoriana). Monasteries developed out of the *laura* (hermits' caves that are still preserved). Gregory endows these monks with traits that also appear in Benedict's biography: Florentinus lives in a cave for three years, Eutitius evangelizes shepherds (Dial 3.15), and Spes dies while standing upright during the psalmody and his soul abandons him in the shape of a dove, showing the simplicity of the heart with which he served God (Dial 4.11.4). Syrian monks too lived in Umbria, e.g., Isaac of Spoleto, who had the gift of "continuous prayer" (Gregory, Dial 3.12.2).

and other monastic authors through personal *lectio divina*, both in his youth and later during his life as a monk.

b. As an adolescent Benedict went to Rome as a student, probably to be later able to work as a civil servant. As a rule, such training lasted five to six years, and the schooling took place in stages. What was called Grammar gave one general knowledge in philosophy, history, and law, while Rhetoric taught one a way of speaking that fit the tastes of the time. Students learned to draft wordy and complex phrases in a rather contrived way. At the same time they learned to formulate succinct sentences with a rhythmical cadence. Benedict's Rule shows that he was ultimately a skillful master of language, as is especially noticeable where he is not dependent on sources. He spoke neither classical nor literary Latin but rather the Latin that was common in well-educated circles. One gets the impression that he may have dictated certain chapters of his Rule to a scribe, perhaps more than one, as the style is mostly clear and refined.⁹² He was able to formulate words concisely and memorably, especially at the beginning and end of a section. He used stylistic devices such as *inclusio*⁹³ (wording the beginning and end of a passage with similar formulations) or *chiasmus*⁹⁴ (allowing one series of clauses to be followed by an analogous but contrasting series of clauses, causing the middle of this structure to take on a special significance).⁹⁵ He has a

92. For example, RB Prol.1-2.

93. For example, RB Prol.1-3 and Prol.46-49. These sections at the beginning and ending of the Prologue, sections that Benedict himself created, make use of the familiar second person singular pronoun *tu*. By also using it at the end of the Rule (73.8-9), the entire Rule achieves *inclusio*.

94. Benedict does not, however, practice the kind of *chiasmus* common in the classics but rather the one appearing in the Bible. One senses an editing intervention in sections where the rules of *inclusio* and *chiasmus* were not followed.

95. See Christian Schütz, *Zum geistlichen Profil Benedikts: Kommentar zur Benediktusregel* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 2002), 28–30; André Borias, "L'inclusion dans la Règle Bénédictine," *Rev Bén* 92 (1982): 266–303; A. Borias, "Le chiasme dans la Règle Bénédictine," *Rev Bén* 95 (1985): 25–38; Anna M. Quartiroli, *La Regola di San Benedetto* (Praglia: Scritti Monastici, 2002), VII–VIII.

preference for repetition and the number three.⁹⁶ In this kind of late Latin, the verb modes are not used precisely, and the nominative can sometimes follow a preposition.⁹⁷

c. In questions of leadership Benedict possessed organizational and legal abilities, above all a sense of proportion and an objective judgment that shunned one-sidedness. In any case, he enjoyed a kind of education in which a Roman nature shimmers through. So Gregory the Great's statement that Benedict broke off his education in order to avoid encountering the knowledge of the world must be accepted with reservations.⁹⁸ One can imagine, however, that the decadence of Rome, the bland educational system of late antiquity, and the behavior of Benedict's fellow students may have become repulsive to him. The chaos in the world and the church of the time may have repelled him.

d. In any case Benedict distanced himself from his family members and their resources, breaking off the studies they had in mind for him. At first he stayed with his nurse in Enfide (Affile), where he came upon a group of affluent men in the Sabine mountains. He soon no longer needed the accompaniment of his nurse and, like Antony and many monks since, began a hermit's life. He found the valley of Subiaco, which lies about eighty kilometers east of Rome and stands out for the beauty of its wooded cliffs, its lake, and the Anio River. There he lived in a cave⁹⁹ in strict solitude, discreetly receiving monk's clothing and sustenance from the monk Romanus.¹⁰⁰ He probably spent time with the

96. Important statements are made in threes or with alliterations (e.g., RB Prol.1-3: *obsculta, inclina, excipe* and *praecepta, admonitio, sermo*; 48.7: *Opus Dei, oboedientia, obprobria*); Versicles are repeated three times (RB 9.1; 35.16-17; 38.3; 58.21), etc.

97. See RB 9.7 (*de sedilia sua surgant*); 41.6 (*ab idus autem septembres*).

98. Dial 2.inc. Benedict did not, however, establish a monastery of studies with a primary focus on scientific interests as did his contemporary Cassiodorus (d. after 580), in Vivarum near Squillace.

99. It is known that many caves on Apennine mountainsides were inhabited by hermits (Gregory, Dial 3.16). Oratories in Subiaco were already decorated with sacral paintings in the sixth century. The Syrian monk Isaac lived in a similar way near Spoleto.

100. Gregory mentions the monk Romanus, who supported the young Benedict materially as well as spiritually; Romanus himself "lived nearby in a monastery under the rule of the father Adeodatus" (Dial 2.1.4-5).

Bible, especially the Psalter, in unceasing prayer. His path of inner purification must also have included ascetic fasting.

e. As the young monk became known, he began to attract men looking for advice, and the monastic community of Vicovaro asked him to become their abbot. He hesitated to follow their calling, as he had in mind a different ideal of the authentic monastic life. In fact he actually failed in this calling to Vicovaro because of later opposition from these monks and so retired back to the “beloved solitude” of Subiaco. Here new groups of students gathered around him, and he organized for them a cenobitic life in “twelve monasteries . . . each with twelve monks according to what has been instituted by the fathers.”¹⁰¹

An Abbot in Montecassino

f. The monasteries of Subiaco continued to exist, but because of external provocations, Benedict moved to the hills of Montecassino, about 150 kilometers south of Rome. The mountain of Cassino (about five hundred meters above sea level) enjoys a wide view of the horizon to the south. On this hill the population had once built an acropolis for protection from their enemies, making offerings there to their patron gods. There Benedict destroyed first an altar dedicated to Apollo and then one to Jupiter, turning one of these temples into an oratory of Saint John the Baptist and the other into an oratory of Saint Martin. He founded a monastery in the acropolis,¹⁰² probably with the approval of the civil authorities. Here Benedict wrote his Rule, where he developed his ideas beyond the Master’s vertical view, as a relationship descending

101. Dial 2.3.13. The portrayal in this passage is meant to show that under an abbot like Benedict, the people of the twelve tribes of Moses and the church of Christ founded on the apostles were now made manifest in the cenobitic life. As a grouping of monasteries is presupposed here, the *instituta partum* was understood as the rules of Pachomius or Cassian. In recent times, the Rule of the Master has also been considered a possible influence.

102. Archaeologists found remains of temples and signs that these were converted into churches; however, there are no traces of monastery buildings. See Gregory, Dial 2.8.11; 34.1.2.7. Caesarius prepared a tomb for himself and his sister in the convent of Arles, which was dedicated to Mary as well as to Saint John and Saint Martin.

from teacher to student, into a more horizontal dimension, with Christ visible not only in the abbot as teacher, but also in one's brother, in the poor, in the guest, and in the sick.

4.3 The Ecclesial and Political Realities of the Sixth Century

Blossoming of Late Antiquity and the Arian Rule of the Goths

a. Benedict's life began during the time of the Ostrogoths under King Theodoric (493–526), who from 507 onward ruled both Italy and southern Gaul, formally in the name of the Byzantine emperor. The occupation army and the Romans lived separately, but Theodoric effected a symbiosis between Roman culture and the leadership of the Goths, as was advantageous for the realm. Theodoric allowed capable Latins to rule and to cultivate neglected lands. Magnificent architectural works of late antiquity still survive, for example in Ravenna, capital of the Goths and later of the exarchate of the Byzantines. The Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo was built in Ravenna in the sixth century. Later, but still during Benedict's lifetime, the churches of Saint Vitale (ca. 525–548) and Sant'Apollinare in Classe (ca. 536–549) were built. These masterpieces of architecture and iconography, seen in the mosaics influenced by the Byzantine style but also highly singular, were a source of light for the West.

b. The Goths were only partially Christianized, holding to the tenets of Arianism, thus denying the essential equality of Christ with the Father.¹⁰³ The Christ-centeredness of the Rule of Saint Benedict as well as its emphasis on reverence for the Trinity can be understood partially as a reaction to Arianism. The Goths, whose rule the emperor legitimized out of necessity, represented their own Italian interests vis-à-vis Constantinople. Their independence also allowed Catholics an independent position in church matters.

Church and State Conflicts

c. During his youth Benedict may have experienced the bloody and long-lasting turmoil of a Roman schism. A minority devoted

103. The Arians had their own bishops and churches, e.g., in Ravenna. It was not until Gregory the Great that the church of St. Agata dei Goti in Rome was used for Catholic worship.

to Constantinople had just set up Laurentius as pope in opposition to the elected—and dubious—Pope Symmachus (498–514). Symmachus, who later created a social infrastructure, gave Caesarius of Arles (d. 542) primatial rights in Gaul and Spain. After him, Pope Hormisdas (514–523), a widower, also wrote to Caesarius and oriented him to what was happening in the church. Thus close ties were formed between Rome and the provinces of southern Gaul. But intrigues against the Goths developed, involving eastern Rome and the Burgundians. Relationships between a “Roman” abbot and the monks of southern Gaul should not be surprising. Pope Hormisdas instructed his clergy in questions regarding the psalter¹⁰⁴ and commissioned the Gothic monk Dionysius Exiguus (d. before 556), who had previously collected papal decrees under Pope Symmachus, to produce a Latin collection of Greek canons. This process of codification of conventional church law is equivalent on the one hand to the later works of legislation by Emperor Justinian,¹⁰⁵ and on the other hand to the codification of monastic law in the monastic rules of the time. Theodor Schieffer wrote of the importance of this process, “This age examined and formed what was given them in order to hand on an orderly legacy to the world.”¹⁰⁶ Pope Hormisdas wanted to open up the possibility of appointing his own successor, recalling the provision for abbatial successors found in the Master.¹⁰⁷ Hormisdas had to attend to the complaints (e.g., regarding questions about the Trinity) made by

104. *Liber pontificalis* 54.1, ed. Louis Duchesne, 2 vols. [Paris: E. de Boccard, 1981], 1:269): *Hic composuit clerum et psalmis erudiuit.*

105. The *Codex Iustinianus* appeared in 529; novellas followed until 565. The Latin text of the novellas was spread in Italy from 555 onward. Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire*, 9:99.

106. Theodor Schieffer, “Die Reichskirche des 6. Jahrhunderts,” in *Handbuch der europäischen Geschichte*, ed. Theodor Schieder, 7 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1976), 1:317. At around the same time, the codification of the order of pericopes appears in a lectionary, which Bishop Victor of Capua (d. 554) dedicated to Bishop Constantius of Aquino.

107. It is striking that the Master foresees that an abbot currently in office would name his own successor (RM 92–93). It seems that the Master has in mind an analogy to an emperor’s appointing a co-regent, with a right of succession (RM 93.63: *quasi iam spiritalis Caesar designatus*). Should the *terminus a quo* of the RM therefore be dated back to the time of Hormisdas?

Eastern (Syrian) monks, some of whom immigrated to Italy.¹⁰⁸ In 519 and 520, Benedict's friend, Bishop Germanus of Capua (d. 541), lived in Constantinople as apocriary (papal envoy) in Constantinople.

d. In Theodoric's final years growing tensions emerged as he sensed intrigue coming out of Byzantium. He took measures against sympathizers in the highest official offices¹⁰⁹ and against representatives of the church. When Emperor Justinian (518–527) began an intense persecution of the Arians, Pope John I (523–526)—at Theodoric's urging—had to present himself in Constantinople in order to guarantee the Arians their religious freedom. The pope was received honorably in Byzantium, where he accomplished a great deal, but he returned without permission to reconvert to Arianism those Goths who had become Catholics by force. Thus the pope was received in Ravenna with distrust. He died there in 526. The Arian king named Pope Felix IV (526–530), a relative of the later Gregory I (d. 604), against the will of the Roman people and clergy. In this conflict Gregory supported Caesarius of Arles (d. 542) and sent him an excerpt (*Auszug*) from Augustine (d. 430), which was then accepted by the second synod of Orange (529).

e. Under the weak successors of Theodoric (d. 526) the Roman church enjoyed more latitude than before. As a deacon under Pope Hormisdas, Pope Felix IV was a member of a papal delegation that ended the Acacian schism¹¹⁰ in Constantinople under Emperor Justinian I (518–527). As a result, the antagonism between the churches of Rome and Byzantium diminished. Felix

108. Scythian (Gothic) monks came to Rome in 519 during a “theopaschite” conflict. In the Trisagion they wanted the following sentence to be sung: “One of the Trinity suffered for us.” In Rome they could count on Dionysius Exiguus, a Scythian; however, they did not obtain any official support. They were regarded as overeager simplifiers. Pope Gregory tells of the ardent zeal of a Goth (Dial 2.6).

109. Theodoric ordered the incarceration of Boethius, who then wrote *De consolatione philosophiae*, a work widely read in the Middle Ages. Boethius was executed in 524.

110. Patriarch Acacius (472–489) vehemently opposed Monophysitism in support of the Christology of the Council of Chalcedon, especially as Chalcedon acknowledged privileges of Constantinople.

IV himself appointed his successor, Boniface II (530–532), son of Sigibald the Goth, in order to forestall further contentiousness between the parties, but this provision for a succession could not be maintained.¹¹¹ In 531, Boniface condemned semi-Pelagianism, a teaching clearly represented in the Rule of the Master.

The difficulty with issues of succession are shown in the simony-influenced election of Pope John II (533–535). Although the king of the Goths tried to put a stop to such abuses, his attempts failed.

Justinian's Church Policies

f. The Eastern Roman emperor, Justinian I (527–565), a speaker of Latin, envisioned a restorative renewal of the political, religious, and legal unity of the empire, combined with a new discipline, especially when it came to monasteries and monks. He worked at eradicating the remnants of paganism and closed the Athens School of Philosophy in 529. Within the church he tried to unify the adherents and opponents of the Council of Chalcedon, but with no room for a symbiosis of Romans and the Goths who had not become assimilated.

g. In 535 Justinian began to take Italy back from the barbarians, with the southern provinces quickly falling into the hands of Belisar (d. 565), the commander of his armies. He also occupied Rome, against the will of the Romans. The Goths reacted to this occupation with bewilderment. In Constantinople Pope Agapit I (535–536), at the behest of the Ostrogoth King Theodat, unsuccessfully asked for peace.¹¹² In 539 Milan was destroyed. From the north, marauding bands of barbarians joined the melee. Belisar deposed Pope Silverius, a son of Hormisdas who was made pope under pressure from Theodat the Goth. Silverius surrendered Rome to Belisar, the emperor's commander. After the removal of

111. Bonifatius II had the clergy engage Deacon Vigilias as his successor; however, he had to withdraw that ruling at a synod of the Roman clergy in 532.

112. Nevertheless, he managed to achieve the dismissal of Anthimus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who was oriented toward the Monophysites and was a favorite of Empress Theodora.

Silverius, Belisar had Vigilius (537–555) elected pope.¹¹³ As pope, Vigilius championed the Council of Chalcedon, thus dissipating suspicions of Monophysitism. Called to Constantinople in 547, Vigilius was subjected to bestowals of both goodwill and abuse, having to submit to the politics of the emperor, who was intent on reunifying the Monophysites with the church.¹¹⁴

h. In Constantinople Vigilius occasionally took advice from his deacon Pelagius, thus strengthening his pro-Chalcedonian leanings. Deacon Pelagius lived in Byzantium twice and in 540 traveled to Gaza and Jerusalem. There he supported the pro-Chalcedonian and anti-Origen stance of Abbot Gelasius of Saint Sabas Monastery, which was influential in the entire East. Because of Pelagius, Justinian condemned Origenism, about which many disputes ensued, especially in monastic circles. While living with monks, Deacon Pelagius became acquainted with the sayings of the fathers, which he translated into Latin sometime between 543 and 545. Bishop Sabinus of Canusium, who led a papal delegation to Constantinople in 536, probably introduced Benedict to the sayings of the fathers translated by Pelagius when he visited Benedict in 546 and spoke to him about Totila's conquest of Rome.¹¹⁵

Times of War

i. Meanwhile, in military and political matters, in 541 Ravenna fell, without resistance, into the hands of the Ostrogoth com-

113. Empress Theodora had letters forged in order to bring down Silverius. Through Vigilius, she tried to achieve the reinstatement of the Patriarch Anthimus and hence a condemnation of the Council of Chalcedon (451). Vigilius had Silverius handed over to him and exiled him to the island of Ponza, where he died a broken man.

114. Around 544 Justinian condemned the "Three Chapters," statements of the theologians Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa, who were supported by the Council of Chalcedon. Pope Vigilius joined Justinian while maintaining reverence for the Council of Chalcedon. When a storm of indignation arose against the pope, he rescinded his decision in a new statement, supported by his deacon Pelagius. Compromised by the emperor through the publication of a secret agreement and forsaken by his deacon, Vigilius again condemned the "Three Chapters" (553). Dishonored and disdained by all, he died on his way back to Italy.

115. Gregory, Dial 2.15.3.

mander Belisar, and Justinian financially exploited Italy to cover the costs of military campaigns. For their part, the Goths, who still held certain regions, began to regroup. Ultimately the young and energetic Totila became their source of hope. After his first conquests, he marched south in 542, where his troops conducted themselves savagely, for example, brutalizing the Catholic clergy. Soon Totila was ruling large regions of Italy. He too tried to exact contributions, and he simplified the state tax system, bringing relief to the poor but not to the rich or the clergy. Totila tried to pacify the region and to bring social welfare even to the poorest. Totila's visit to Benedict and Benedict's warnings to him may have been the cause for this change of attitude.¹¹⁶ The Goths subdued cities in Umbria, blocked the sea harbors to prevent Byzantine supplies from arriving, and surrounded Rome. On December 17, 546, Totila invaded the starving city and threatened the Eastern Romans with the total destruction of Rome if they refused to recognize him as ruler. Unfortunately, however, he relocated his troops, so Belisar recaptured Rome. But in 549 Totila entered Rome again, organizing the city and a fleet in order to acquire needed supplies with these raids. But in spring 552 the Byzantine general Narses marched into Italy with his army, and Totila had to face the battle. Before the battle he shone by performing riding stunts for his troops, but he was defeated and killed when he tried to flee. In 553 the definitive defeat of the Goths under King Teja took place in the battle of Vesuvius.

k. The recurring war campaigns and incursions of the "barbarians" had a devastating impact, especially in Rome. The country was depleted.¹¹⁷ Justinian's vision for the renewal of the entire empire was not achieved, and there were no new perspectives for the future. The wars and their consequences were perhaps the reasons for the miserable conditions in the monasteries, which are reflected in the Rule of Saint Benedict.¹¹⁸ It was during this period

116. Gregory, *Dial* 2.14–15: "From that moment on he [Totila] was less cruel."

117. Gregory (*Dial* 3.38.3) speaks about the destruction of entire areas and cities as well as of churches and many monasteries. Ravenna was an oasis.

118. *RB* 2.33-35; 39.3, 6; 40.8; 48.7-8; 57.4.

of hardship that the monastery at Montecassino was established and the Rule was composed.

1. Deacon Pelagius ministered to the suffering people of Rome in many ways. After the defeat of the Goths, Justinian I (527–565) elevated this deacon to the position of pope. Pelagius I (556–561) accepted the “Three Chapters” that he had previously fought against. Because of this retreat with regard to Byzantine politics, the Roman church at first mistrusted Pelagius, but then accepted him.¹¹⁹ In the Rule of Saint Benedict the process of electing an abbot goes back to a Pelagian instruction of February 559¹²⁰ that was based on an instruction by Justinian.¹²¹ Byzantine influence and presence had become noticeable everywhere. Many Italian church buildings were drawn using Byzantine and even Syrian forms,¹²² for example, in Canosa, where Benedict’s friend Sabinus was bishop. According to Gregory’s account, Benedict had contact with representatives of the church who knew Eastern theology; perhaps he also knew monks from the East.¹²³ The many newly established oratories of monks (often Eastern) gave support to the devotion of the people and soon became the outposts of the mission among the Germanic tribes. During this period commoners’ churches began to spread in the area while, for example, as Gregorio Penco explains, the bishop’s see of Cassinum foundered. Benedict himself stood in the midst of forces of the time, in the monastery to be sure, but not withdrawn from the world.

119. Supported by the emperor, the pope established order in Rome. His benevolence and a public profession of faith made him acceptable. The dioceses of Northern Italy, however, which under Vigilius had broken with Rome, broke off ecclesial communion with Pelagius I. The continuing schism resulted *inter alia* in the Milanese liturgy’s development in a direction of its own. The Roman Missal preserves prayers that Pelagius composed in years of destitution.

120. Ep 28, in *Pelagii I Papae Epistulae quae supersunt*, ed. Pius M. Cassó and Columba M. Battle, *Scripta et Documenta* 8 (L’Abadia de Montserrat, 1956).

121. *Codex* I.3.46 (47) from Nov. 17, 530, and *Novellae* 123, chap. 34, from May 1, 546.

122. The Christocentrism of the Rule of Saint Benedict has a counterpart in Byzantine art, in which the central motif is Christ (or the *crux gemmata*), often surrounded by angels. See RB 7.13, 28; 19.6.

123. See nn. 90 and 93.

According to Gregory he participated in the evangelization of the country people and met with important people in Rome,¹²⁴ Cassinum,¹²⁵ and elsewhere.¹²⁶

m. Benedict probably experienced the invasion of the Lombards from the Northeast into Italy after 567. These invaders, many of whom had just been converted from paganism to Arianism, confronted the populace and the Catholic Church with cruelty and intolerance, often resorting to persecution and burning monasteries to the ground along the way. Pope John III (561–574) transferred the relics of the martyrs from the oratories outside of Rome into the city, recalling Benedict.¹²⁷

n. Many monks also sought refuge in Rome, and in the community of Montecassino. Pope Benedict I (575–579) called on Byzantium for help against the Lombards, but in vain. They destroyed Montecassino (577?). During the siege of Rome by the Lombards, Pelagius II (579–590), son of the Goth Winigild, was elected and immediately consecrated pope without Eastern Roman participation. He sent his deacon Gregory to Constantinople as apocrisiary; Gregory received no help but was advised that he should turn to the Franks. He then took the chair of Peter as Gregory I, the Great (590–604), and in 593 he wrote the biography of Saint Benedict.

5. The Rule's Path into the Future

5.1 *The Rule's Time of Composition*

a. Benedict wrote down his rule to summarize his experiences as monk and abbot, but also with those abbots in mind who after his death would be superiors of the monasteries he founded: in Montecassino, Abbots Constantianus and Simplicius, and in Subiaco, where Benedict continued to be honored, Maurus and Honoratus (ca. 593), who had previously been a monk in Montecassino. In Terracina Benedict founded a monastery (probably

124. Dial 2.1.8.

125. Dial 2.17.

126. Dial 2.26 (*vir illustris*); 2.15.3 (bishop); 2.23 (nuns of a good family); 2.20 (novice of distinguished origin).

127. See RB 14; 58.19. In the Rule of the Master there is no mention of saints' relics in the oratory.

on the site of a temple on a hill above the sea) and oversaw its organization, and in the Lateran area of Rome the Monastery of Saint Pancratius appeared; there the monks of Montecassino retreated after the destruction of their house by the Lombards.¹²⁸ Here Valentinianus, who had been a monk of Montecassino under Benedict, became abbot (d. before 593).

b. The year of Benedict's death should be seen in this context.¹²⁹ According to the traditional view, Benedict died in 547. But because Gregory wrote the *Dialogues* for spiritual purposes, it is difficult to ascertain the timing of the events they describe. Many believe that Benedict died between 550 and 560. But Justinian's decree regarding abbatial elections (described above), which probably made its way into the Rule of Saint Benedict by means of a directive given by Pope Pelagius I in 559,¹³⁰ suggests that Benedict's death came later. The observances of the leading monasteries in southern Gaul, which exhibit characteristics related to Benedict's way of life, achieved developments only at the end of the century that Benedict had supposedly already anticipated in 547.¹³¹

5.2 *The Dissemination of the Rule*

a. Gregory the Great praised Benedict and his Rule with these words: "You should know, however, that a significant charisma was characteristic for the man of God . . . through the words of his teaching. He wrote a rule for monks that stands out for its dis-

128. Benedict predicted the destruction of Montecassino after the barbarian invasions of 568. See *Règle de Saint Benoît. Édition du centenaire*, ed. Henri Rochais and Eugene Manning (Rochefort, Belgium: Les Éditions la Documentation Cistercienne, 1980), XV–XVII.

129. Vogüé has summarized and critically examined Eugene Manning's hypotheses, presented in earlier editions of this commentary (see *Règle de Saint Benoît. Édition du centenaire*, ed. Rochais and Manning, XV–XVII; Adalbert de Vogüé, "Les dates de Saint Benoît et de sa Règle d'après quelques travaux récents," in *Études sur la Règle de Saint Benoît, Nouveau recueil* [Bellefontaine, 1996], 387–415).

130. See n. 122 above.

131. *Regula Ferioli*, ed. Georg Holzherr (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1961), 74–75.

cernment [*discretio*] and for the luminosity of its discourse."¹³² One can assume that the Rule of Saint Benedict was available in the Lateran, and one can imagine that Pope Gregory or his successor may have distributed it to certain audiences.¹³³ Columba of Luxeuil (543–615), who corresponded with Pope Gregory, may have received the Rule—which he quotes—from Gregory (ca. 590).¹³⁴ Columba's students had access to the Rule¹³⁵ alongside the Rule of Columba and other rules; it was an epoch of mixed rules. The Rule of Saint Benedict appeared in the Diocese of Albi¹³⁶ about 630 and then in other places in France,¹³⁷ sometimes in excerpts.¹³⁸

b. The Rule of Saint Benedict available in the Lateran and known to Columba's students migrated north in ways that are difficult to ascertain.¹³⁹ Why was this rule preferred? It is based on

132. Dial 2.36.

133. In 641 Pope John IV called Benedict an "abbot of this city, of our Rome." This pope came from the same milieu as Gregory the Great (Ildefonso Schuster, *Storia di S. Benedetto e dei suoi tempi* [Milan: Abbazia de Viboldone, 1953], 256).

134. See Adalbert de Vogüé, "Bourgogne, Angleterre, Alémanie: sur trois étapes du cheminement de la Règle," in Vogüé, *Études sur la Règle*, 147–66. See also Michaela Zelzer, "Die Regula Donati als frühestes Zeugnis des 'monastischen Gebrauchstexts' der Regula Benedicti," in *Il monachesimo tra eredità e aperture*, ed. Maciej Bielawski und Daniël Homergen, Studia Anselmiana 140 (Rome, 2004), 753–63.

135. Saint Wandregisel, for instance, became familiar with "Benedictine" spirituality in the monastery of Faremoutiers, which had been reformed by Abbot Waldebert (629–670), a student of Columban (André Borias).

136. Venerandus, the founder of the monastery Altaripa (northeast of Toulouse), mentions in a letter to his bishop the *regula s. Benedicti abbatis romensis*.

137. A mere mention of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* (without any other Rule) is found in the records of a council held by Saint Leodegar, the bishop of Autun, 663–668 (no. 15). The oldest textual evidence of the RB is to be found in the rule of Donatus, who was educated in Luxeuil and was bishop of Besançon from 625 to around 660.

138. Rule of Donatus of Besançon (660); Rule of Chrodegang of Metz (ca. 724–766).

139. Early evidence of the Rule is found in Northumberland. Wilfrid of York, born in 634, had been in Rome and spent a longer period in Lyon. He was enthusiastic about everything called Roman. Around 660 he became the abbot of Ripon, where he introduced the Rule. He also

a tradition that the author Benedict wanted to preserve. At times he allows mitigations, but he follows a clear path. Above all, he had the ability to create a synthesis between two hundred years of monastic practices and the needs of his time. He remained flexible because (in contrast to other rules) he liked to leave details to the discretion of the living authority of the abbot. His Rule gives instructions for issues that are important for organization, but combined with biblical and spiritual explanations. Benedict finds the balance between two poles: the community and the individual. For this reason Vogüé says that the Rule of Saint Benedict remains a convenient book. Thus this Rule commended itself to Western monasticism, not least to the monasteries in the areas of the newly evangelized Germanic peoples.

c. The text of the Rule exists in numberless manuscripts that feature different readings. Most of these are negligible variants. It is difficult if not impossible to determine the authentic original version with certainty. The usual classifications of manuscripts have proven untenable because of the very high number of transitional forms that resulted from the brisk exchange among the monasteries of different countries. The oldest extant manuscript of the rule is the *Codex Oxoniensis* (Oxford MS. Hatton 48), written in southern England (Worcester) between 700 and 710; it contains

preached in south England, where he probably made it known as well. With his friend Benedict Biscop from Northumberland, Wilfrid went to Rome in 653 and spent two years in Lérins (665–667). He returned to England with the Greek monk Theodor, who, together with Adrian, was sent to England by Gregory I. Adrian, previously an abbot near Naples, was stopped in the Frankish Empire for two years before he could move on to England. It is thus assumed that the monks whom Gregory had sent to England with the aim of Christianizing the English people may have contributed to the spread of the Rule when passing through the Frankish Empire. The aforementioned Benedict Biscop founded the monasteries Wearmouth and Jarrow, where the Rule of Saint Benedict was observed and where the Venerable Bede (673–735) lived. The *Codex Oxoniensis* was probably drafted there. Willibrord (d. 739), who evangelized in the Frankish Empire, was educated in the aforementioned monastery in Ripon. Boniface (d. 754), later known as the apostle of the Germans, temporarily worked under him. The Anglo-Saxon monks spread the Rule on the continent (*RB 1980*).

a short conclusion to the Prologue.¹⁴⁰ This version appears on the continent as well, but it is not very widespread.

d. The tradition represented by Paulus Diaconus maintains that the monks of Montecassino took the Rule with them when they fled to the Lateran and that Pope Zacharias (d. 752) later gave it back to Montecassino.¹⁴¹ At the request of Charlemagne (d. 814),¹⁴² a copy apparently made its way to Aachen. The reform abbot Benedict of Aniane (821), through his influence in various synods (from 816 to 818), was able to bring about a declaration that the Rule of Saint Benedict was to be the sole rule in the Frankish Empire.

e. Around 817 Abbot Haito of Reichenau sent the monks Grimald and Tatto to Benedict of Aniane in Aachen, so that they might be educated in the spirit of the Carolingian reform. At the request of Reinbert, the librarian of Reichenau, they completed an exact copy of the aforementioned Aachen exemplar. It features

140. The end of the Prologue, which did not exist in the *Codex Oxoniensis*, was moved to a different position in the excerpt of the Rule of the Master, which is to be found in a florilegium referred to as Rule of Eugippius. Since Eugippius lived near Naples, Vogüé assumes that Abbot Adrian, who also came from the area around Naples and eventually became the abbot of Saint Peter in Canterbury, could have made this textual version known in the North. In this manuscript Benedict is called a "Roman" (*romense*) abbot. People coming from areas with pre-Roman vernaculars dealt easily with the Latin text of the Rule. Hiberno-Scots and Anglo-Saxons, on the other hand, had studied the ancient language and its grammar. As a result, a tendency to smooth out late Latin formulations according to the rules of classical Latin arose in the North. That presumably explains the emergence of the multiple text versions. See Zelzer, *Die Regula Donati*, 761–62.

141. *Historia Langobardorum Pauli Diaconi* 4.17, 6.40, ed. Ludwig Bethmann and Georg Waitz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Langobardorum* [Hannover, 1878], 122:178–79). Pope Zachariah translated the Rule into Greek; Saint Benedict is therefore revered in the East as well. At the altar of Saint Benedict in the monastery of Einsiedeln, Zachariah stands as an accompanying figure.

142. Benedict of Aniane established a collection of twenty-five pre- and post-Benedictine Rules (*Codex regularum*) and a concordance to the Rule (*Concordia regularum*) in order to show that the Rule of Saint Benedict was in accordance with other monastic rules, of which every single one conveys the wisdom of the older model in its own way.

the longer conclusion to the prologue.¹⁴³ A copy of the completed transcription of the Rule still exists in the monastery library of Saint Gallen. This *Codex Sangallen 914* is today regarded as the most valuable witness to the Rule of Saint Benedict and is the basis of today's editions of the rule.

f. The librarian Reinbert, who carefully kept the Reichenau collections, gave the monk Meinrad (d. 861) a manuscript of the Rule when he founded a hermitage in the mountain valley of the "Dark Forest." This codex is kept in the monastery library of Einsiedeln and is handed to each new abbot at his installation. One of the first abbots or monks of the monastery founded in 934—referred to then as "Meinrad's Cell"—provided interlinear glosses in the codex, which apparently meant that he had identified necessary interpretations and explanations.

143. RB Prol.40-50 (including the Master's definition of a monastery as a "school of the Lord").

**Text of the Rule
of Saint Benedict
and Commentary**

PROLOGUE

Prologus

¹Obsculta, o fili, praecepta magistri, et inclina aurem cordis tui, et admonitionem pii patris libenter excipe et efficaciter comple, ²ut ad eum per oboedientiae laborem redeas, a quo per inoboedientiae desidiam recesseras. ³Ad te ergo nunc mihi sermo dirigitur, quisquis abrenuntians propriis voluntatibus, Domino Christo vero regi militaturus, oboedientiae fortissima atque praeclara arma sumis.

⁴In primis, ut quicquid agendum inchoas bonum, ab eo perfici instantissima oratione deposcas, ⁵ut qui nos iam in filiorum dignatus est numero computare non debet aliquando de malis actibus nostris contristari. ⁶Ita enim ei omni tempore de bonis suis in nobis parendum est ut non solum iratus pater suos non aliquando filios exheredet, ⁷sed nec, ut metuendus dominus irritatus a malis nostris, ut nequissimos servos perpetuam tradat ad poenam qui eum sequi noluerint ad gloriam.

⁸Exsurgamus ergo tandem aliquando excitante nos scriptura ac dicente: *Hora est iam nos de somno surgere*, ⁹et apertis oculis nostris ad deificum lumen, attonitis auribus audiamus divina cotidie clamans quid nos admonet vox dicens: ¹⁰*Hodie si vocem eius audieritis, nolite obdurare corda vestra.* ¹¹Et iterum: *Qui habet aures audiendi audiat quid spiritus dicat ecclesiis.* ¹²Et quid dicit? *Venite, filii, audite me; timorem Domini docebo vos.* ¹³*Currite dum lumen vitae habetis, ne tenebrae mortis vos comprehendant.*

¹⁴Et quaerens Dominus in multitudine populi cui haec clamat operarium suum, iterum dicit: ¹⁵*Quis est homo qui vult vitam et cupit videre dies bonos?* ¹⁶Quod si tu audiens respondeas: Ego, dicit tibi Deus: ¹⁷*Si vis habere veram et perpetuam vitam, prohibe linguam tuam a malo et labia tua ne loquantur dolum; deverte a malo*

et fac bonum, inquire pacem et sequere eam. ¹⁸Et cum haec feceritis, *oculi mei super vos et aures meas ad preces vestras, et antequam me invocetis dicam vobis: Ecce adsum.* ¹⁹Quid dulcius nobis ab hac voce Domini invitantis nos, fratres carissimi? ²⁰Ecce pietate sua demonstrat nobis Dominus viam vitae. ²¹Succinctis ergo fide vel observantia bonorum actuum lumbis nostris, per ducatum evangelii pergamus itinera eius, ut mereamur eum *qui nos vocavit in regnum suum* videre.

²²In cuius regni tabernaculo si volumus habitare, nisi illuc bonis actibus curritur, minime pervenitur. ²³Sed interrogemus cum propheta Dominum dicentes ei: *Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo, aut quis requiescet in monte sancto tuo?* ²⁴Post hanc interrogationem, fratres, audiamus Dominum respondentem et ostendentem nobis viam ipsius tabernaculi, ²⁵dicens: *Qui ingreditur sine macula et operatur iustitiam;* ²⁶*qui loquitur veritatem in corde suo, qui non egit dolum in lingua sua;* ²⁷*qui non fecit proximo suo malum, qui opprobrium non accepit adversus proximum suum;* ²⁸*qui malignum diabolus aliqua suadentem sibi, cum ipsa suasionem sua a conspectibus cordis sui respuens, deduxit ad nihilum, et parvulos cogitatos eius tenuit et allisit ad Christum;* ²⁹*qui, timentes Dominum, de bona observantia sua non se reddunt elatos, sed ipsa in se bona non a se posse sed a Domino fieri existimantes,* ³⁰*operantem in se Dominum magnificant, illud cum propheta dicentes: Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam;* ³¹sicut nec Paulus apostolus de praedicatione sua sibi aliquid imputavit, dicens: *Gratia Dei sum id quod sum;* ³²et iterum ipse dicit: *Qui gloriatur, in Domino gloriatur.* ³³Unde et Dominus in evangelio ait: *Qui audit verba mea haec et facit ea, similabo eum viro sapienti qui aedificavit domum suam super petram;* ³⁴*venerunt flumina, flaverunt venti, et impegerunt in domum illam, et non cecidit, quia fundata erat super petram.*

³⁵Haec complens Dominus exspectat nos cotidie his suis sanctis monitis factis nos respondere debere. ³⁶Ideo nobis propter emendationem malorum huius vitae dies ad indutias relaxantur, ³⁷dicente apostolo: *An nescis quia patientia Dei ad paenitentiam te adducit?* ³⁸Nam pius Dominus dicit: *Nolo mortem peccatoris, sed convertatur et vivat.*

³⁹Cum ergo interrogassemus Dominum, fratres, de habitatore tabernaculi eius, audivimus habitandi praeceptum, sed si compleamus habitatoris officium. ⁴⁰Ergo praeparanda sunt corda nos-

tra et corpora sanctae praeceptorum oboedientiae militanda, ⁴¹et quod minus habet in nos natura possibile, rogemus Dominum ut gratiae suae iubeat nobis adiutorium ministrare. ⁴²Et si, fugientes gehennae poenas, ad vitam volumus pervenire perpetuam, ⁴³dum adhuc vacat et in hoc corpore sumus et haec omnia per hanc lucis vitam vacat implere, ⁴⁴currendum et agendum est modo quod in perpetuo nobis expediat.

⁴⁵Constituenda est ergo nobis dominici schola servitii. ⁴⁶In qua institutione nihil asperum, nihil grave, nos constituturos speramus; ⁴⁷sed et si quid paululum restrictius, dictante aequitatis ratione, propter emendationem vitiorum vel conservationem caritatis processerit, ⁴⁸non ilico pavore perterritus refugas viam salutis quae non est nisi angusto initio incipienda. ⁴⁹Processu vero conversationis et fidei, dilatato corde inenarrabili dilectionis dulcedine curritur via mandatorum Dei, ⁵⁰ut ab ipsius numquam magisterio discedentes, in eius doctrinam usque ad mortem in monasterio perseverantes, passionibus Christi per patientiam participemur, ut et regno eius mereamur esse consortes. Amen.

Prologue

¹Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart. This is advice from a father who loves you; welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice. ²The labor of obedience will bring you back to him from whom you had drifted through the sloth of disobedience. ³This message of mine is for you, then, if you are ready to give up your own will, once and for all, and armed with the strong and noble weapons of obedience to do battle for the true King, Christ the Lord.

⁴First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to him most earnestly to bring it to perfection. ⁵In his goodness, he has already counted us as his sons, and therefore we should never grieve him by our evil actions. ⁶With his good gifts which are in us, we must obey him at all times that he may never become the angry father who disinherits his sons, ⁷nor the dread lord, enraged by our sins, who punishes us forever as worthless servants for refusing to follow him to glory.

⁸Let us get up then, at long last, for the Scriptures rouse us when they say: *It is high time for us to arise from sleep* (Rom 13:11).

⁹Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our

ears to the voice from heaven that every day calls out this charge: ¹⁰*If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts* (Ps 94[95]:8). ¹¹And again: *You that have ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches* (Rev 2:7). ¹²And what does he say? *Come and listen to me, sons; I will teach you the fear of the Lord* (Ps 33[34]:12). ¹³*Run while you have the light of life, that the darkness of death may not overtake you* (John 12:35).

¹⁴Seeking his workman in a multitude of people, the Lord calls out to him and lifts his voice again: ¹⁵*Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days?* (Ps 33[34]:13). ¹⁶If you hear this and your answer is "I do," God then directs these words to you: ¹⁷*If you desire true and eternal life, keep your tongue free from vicious talk and your lips from all deceit; turn away from evil and do good; let peace be your quest and aim* (Ps 33[34]:14-15). ¹⁸Once you have done this, *my eyes will be upon you and my ears will listen for your prayers; and even before you ask me, I will say to you: Here I am* (Isa 58:9). ¹⁹What, dear brothers, is more delightful than this voice of the Lord calling to us? ²⁰See how the Lord in his love shows us the way of life. ²¹Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see him *who has called us to his kingdom* (1 Thess 2:12).

²²If we wish to dwell in the tent of this kingdom, we will never arrive unless we run there by doing good deeds. ²³But let us ask the Lord with the Prophet: *Who will dwell in your tent, Lord; who will find rest upon your holy mountain?* (Ps 14[15]:1). ²⁴After this question, brothers, let us listen well to what the Lord says in reply, for he shows us the way to his tent. ²⁵*One who walks without blemish*, he says, *and is just in all his dealings;* ²⁶*who speaks the truth from his heart and has not practiced deceit with his tongue;* ²⁷*who has not wronged a fellow man in any way, nor listened to slanders against his neighbor* (Ps 14[15]:2-3). ²⁸He has foiled the evil one, the devil, at every turn, flinging both him and his promptings far from the sight of his heart. While these temptations were still young, he caught hold of them and dashed them against Christ (Ps 14[15]:4; 136[137]:9). ²⁹These people *fear the Lord* and do not become elated over their good deeds; they judge it is the Lord's power, not their own, that brings about the good in them. ³⁰*They praise* (Ps 14[15]:4) the Lord working in them, and say with the

Prophet: *Not to us, Lord, not to us give the glory, but to your name alone* (Ps 113[115:1]:9). ³¹In just this way Paul the Apostle refused to take credit for the power of his preaching. He declared: *By God's grace I am what I am* (1 Cor 15:10). ³²And again he said: *He who boasts should make his boast in the Lord* (2 Cor 10:17). ³³That is why the Lord says in the Gospel: *Whoever hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house upon rock; ³⁴the floods came and the winds blew and beat against the house, but it did not fall: it was founded on rock* (Matt 7:24-25).

³⁵With this conclusion, the Lord waits for us daily to translate into action, as we should, his holy teachings. ³⁶Therefore our life span has been lengthened by way of a truce, that we may amend our misdeeds. ³⁷As the Apostle says: *Do you not know that the patience of God is leading you to repent?* (Rom 2:4). ³⁸And indeed the Lord assures us in his love: *I do not wish the death of the sinner, but that he turn back to me and live* (Ezek 33:11).

³⁹Brothers, now that we have asked the Lord who will dwell in his tent, we have heard the instruction for dwelling in it, but only if we fulfill the obligations of those who live there. ⁴⁰We must, then, prepare our hearts and bodies for the battle of holy obedience to his instructions. ⁴¹What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace. ⁴²If we wish to reach eternal life, even as we avoid the torments of hell, ⁴³then—while there is still time, while we are in this body and have time to accomplish all these things by the light of life—⁴⁴we must run and do now what will profit us forever.

⁴⁵Therefore we intend to establish a school for the Lord's service. ⁴⁶In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome. ⁴⁷The good of all concerned, however, may prompt us to a little strictness in order to amend faults and to safeguard love. ⁴⁸Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset. ⁴⁹But as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love.

⁵⁰Never swerving from his instructions, then, but faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom. Amen.

0**Leitmotifs and basic tone of the entire Rule.**

a. The Rule of the Master,¹ which Benedict follows to a considerable degree, also contains a short Prologue comprised of admonitions about listening and acting as well as an introduction to the Rule (RM Prol). A threefold theme follows: (1) In the parable of the baptismal font (RM Th) comes an inviting voice issuing from the font. It portrays monasticism as a deepening of baptism. (2) An explanation of the Lord's Prayer (RM ThP) introduces the new kind of prayer to which one is invited. (3) A commentary on two psalms (RM ThS) used for baptismal catechesis is directed toward the monks.

b. Benedict adopts the psalm commentaries with few changes but leaves out the first two parts of the Master, artfully replacing them with introductory verses.² He also formulates the closing verses of the Prologue, thus creating a frame around the Prologue. The central idea of both the beginning and conclusion is the path toward salvation. The beginning directly addresses the listener, in the second person, as does the end of the Rule.³ Near the middle of the Prologue Benedict again emphasizes the central idea of salvation.⁴

c. The Prologue is not just a preliminary note; rather, it establishes the Rule's fundamental tone, which is to be heard in conjunction with all later spiritual and organizational directives of the Rule. Benedict formulates these rather objectively, while in the opening verses he addresses a brother in the second person, with convinc-

1. Benedict's most important model, not necessarily in terms of its spirituality, but rather with regard to its extent and citation, is the Rule of the Master. Parallels (=) between these two rules are to be found in every chapter. This information is taken from Adalbert de Vogüé and Jean Neufville, eds., *La Règle de S. Benoît*, 6 vols., SCh 181–86 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972–1977), 1:174–85. For the RB Prologue: RB Prol.1 = RM Prol.1, 5, 8, 15, 19, 22; RB Prol.2 = RM Prol.3, 7, 11; ThP.6; RB Prol.3 = RM Th.18, 21; ThP.24–53; RB Prol.4 = RM ThP.69–72, 79; RB Prol.5–44 = RM ThS.2–44; RB Prol.45 = RM ThS.45; RB Prol.48 = (RM Prol.14); RB Prol.50 = RM ThS.46.

2. RB Prol.1–4.

3. RB Prol.73.

4. RB Prol.21–22.

ing cordiality. Toward the end of the Rule, he again uses a second-person singular verb.⁵ The final chapters strike a deeply spiritual chord, which resounds through the whole Rule. The final chapter is an epilogue that presents an explanation of purpose. The reader can profitably read the epilogue together with the beginning. The rest of the Rule is thus nested in a frame, from beginning to end. This chiasmic structure shows the background against which the individual regulations of the Rule are to be understood.

1-7

The voice of a fatherly teacher invites listeners to listen wholeheartedly to the words that guide them toward salvation, to avoid paths of evil, and to proceed in obedience and in service to Christ, who may be called upon for help.

1

a. People have often puzzled over the identity of the Master named in the introduction. The author consciously expresses himself in an indeterminate way, as though saying, “These words come from me, but are taken from a divine source. I am not conveying a new teaching to you, but rather what I have learned from the fathers.” Benedict uses the *Admonition to a Spiritual Son*,⁶ attributed to Basil, at the beginning of his Prologue. This *admonitio* reminds the reader that the Rule is not a new creation but is rather drawn from Holy Scripture as it is interpreted by the fathers and applied by them to the ascetical life. The words *master* and *father* also recall that no one becomes a monk without first receiving training from a monastic father, a fundamental norm that was also applied among the hermits of Egypt. Benedict formulates the admonition to a spiritual son⁷ in a more affectionate

5. RB Prol.1-3; 73.8-9.

6. *Admonitio ad filium spiritualem, prooemium*. RB Prol.1-4 includes, besides themes from the RM and the biblical Wisdom literature, formulations of this “admonition.” It probably originates from Lérins (ca. 500); see the introduction, 3.2.e.

7. RB Prol.1: *aurem cordis . . . pii patris*. The *Admonitio* prooem reads, “*Corde credulo* [to hear with a believing heart].”

and fatherly way than does Basil, but he also emphasizes effective action.

b. Benedict begins emphatically with “Listen!” He is addressing a “hearer of the Word.” In earlier days candidates for baptism were called “listeners,” *audientes*, beginning at a certain point in the initiation.⁸ Influenced by baptismal spirituality, the author of the *Lives of the Jura Fathers* (before 515) writes, “Thanks to the inspiration of the divine Word,” we have seen a spiritual fruitfulness of the “monasteries and churches of Christ.”⁹ The Rule of Saint Benedict and what it describes should appear as a product of the Word. Holy Scripture often appears personified in the Prologue. It “wakes” and calls, and it is perceived as the voice of the inviting Lord.¹⁰ Other monastic writings also begin with “Hear, O Israel, the commandments of life!”¹¹ That is the opening line of the most important prayer of a faithful Jew, the “Sh’ma Israel”: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone.”¹²

c. An intensive listening or careful hearing should correspond to this call. The heart must incline itself toward that which is heard. With these introductory words Benedict articulates the basic attitude of humility.¹³ At the same time, it is clear that the Rule is directed at the whole person, body and soul. It addresses the heart in the biblical sense, that is, the whole person and his or her conscience. Listeners thus perceive the voice of their own heart. One might say that the Rule wishes to develop a spirituality of the heart,¹⁴ with *heart* meaning not the irrational emo-

8. See Hippolytus, *Traditio apostolica* 17–18, in *Hippolytus Werke*, ed. Hans Achelis, Exegetische und homiletische Schriften (Leipzig: J. Hinrichsen Buchhandlung, 1897).

9. See VPJur 12.

10. Prol.8, 9, 19.

11. According to Horsiesus, Lib 1, whereby he cites Bar 3:9 in a context about wisdom; see Jerome Ep 22.1: “Hear.”

12. Deut 6:4.

13. See commentary on RB 7. See Matt 11:29: “Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.” Also, see Matt 23:8-10; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Clem 2:1; 21:8; 29:3, 6; 44:3; 57:1-2.

14. The word *heart* appears in the Rule thirty-one times; of these, twenty-two instances are in those parts taken from the RM (see RM 10.123: *actus militae cordis*). When looking up parallels to the Rule of Saint Benedict in the older patristic or monastic literature, one comes

tions but rather one's disposition and the realm of matters close to the heart.

d. For Benedict feelings and discussions are not enough: they must lead to action. The seed of the Word must bear fruit. Like every Christian, the monk must live according to the teachings of Christ, but the monk should bring the Word to fruition in a particularly intensive way. Here Christ himself is the "kindhearted Father."¹⁵

2

a. In the first sentences of his Prologue Benedict succinctly summarizes the Prologue of the Rule of the Master. In the Master a teacher bids a hearer to listen to the Word of God in this "writing" and to obey it. "At the crossroads of one's own heart,"¹⁶ the listener must choose between the way "to the Lord" and the way "to ruin." Benedict speaks in a concrete way of a return from being distant from God. Theological depth is evident in this image. Seven hundred years later Thomas Aquinas structured his *Summa* according to the image of a circular movement, namely, the departure from God and the return to God.¹⁷

b. Listening and obeying are expected. Obedience is, first of all, ascetic work or effort for humans.¹⁸ Only toward the end of the Rule does Benedict characterize obedience as a "good" (*bonum*). Initially Adam's guilt led to "work by the sweat of one's brow."¹⁹ The desert fathers said, "If someone begins the life of a monk [*conversatio*], God looks for the effort of obedience from that person more than anything else."²⁰ Ancient monasticism did not emphasize this effort or the ascetic work on oneself to which listening to God would lead: "One of the desert fathers said that

across the term *heart* surprisingly often. It is clearly a key concept. See commentary on Prol.1, 28, 40, 49; 7.3; index: *heart*.

15. V. 3.

16. RM Prol.8-9.

17. *Summa theologicae*, I, q. 2 prol: Emergence from "God," "movement of the intelligent nature toward God [*in Deum*]," through "Christ, who [as man] is the way to God."

18. *Labor, kapos, ponos*.

19. Deut 6:4.

20. VPatr 5.14.15.

one's effort is conceited if it is without humility. Humility is the precursor of love."²¹

c. The opposite of ascetic effort is personal inertia or *acedia*, the lack of a sense of spirituality, religious apathy.²²

d. But the monk cannot expect to be freed from the entanglements of guilt through asceticism, but rather through the workings of the risen Christ, the second Adam. Whoever turns to him will become a "new resident of paradise."²³ Obedience (*hypakoe*) to him leads to righteousness. "In one's heart one must be obedient"²⁴ to the teaching that Christ proclaims. Upon this foundation Benedict develops a spirituality of the heart.²⁵

3

a. The renunciation of a sterile self-centeredness and the acceptance of Christ illuminate the deeper meaning of asceticism, which can be understood only in the context of binding oneself to the person of Jesus Christ. Doctrines, norms, and practices do not motivate people to follow Christ or take up ascetic practices; rather, personal allegiance to Jesus does so. The image of Christ that Benedict presents in a way recalls the Pantocrator images of the early church. With subtle enthusiasm, Benedict hints that this relationship goes far beyond the bonds of a soldier to his king. The *Admonition to a Spiritual Son* clarifies it in this way: "In this world a soldier is ready and willing to obey an order no matter where he is sent. . . . A soldier in this world goes to war against a visible enemy. But against you an invisible enemy will not cease to fight."²⁶ At the beginning and end of his Prologue, Benedict, like the Master, verbally emphasizes these ideas of the lordship and Kingdom of Christ. He emphasizes it further by means of

21. VPatr 7.13.7.

22. See commentary on 1.10-11; 7.10-13 (b); 48.7-8 (d), 17-18 (b-c), 24-25 (b).

23. See Rom 5:12-19. Jerome, Ep 3.4.

24. See Rom 6:16-17.

25. See n. 13.

26. Admonitio 1. Benedict's formulation sounds more committed: *fortissima atque praeclara arma*.

an *inclusio*. The monk thus participates in the royal dignity of Christ (Borias).²⁷

b. The image Benedict takes up of service and battle for Christ against the power of evil comes from the apostle Paul.²⁸ It signals a shift of the external bloody battle of martyrs to an inner front. The watchword the martyrs brought before a judge remains the same: "I serve Christ, the true king!" Polycarp exemplified this position when he said, "For eighty-six years I have served him. He was never unjust to me. How can I malign the king who has saved me?"²⁹ A woman who has made profession can also be seen as belonging to the *militia Christi*.³⁰ Benedict here echoes Origen's words: "You must fight the battle within. The edifice that must be brought down is inside you. Your enemy emerges from your heart."³¹ He is talking here not only about resisting the power of the evil one. More important, the soldiers of Christ receive marching orders to put love into practice fully, as is required by the great commandment.³²

c. Benedict's words also summarize the baptismal catechesis of the Master.³³ The Master calls it an "account of the warfare of the heart" (*actus militiae cordis*).³⁴ This baptismal catechesis was originally meant for Christians. Now it forms the basis of monastic spirituality. For the Master and for Benedict, the monk is simply but quintessentially a Christian. In this baptismal catechesis, the "benevolent voice" of the Lord invites to the refreshing spring of baptism those born of Eve or "mother earth," those "burdened" with the guilt of their father Adam, those who stray on the "paths of life in exile." At this "refreshing spring" they free themselves from a "deadly burden" by "turning away" from sin.³⁵ Newly born in Christ, they find in him a "father." They

27. RM ThS.17, 18, 46; RB Prol.3, 20–22 (in the middle), 50.

28. Eph 6:13–17. See commentary on RB Prol.28 (a), 40, 45 (b); 5.10–13 (c); 7.35–43 (b); 48.17–18 (c); 49.6–7 (b).

29. *Martyrium Polycarpi* 9.3.

30. See Sulpicius Severus, Dial 2, 11.2.

31. Origen, Jes Nave Hom 5.2.

32. RMac 1.

33. RM Th.

34. RM 10.123.

35. See commentary on Prol.45 (a).

find a supportive “mother” in the “law of Christ,” that is, grace of Christ imparted by the church. Benedict includes this theology with the statements about the “work of obedience” and about “renunciation.” These are reminiscent of monastic profession, which was also seen as analogous to baptism.³⁶ Thirst for the life-giving baptismal fountain leads one to commit to Christ and to renounce the pomp of the evil one. From this develops the decision to live ascetically.³⁷

d. Basil (d. 379) explains this renunciation positively and with words taken from the New Testament: “He for whom the whole world is crucified for the love of Christ—and he himself is crucified for the world—how can he become a slave to the problems and constraints of this world, for the Lord instructs him to deny himself out of love for him.”³⁸ The Theban Joseph calls for the “submission under a spiritual father and his instructions as well as the renunciation of one’s own arbitrary will.”³⁹ Benedict’s mentor Cassian points to three dimensions of renunciation corresponding to the “tradition of the fathers combined with the authority of the Scriptures”: (1) a renunciation of money and property (thanks to God’s call), (2) a change in one’s lifestyle with its addictions (thanks to the model of holy people), (3) a change of orientation from things present and material to things to come and invisible (thanks to a new sense of perspective).⁴⁰ A decision for Christ now appears as a real alternative. The radical approach that Cassian calls renunciation is freely chosen out of enthusiasm for Christ. It is not obligatory for all Christians (and it is something about which Cassian is silent).

4

In the Master an explanation of the Lord’s Prayer follows the baptismal catechesis.⁴¹ At this point Benedict briefly calls for

36. See commentary on RB 58.12, 17-18 (a-b, e), 26.

37. See VHonor 1.5-8.

38. See RBasRuf 4.8; Matt 6:14; 16:24.

39. VPatr 5.1.9: *et omnibus propriis renuntiat voluntatibus*.

40. Conf 3.3-4.

41. RM ThP. It also belongs to the *actus militiae cordis*. When recommending “persistent prayer” (v. 4), Benedict probably thinks of the commentary on the Lord’s Prayer in the RM (Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire*, 9:105).

prayer, which precedes all other activities. Before calling for asceticism he shows that the grace of Christ must carry all endeavors.⁴² Christ is not only the master but also the supportive father. This formulation sounds more semi-Pelagian than Augustinian. A person begins; God completes.⁴³ But the controversy regarding grace is long over. So Benedict uses here a formula close to practice: Do your best, and God will help. Origen (d. 253), Cassian (d. 432), Caesarius (d. 542), and the fathers of Lérins expressed themselves in a similar way. It was not Benedict's intention to enter into a controversy about "antecedent" grace. He is perhaps influenced by the *Admonition to a Spiritual Son* (ca. 500), whose thinking he certainly shares: "Do not ask on the basis of your own merits; and if you become aware of a good deed, hide it! If you keep silent, God will reward you many times over. . . . Whatever work you begin, call first upon the Lord, and do not cease to thank him when it is completed."⁴⁴ We know our limitations; we expect that God will allow us to go beyond such limitations.

5-7

a. At this point Benedict begins to follow the Rule of the Master almost verbatim.⁴⁵ The *we* of the community takes the place of the familiar second-person form. At the beginning he introduces the theme of being a child of God, recalling the "love of God" that lives in one's "heart," the "Spirit who makes us sons" and "heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ."⁴⁶ According to Benedict, Christians must think of the sufferings of God, who "must become saddened" when Christians disregard his self-revelation in the grace of being children of God, grace that he gives out of love.

b. Benedict emphasizes that monks are to serve God with the gifts he has given them.⁴⁷ They are to act along with

42. See commentary on RB Prol.18.

43. See commentary on RB Prol.35-38.

44. Admonitio 11.

45. RM ThS.2-46 = RB Prol.5-45, 50. This section belongs to the "account of the dealings of the heart" in the RM.

46. See Rom 5:5; 8:15-17.

47. The expression *de bonis suis* is reminiscent of *offerimus de tuis donis ac datis* [from your gifts and offerings] in the ancient Roman Canon of the Mass (*Missale Romanum*, Eucharistic Prayer I).

his grace, which will control every (semi-Pelagian) sense of self-righteousness.⁴⁸

c. The theme of judgment forms the opposite perspective, referring to one's responsibility. For Basil, Christians become their own judgment: "If we turn away from God's love . . . we will inevitably succumb to his anger.⁴⁹ . . . We can suffer no greater punishment than to alienate ourselves from God's love."⁵⁰ Irenaeus (d. ca. 200) offers biblical thought processes strikingly related to those in Benedict's Prologue: "Just as among humans disobedient sons disowned by their fathers are still their sons according to nature but no longer according to the law, because they no longer inherit from their natural parents, in the same way those who do not obey God will be disowned by him and cease to be his sons. Therefore, they cannot receive inheritance from him."⁵¹ Whoever was cast out from this family unit in earlier times was without rights, like unprotected game.

8-20

At this point Christ, the Lord, addresses his worker in person. With the help of Psalm 33 he explains to him the way to life. He is to "hasten onward," under the guidance of the Gospel, in order in the end to be able to see the Lord in his kingdom.

8-11

a. In a variety of ways the author describes the call to watchfulness. The sleeper is to "get up," understood in the context of baptismal spirituality,⁵² namely, in a way that resonates sacramentally and existentially with the resurrection of Christ.⁵³ The wake-up call is to strike both the ears and the heart, in other words, the entirety of the person. If in other instances the author

48. V. 6 is framed with warnings in vv. 5 and 7 (Böckmann).

49. See Eph 2:3; 5:6.

50. RBasRuf 2.27.

51. *Adversus haereses* 4.41.3.

52. See Eph 5:14 (probably from a baptismal hymn): "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." See also Rom 6:4-5.

53. See Rom 6; 13:11-14.

prefers phrases like *every day, at all times, constantly, and in all places*, here he situates God's call in *today*. Benedict inserted this text into that of the Master for his own purpose.⁵⁴ Yet it remains clear that hearers are to answer freely to the call: "Whoever has ears . . . harden not your hearts."

b. At the conclusion of the parable of the sower, the seed of the Word is sown into one's heart but then falls onto rocky ground.⁵⁵ Eastern spirituality warns about "hardening of the heart," about "brittleness" or "sclerosis" of the heart, that is, *lack of sensitivity*. But the Eastern fathers also knew of a cure: "Someone asked Abbot Poimen about hardness of heart. He answered: 'Water is by nature soft, whereas stone is hard. But when water drips onto stone continuously, it hollows out the stone. God's Word too is fine and mild, whereas our hearts are hard. But the one who often hears the Word of God creates room in his heart for the fear of God so that it can move in.'"⁵⁶

c. The voice of the Lord "today" necessitates a genuine inner sensitivity.⁵⁷ This voice here becomes the Spirit's word of encouragement to the "churches."⁵⁸ Here Benedict addresses communities or particular churches. The monastery understands itself as a church community. It must discern the voice of the Lord from the many demands that come from the entire church, the local church, and neighbors in its area.

d. An intensely experienced hearing of the Word of God corresponds to seeing the divine light. This idea recalls Johannine theology.⁵⁹ Statements about light come at the beginning of a commentary on the psalms, hinting at baptism. The church has seen the light in the Word of God. But the church also has

54. V. 10; see Matt 13:19; Luke 8:15. The voice that is to be heard "every day" is perhaps to be explained by the invitatory Psalm 94, which is heard daily.

55. See Matt 13:18-23.

56. VPatr 7.29.

57. See Matt 13:18-23.

58. See Matt 13:18-23.

59. Vv. 9 and 13. See John 1:4-6; 9 (healing of the man born blind). The translation "deifying light," though correct in terms of content, overloads the wording of *deificum*, which was a synonym for "divine" in the language of the time.

baptism, which seals the faithful acceptance of the Word of God, always understood as standing in the light of Christ.⁶⁰ Hearing the Word of God and seeing the divine light are dual motifs with which Eastern mysticism was especially familiar. This mysticism emanates from the theophanies on Mount Sinai and on the Mount of the Transfiguration,⁶¹ with their outward manifestations that result in both awe and fascination: light, a shining cloud, thunder, and a voice admonishing that one listen.⁶² Fascination causes the running that occurs in this passage.⁶³ God's revelation in light and in Word now takes place in the heart. Thus Origen explains, "This is healthy teaching—that a human being alone cannot be the true master of virtue. 'The one who teaches humans wisdom,' so say the psalms, is none other than God. God teaches by illuminating the soul of the one learning from him and by lighting up the spirit with his own Word. Even if upright people teach us . . . it is still the Lord teaching through them. Insight itself and the opening of our hearts to receive divine teaching happen through divine grace."⁶⁴ Irenaeus of Lyon wrote, "There is only one way leading everyone who sees on high, illuminated by heavenly light. . . . This way unites people with God."⁶⁵ A glance at the Prologue of the gospel of John, about the incarnate

60. Ps 34:6: "Look towards him and be radiant"; Ps 34:9: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Because of these verses the early church sang Psalm 34 when celebrating the sacraments of initiation. Baptism is traditionally called *photism* (enlightenment). See Heb 6:2-4; 10:32; Justin (Apol 1.61): "And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings." Thomas Aquinas (*Summa* 3.67, 1 ad 2) writes, "Baptism is not only a cleansing, but the power of enlightenment." The present Order of Baptism also speaks of enlightenment and is familiar with the symbolism of light.

61. See Matt 13:18-23.

62. See Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* 12.43.

63. Vv. 9 and 13. Benedict has added the words *life* and *death* to John 12:35. Additionally, he has replaced the word *ambulare* (walk) with the word *currere* (run), which he uses four times in the Prologue (RB Prol.13, 22, 44, 49) and in RB 27.5; 43.1.

64. Fragment on Job 22.2.

65. *Demonstratio apostolicae praedicationis*, Pref.1.

Word, which is the light that enlightens every person,⁶⁶ shows the background of this theology.

e. In this Johannine context, Basil experiences not only divine teaching but especially the love between God and people as an indescribable inner light:

I experience the love of God in a completely inexpressible way. It is to be experienced rather than expressed. It is an indescribable light. If my speech wanted to draw comparisons with lightning or thunder, the ears would not be able to stand it or comprehend it. If you consider a blinding beam of light, the clear shining of the moon, sunlight itself, these are all dark and more dismal than the dark night when compared to this glory. . . . With our bodily eyes we do not perceive this radiance, but our souls and spirits perceive it. When this radiance penetrates the souls and spirits of saints, it drives deeply into them the burning desire to love him. . . . "When can I come and see the face of God? . . . My soul thirsts for God, the living God."⁶⁷

f. In summary, the divine light is seen in the sacraments of faith (e.g. baptism), in which Christ addresses Christians and becomes symbolically visible. This light is seen in the teaching of the Gospel and experienced in the gift of divine love. In this light Christians are to read the Old Testament psalms and prophets, to which Benedict was partial. He himself speaks in the image-rich language of the Bible, not in an abstract, theoretical way. This is how he encourages meditation. From the literal meaning and from the images and parables of Scripture Christians should ascend to a realization of the deeper realities of faith and to the loving vision of God. A superficial glance easily misses the mystical depth of some of the passages of the Rule. Its reticence is intentional. According to Evagrius (d. 399)⁶⁸ and Cassian, the holy light is not to be given to everyone without discernment. The "mysteries of spiritual meanings are to be hidden" from many.⁶⁹

66. John 1:5, 9, 14.

67. RBasRuf 2.18-23; see Ps 42:3.

68. Prakt 11.

69. Cassian, Conf 14.17. See Matt 7:6. Also see commentary on RB 19.3-7; 73.3.

12-13

a. At this point the commentary on the psalms begins, starting with Psalm 33, used by the ancient church in addressing candidates for baptism and as a preferred communion song: “Come, my sons, listen. . . . Taste and see . . . and you will be enlightened.”⁷⁰ The voice of the Lord invites “those who are listening.”⁷¹ With the call “Come, my sons,” the catechumens of the ancient church were called to baptism.⁷² The psalmist addressed God as *Lord*. Christians transferred this title to Christ. For them, God is present in Christ. With the words of the psalm they pray eagerly to Christ. This view, spread by Origen, was especially cherished in monastic circles (Fischer). The light that contrasts with the darkness is Christ.

b. When touched by God’s word, a person’s first reaction is fear: dismay at one’s inadequacy, limitations, and guilt; fear of darkness, where one’s sense of direction is lost; and fear of a meaningless death. But this slavish fear becomes reverence for the God who is holy.⁷³ It leads to the purification of one’s heart.⁷⁴

14-15

God desires the salvation of humankind. Christ the Lord searches humans out and offers them complete and lasting life and happiness. He calls individuals from the crowd to be collaborators in the work of salvation:⁷⁵ in work on themselves and in the service of others. The individuals are asked about what they seek; monks do not forgo their wills. When the Rule frowns on one’s own will, it has to do with egotistic self-will. When the word *life* is mentioned, one thinks of Christ, who says, “I am the

70. Ps 34:12. See the admonition to the newly baptized in 1 Pet 3:10-12. Also see commentary on RB Prol.8-11.

71. The word *audire* appears nine times in the Prologue.

72. See Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum* 33.12.

73. RB 7.67, 69.

74. See commentary on RB 4.55-58; 7.10-30, 62-66; 31.10-12; 72.12; 73.2.

75. See Matt 20:1-19. Also see the commentary on RB 4.78 (workshop) and 7.18 (the capable brother). The human being, in turn, “seeks God” (RB 58.7).

life." This is an "abundant life," or rather a life overflowing with that which is to be shared with others.⁷⁶

16-17

The shift to the more personal second person in this text taken from the Master indicates that one is personally struck by the Word "of God."⁷⁷ Christ directs this word toward everyone. The response is a free and personal "I!" The one who looks for the ultimate meaning of life and its fulfillment in the hereafter should not forget the justice owed to others. As is promised in baptism, one must turn away from evil and turn toward Christ. This is how one attains peace, which is Christ himself.⁷⁸ The Rule often speaks of peace,⁷⁹ frequently mentioning both peace and love at the same time, both of them fruits of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ Searching for peace leads to love, which is mentioned as a goal at the end of the Prologue,⁸¹ as also at the end of the chapter on good works,⁸² at the end of the chapter on humility,⁸³ and at the end of the Rule itself.⁸⁴ Searching for peace is ultimately identical to a "search for God,"⁸⁵ which is the aim of the monk.

18-20

The inner comforting experience of God's closeness leads to prayer (which does not sound Pelagian). Cyprian (d. 258) likewise quotes Isaiah: "While you are praying he speaks to you: see, I am

76. John 14:6. Christ is the good shepherd, who has come so that his sheep have "life in abundance [overflowing]"; he "lays down his life [*animam suam*]" for the sheep (see John 10:10-11).

77. In contrast to the use of *Lord* in RM ThS.12, Benedict inserts *God* in verse 16, probably as a response against the Arianism of the Goths (Quartiroli).

78. This peace is Christ himself (see Eph 2:14).

79. RB 4.25, 73.

80. See Gal 5:22. RB 65.11; 4.71-73.

81. See commentary on RB Prol.48-49.

82. See commentary on RB 4.73.

83. See commentary on RB 7.67-68.

84. See commentary on RB 72.8-11.

85. See commentary on RB 58.7.

here!”⁸⁶ God is eye and ear for Christians, as they should likewise be for him. He invites one to an intimate, personal dialogue, “face to face.”⁸⁷ Benedict’s spirituality, like that of the fathers, is unpretentious. But when he mentions the voice of Christ, there is a spontaneous crying out, evidence of a deeply scriptural and Christ-centered spirituality. It has a parallel in the fraternal love that unites a community in the spirit of Christ.⁸⁸ Such ways of acting are carried by the goodness of God, who shows the “way to life”—the wording used to describe this dynamic process (Kardong).

21-22

This turning point in the middle of the Prologue offers both a theological synthesis of the Gospel path and a look forward to the following section, with its invitation to act accordingly.

21

a. These verses form a turning point between commentaries on two psalms⁸⁹ (Quartiroli; Böckmann). In approximately the middle of the Prologue,⁹⁰ Benedict explains the Gospel as the norm for monastic life, as a guide for the path into the future, and as a prerequisite for the grace of seeing God face to face as the goal.

b. To remain clothed⁹¹ means to wait with alertness, ready for the coming of the Lord, like those who are preparing themselves for a long march through the wilderness.⁹² Equipping oneself for a Christian life, getting ready for the journey, amounts to a simple faith that makes one conscious of the presence of God, with that

86. *De Oratione* 33 (Isa 58:9).

87. See Exod 33:11.

88. Benedict, on his own initiative, inserts into verse 19 of the Master’s text (RM ThS.15) the word *dear* (*carissimi*) in addressing the brothers.

89. By using *ergo* in v. 21, Benedict reintroduces the *ergo* from v. 8.

90. These verses are located in the middle of the Prologue, if one assumes it to be the version of the “oldest manuscript” (O), in which vv. 40-50 are missing.

91. See Luke 12:35.

92. Exod 12:11.

consciousness being the fear of God,⁹³ and thus makes it possible to be tested in doing good.⁹⁴ Faith is to be realized in action.

c. The Gospel must be the guiding principle of the Christian life. The Gospel is not to remain an edifying piece of private property but must be proclaimed. A number of manuscripts of the Rule (among them the oldest) adds, “[Put on] the shoes of readiness to fight for the Gospel of peace.”⁹⁵ One’s life should make Christ visible. This responsibility rests on every Christian. The Gospel should become second nature. “Under the guidance of the Gospel” monks became saints and thus witnesses of the faith.⁹⁶ Their astonishing charisma made them messengers of faith even if they were not wandering preachers.

d. Seeing God, the final gift of God, presumes a pure heart and thus ascetic purification as well.⁹⁷

22

a. Benedict now introduces an explanation of Psalm 15, which was used for teaching candidates for baptism. Connecting it to verse 21, he begins with a view toward the goal. As in the Sermon on the Mount, this goal is the “reign of God.”⁹⁸ On the long road through the desert one has to hurry if one is to reach the goal. Benedict describes the journey using vivid images of a tent community⁹⁹ or of nurturing hospitality, images that one might enjoy when living in a monastic community.

b. The image of running swiftly does not echo Romans 9:16, “So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God’s mercy.” Without denying the necessity of grace, Origen praises this “running toward the goal in a drive toward the good.”¹⁰⁰ Augustine (d. 430) emphasizes the same passage from Paul: one must “attribute everything to God, who prepares and supports our goodwill and

93. See commentary on RB Prol.12-13, 29-32; 5.1-9; 7.62-70.

94. See commentary on RB 7.10-13 (a-b); 72.9.

95. See Eph 6:15.

96. Hirsiesus, Lib 15.

97. Matt 5:8.

98. See Matt 5:10, 19-20; 6:10, 33; 7:21.

99. This image is found in vv. 22, 23, 24, and 39.

100. *Peri Archon* 3.1.18.

helps us after our preparations.”¹⁰¹ Here it seems that the success of Christian actions is to be attributed to grace alone. In contrast, Origen also emphasizes the meaning of human cooperation: “Our perfection does not take place without some action on our part, but God does most of it.”¹⁰² The monastic fathers occasionally emphasized the opportunities for human freedom and for powerful wills: Abbot Allois said, “If you really want to, by the evening of one day you can reach a measure of godliness.”¹⁰³

23-34

In the words of Psalm 15, the Lord calls us once again to walk the path of integrity, in order that we may dwell in the tent community on the mountain of God.

23-27

a. The prophet whose question we take on is, for Benedict, the psalmist David. The Lord, who has called us onto the right path, is himself the one who dwells in the tent on the mountain toward which we walk.¹⁰⁴ This is a tent community, dwelling together with the Son of God who has lived with us (literally, “who has put up his tent”).¹⁰⁵ He is the quintessential member of the community.

b. Are we worthy of living in community with Christ? Question and answer are given in Psalm 15, which Benedict now presents. This psalm too was often explained to candidates for baptism. The basic ethos of the monk is identical to the Christian plan for living. The path is simply a life of integrity, truth, and justice motivated by Christ.

28

a. As in Scripture and in the literature of the early church—for example in the Acts of the Martyrs or in the Lives of the desert

101. *Enchiridion* 9.32.

102. *Peri Archon* 3.11.19.

103. *VPatr* 5.11.6.

104. Jesus delighted in praying and preaching on a mountain. See also Gal 4:24-25; Heb 12:22-24.

105. See John 1:14: *eskānosen* (took his dwelling).

fathers¹⁰⁶—Benedict portrays the struggle with the evil¹⁰⁷ one as wrestling, or a battle with and for Christ¹⁰⁸ against the devil.¹⁰⁹ To look at evil, at one's addictions and compulsions, especially one's own shadow, leads to healing, which is the goal of these struggles. Christ is the rock¹¹⁰ on which everything opposed to God shatters. Athanasius (d. 373) describes the climax of the struggle of the thirty-five-year-old cave dweller Antony (d. 357) against evil: "Jesus did not forget the struggle of his servant and became his protector. When Antony lifted his eyes, he saw how the roof opened and how a beam of light shone on him. . . . Antony felt God's help and was able to breathe freely and without pain, and he said, 'Where were you? Why didn't you stand by me from the beginning to ease my pain?' Then he heard a voice that said, 'Antony! I was always here to see how you would fare in the battle. Because you survived and did not let yourself be overcome, I will always be at your side.'" ¹¹¹

b. For early monks, the place of the battle with the evil one was the desert, the place where Christ too was tempted. It was the place of solitude and isolation.¹¹² It held the danger of loneliness but also the opportunity for keeping one's personal integrity. Here the monk had to face the demons of immoderation, sexual self-indulgence, aggressiveness, materialistic impulses, depression, fearfulness, apathy, false excitement, and selfish arrogance.¹¹³ People easily saw the personified evil one in disturbances and difficulties of the soul. These were the cunning attacks of the devil.

106. VAnt 5-6. By "evil promptings" Benedict means *logismoi*, the mental and emotional notions of evil, which are covered in Evagrius Ponticus (*De octo spiritibus malitiae tractatus*) and Cassian (*De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalibus vitiis*).

107. See commentary on RB 24.3

108. See commentary on RB 3.50.

109. Benedict is discreet; he mentions the devil four times. The Master, in contrast, mentions him thirty-seven times. Some monastic *vitae* explain mental strain through imaginative stories about the devil.

110. See 1 Cor 10:4, RB 4.50; 7.44.

111. VAnt 10.1-3.

112. Cassian, Conf 18.6.

113. Evagrius, Prakt 6-39; Cassian, Conf 5.3; VAnt 21.

On the other hand, for Antony it was enough to make the sign of the cross for peace to return.¹¹⁴

c. Jesus in his temptation is the prototype of this battle with the evil one.¹¹⁵ The martyrs too are prototypes, as they are described in the Acts of the Martyrs. They resisted the evil one even to a bloody death. Monks tried to emulate the martyrs in their ascetic struggles. It is said of Antony that he “yearned for martyrdom and he bore witness to it daily”¹¹⁶—even though the persecutions had come to an end. The introductory tract on spirituality in the Rule of the Master is called “An Account of the Warfare of the Heart,”¹¹⁷ recalling the same concept as the Acts of the Martyrs. This same view can be assumed in Benedict, who offers a spirituality of the heart¹¹⁸ and speaks here of “temptations” that are perceived by the “heart.” Desert monastics speak of *logismoi* (see Kardong, Puzicha). *Concerning the Eight Thoughts* by Evagrius Ponticus is a well-known summary of this tradition, reflecting a breadth of psychological experience.¹¹⁹ The battle with the devil no longer takes place in the stadium or before a judge but rather in the arena of the heart.¹²⁰ Cassian advises that one occupy each corner of one’s heart with positive forces so that evil spirits will not find it empty and take it over as a favorite nesting place.¹²¹

d. The weapon of asceticism helps in the battle against evil spirits. Athanasius writes in his biography of Antony, “The best weapons against the demons are a life of purity and a true and trusting faith in God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The demons are afraid of the Lord’s ascetics, their fasts, vigils, prayer, gentleness, meekness, simplicity, honesty, meditations—which have nothing to do with money—their reticence, love for

114. See Eph 6:11-12. VAnt 13.5-6; Cassian, Conf 5.16.

115. See Matt 4:1-11.

116. VAnt 46.2; 47.1.

117. RM 1–10: *actus militiae cordis*.

118. See commentary on RB Prol.1 (c).

119. Evagrius Ponticus, *Über die acht Gedanken*, ed. Gabriel Bunge (Cologne: Beuronener Kunstverlag, 1989).

120. See commentary on RB Prol.3 (c).

121. Conf 5.23, 25; see Matt 12:43-45.

the poor, striving for mercy, freedom from angry impulses, and above all their love of Christ."¹²²

e. The battle and the temptations were understood by Origen as an opportunity for critical self-knowledge: "Everything that our souls have absorbed and that is hidden to all except God—even to oneself—comes to light through temptation."¹²³ The gift of discernment of spirits¹²⁴ is important in clarifying our inner struggles. Origen set up rules for this: "One's soul is illuminated either by the true light that never goes out, which is Christ himself—or if the soul does not have this eternal light, it needs to be illuminated by an ephemeral light by the one who has transformed himself 'into an angel of light' and who illuminates the soul of the sinner with false light, so that what is temporal and perishable may appear to him in the disguise of what is good and valuable."¹²⁵ And again, "One experiences the influence of the good Spirit . . . when one is moved and called to what is good and becomes delighted in what is heavenly and divine . . . in a way that allows freedom and human judgment in one's decision to obey or not to obey. Therefore it is possible to know, through manifest discernment, how the soul will be moved by the presence of the good Spirit, namely, when it does not suffer any dimming of its spirit through current influences."¹²⁶

f. Patristic literature often gives the impression that these people were plagued by fear of demons. But they had firm faith, understanding that if one makes room for Christ, his Spirit and his power, then evil will lose its power. All devilish spooks dissolve into nothingness when faced with one who truly believes, one who carries the Spirit.¹²⁷ Origen explains, "We have the power to dismiss evil influences from ourselves when the power of evil tries to seduce us toward what is bad."¹²⁸ Athanasius in the *Life of*

122. VAnt 30.2.

123. *Peri euches* 29.17.

124. VAnt 33.36. See commentary on RB 64.7-22.

125. *Judic Hom* 1.1.

126. *Peri Archon* 3.3-4. On the darkening, see commentary on RB 31.3-7; 72.1-3.

127. See VAnt 13.4-7.

128. *Peri Archon* 3.2.4.

Antony wrote, "The sign of the cross along with faith in the Lord is for us an unconquerable rampart."¹²⁹

g. Benedict has few references to the devil.¹³⁰ Apparently he did not want to encourage false belief in evil spirits. Later, Gregory the Great (d. 604) in his *Dialogues* depicted Benedict as a bearer of the Spirit. Benedict was able to dispel the fantastical and sinister illusory images that frightened his monks.¹³¹ He saw into their hearts and perceived their secret faults.¹³² Above all, he had the gift of discernment of spirits and did not allow himself to be deceived by any disguise. The Gothic king Totila (541–552) "wanted to test whether the man of God really had a prophetic spirit." Totila put one of his own men, Ringgo, in "royal robes," gave him "the Counts Wult, Roderick, and Blidin" as well as "armed soldiers" as entourage, and had Ringgo go to the monastery while Totila hid "at a distance." "Benedict was seated in a high place. As soon as he saw Ringgo coming and was seen by him, Benedict called out to him, 'Take off what is not yours, my son, take it off!'" Out of fear Ringgo fell to the ground, and the contingent of soldiers quickly returned to Totila.¹³³ Benedict was thus a bearer of the Spirit, possessed the gift of discernment, and gave "demonstrations of power," as did the apostles and prophets before him. He was proven to be an apostolic and prophetic man: "This man was endowed with the Spirit of all those we honor [namely, the prophets and apostles]."¹³⁴ He practiced the gift of the prophets when King Totila himself came to him and learned from him that he, Totila, would "march on Rome, go out to sea, rule for nine years, and then die in the tenth year."¹³⁵

29-33

a. The fear of the Lord,¹³⁶ being struck with awe at the holiness of the Covenant God, manifests itself in faithful service, that

129. VAnt 9.10.

130. See n. 109.

131. Dial 2.9.

132. Dial 2.12-13.

133. Dial 2.14.

134. Dial 2.8.8.

135. Dial 2.15.

136. See commentary on RB Prol.12-13; 7.10-13.

is, in good observance, in fulfilling one's duties, and in ascetic practices.¹³⁷

b. With deep and strong words, both the Master and Benedict challenge the monks to "praise the Lord who is at work within us." This is belief in the primacy of grace compared to all human works. An attitude of humble praise, as exemplified by Mary, corresponds with this belief.¹³⁸ The author does not use the abstract term *grace* but rather has readers direct their praise toward the Lord who is working within them.¹³⁹ These sentences about the Lord as "one who works" within the soul and about humble praise of God make Christ present in ascetic practices, giving monks the right to boast in the Lord.¹⁴⁰ Here, Benedict is laying the groundwork for his teaching on prayer, to be treated further in the pages ahead.¹⁴¹

33-34

For the sake of brevity, Benedict omits the ending of Psalm 15. Thus the transition to the following image of the unshakeable rock who is Christ is not included.¹⁴² One who listens to the Lord, especially to the Sermon on the Mount, stands on firm ground.¹⁴³

35-45

Christ the Lord expects the ones who hear his words to answer with their actions, and for that reason Benedict intends to build a "school of the Lord's service."

35-36

The Lord, who was the speaker in this entire commentary on the psalm, now ends his teaching. Earlier, with similar wording,

137. *Observance* is to be understood as a loyal, non-petty performance of one's duty, as it is recommended in VAnt 30.2. See above, n. 111.

138. Luke 1:46-55.

139. Ps 115:1.

140. RM ThS.28 cites 2 Cor 12:1, while Benedict introduces a different stance by citing 2 Cor 10:17 in v. 32.

141. See commentary on RB 4.55-58; 8-20; 43.3; 49.4-5; 52.1-3.

142. Ps 15:7: "who keeps an oath . . . and does not change his mind. . . . Whoever does these things will never be shaken."

143. See Matt 7:24-25. See commentary on RB Prol.1, 28.

the evangelist ended the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁴⁴ Now Christ waits silently for the reaction. He looks for the monks daily at prayer, at work, and in the fulfillment of their duties. Like a father, he is on the lookout for them.¹⁴⁵ But a deadline has been set for their conversion.

37-38

God is generous in his patience or forbearance (*makrothymia*). *Patientia* can be seen as forbearance in this context.¹⁴⁶ It is the disposition of a farmer who knows how to wait and trust in the growth of the harvest.¹⁴⁷ The deadline has been set so that the monks might purify themselves and stay alive. Here is an echo of Johannine theology: "I have come that they might have life and have it in abundance."¹⁴⁸

39

At this point there follows a kind of summary of prerequisites for the path to life or to the Kingdom.¹⁴⁹ Certain manuscripts conclude the Prologue here with, "We will be heirs of the heavenly Kingdom."¹⁵⁰ The testing carried out during this period leads to the ultimate goal, to the tent community with God.¹⁵¹ For this transition to perfection, Origen coined the image, "God enters the soul, and the soul makes its journey into God."¹⁵²

40

a. The long ending of the Prologue takes up the themes Benedict alluded to in his introductory verses,¹⁵³ that the monks

144. See Matt 7:28. See Luke 15:20.

145. See commentary on RB Prol.3.

146. See 1 Cor 13:4: *Caritas patiens est* (Greek: *makrorhymeis*); "Love is patient, love is kind."

147. See Jas 1:7; Mark 4:26-29 (the seed grows in silence).

148. John 10:10.

149. Therefore: *ergo*.

150. A relatively small number of manuscripts feature this abridgment, for unknown reasons.

151. See commentary on RB Prol.22-27.

152. *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 2.16.

153. RB Prol.1-4.

must hear with their hearts the instructions given by Christ and carry them out in his service, avoiding false paths with his help and hurrying onto the path of life (Böckmann).

b. The Rule develops a spirituality of the heart,¹⁵⁴ but its goal is not mere introspection. The entire human being, body and soul, is to be equipped for military service. This wording again enunciates the theme of engaging in battle with the power of the evil spirit who stands opposed to the Good News of Christ.¹⁵⁵ In human hearts or consciences, people are to be completely present to themselves, not letting themselves be controlled by external constraints or allowing themselves aimlessly to waste their energies. With simple words, the author takes a stand against mere intellectualism and other kinds of personal fragmentation. When both heart and body are involved in inner recollection in order to submit oneself obediently to God's guidance, one no longer fears losing one's own center in a complex and scattered environment.¹⁵⁶

41

This verse is not to be understood in a semi-Pelagian sense.¹⁵⁷ The author is probably alluding to Ephesians 2:3: "Whoever belongs to 'the children of wrath by nature' must depend on grace."¹⁵⁸ Here there is no illusion about a perfect world. Benedict is well aware of the crises of human existence, but he also believes that the human world is open to God and that humans are allowed to pray.

42-44

Once again Benedict pulls earlier themes together, some of them only in passing: death and life, light and darkness, open deadlines and definitive decisions, existence in one's body and a

154. See commentary on RB Prol.1, 28.

155. See commentary on RB Prol.28.

156. Antony had already preached, "The spiritual insight proves to be strong when the body's will is weak" (VAnt 7.9).

157. See commentary on RB Prol.4. Cassian deals with the interaction of divine grace and human freedom (Conf 13): *de protectione divina*.

158. See commentary on RB Prol.5-7.

new way of being, fear and trust, the path and running toward the goal—the last of which assumes dynamic movement.

45

a. The conclusion of the Prologue begins with an image of the monastery. In the Master's baptismal catechesis appear the words, "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Here you will find peace for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."¹⁵⁹ Learning from the Lord means becoming his student. This idea corresponds to the invitation, "Go and make students [disciples] of all nations . . . teaching them to observe everything."¹⁶⁰ This great commission gives the context for the Master's phrase, "school of the Lord's service,"¹⁶¹ used in this longer conclusion to the Prologue.

b. In the Rule of the Master the term *school* is used ten times in reference to the monastery. Benedict avoids this term (but not the idea) in other places, apparently to guard against the pedantry of the Master and his idea of virtues-competition among his "students." In the sixth century the word *school* (*schola*) denoted first a common room for soldiers, workers, or students, then the members of this school, and finally service itself, here the multifaceted service of Christ.¹⁶² This service includes "persisting in the teaching," as it is later formulated in reference to a phrase from the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁶³ Christ proclaims this teaching, and the monks serve him. The service he teaches includes hearing and obeying his voice,¹⁶⁴ rejecting burdensome sin or the

159. Matt 11:19. RM Th.13-18. The Lord's voice arises from the baptismal font. See commentary on RB Prol.3.

160. See Matt 28:20.

161. RM ThS.45-46.

162. The expression *schola* has been in use for a long time in the religious environment. Examples appear in Pelagius, *Letter to Demetrias* 21; 23; 55; and in Faustus von Riez, Hom 35.7: *schola Christi*. In German and Yiddish a synagogue is called a *Schul*. It is a house of instruction and prayer. Benedict's instruction here concludes with a prayer for the coming of the Kingdom. See commentary on RB 31.17-19.

163. See commentary on RB Prol.50; see Acts 2:42.

164. See commentary on RB Prol.1, 3, 8-13, 18-20. "Servant of God [*servus Dei*]" was a common name for a monk.

soldierly battle against it, and committing oneself to Christ as well as service,¹⁶⁵ that is, one's training or ascetic practices.¹⁶⁶

c. If the monastery is a school of the Lord, its members belong to the circle of disciples of the Lord. These disciples recognize Jesus as their master. The Twelve belonged to this circle,¹⁶⁷ a group that followed him¹⁶⁸ or was sent out by him.¹⁶⁹ The number of disciples was large.¹⁷⁰ The faithful of the New Testament were also called disciples or students.¹⁷¹ The monastery, in a conscious and obvious way, makes real nothing other than the call—relevant for all believers—to become part of the circle of disciples. According to the words of the Rule, the “school of the Lord’s service” is to be founded and organized. Holy Scripture offers the plan or a summary outline for this founding. The monastery is a concrete manifestation of the plan, though not the only execution of the design or one that exists for all time. The pedagogy of this school should lead to good growth and maturity of the individual and of the community.

46-50

A concluding look at the path of salvation to be followed in the dynamic of the Spirit, in patience and persistence, inspired by love, until one shares in the Kingdom.

46

Verses 46-49 of the Prologue, formulated not by the Master but by Benedict, recall various church writers and reveal a great deal of sensitivity (Lentini).¹⁷² As in the first verses of the Prologue, Benedict here switches to the familiar second-person address.

165. See commentary on RB Prol.3, 28.

166. See commentary on RB Prol.12-13.

167. See Matt 10:1-4; 12:1-2.

168. See Matt 8:21-22.

169. See Luke 10:1.

170. See Luke 6:17; John 6:60-61.

171. See Acts 6:1-7; 9:10-26.

172. An example is Pelagius, *Letter to Demetrias* 8: *nihil asperum, nihil inaccessibleis*. Benedict perhaps wants to reassure the readers, since in ancient times schoolmasters were often heavy-handed and schooldays were tough (Puzicha).

The word choice is also typical for him.¹⁷³ With clear reference to Matthew 11:29-30, he declares that this school should not put heavy burdens on its members. This Rule includes many remarks that betray anxiety about the decadent condition of contemporary monasticism.¹⁷⁴ At the same time it reveals Benedict's worry that the Rule could be experienced as too demanding for beginners. In response, the text maintains, first of all, that hardships and difficulties are not to be cultivated in the monastery for their own sakes—neither arbitrarily nor from negative attitudes of those hostile to life. It is precisely the Rule of Saint Benedict that knowingly brings alleviations, in contrast to earlier practice.¹⁷⁵ In addition, monks tried to make clear that only experience would show how accessible the monastic way was, while doctrines and institution might at first be seen as excessively demanding. A certain person “asked Abbot Moses for a word. The father said to him, ‘Go to your cell, and your cell will teach you everything.’”¹⁷⁶ This is not a theoretical discussion, or procrastination, or a calculation of the risks, but rather a courageous “going” and the lived practice that leads one forward along the path.

47

a. A little strictness must be prompted by *aequitas*, which requires *discretio*, or the “gift of discernment.”¹⁷⁷ Whatever predictable strictness there is must be presented and explained to beginners ahead of time.¹⁷⁸ This text recalls Cassian, who warns not to overestimate the value of charisms and the power of miracles. What is important for all, he says, is the question of whether they have corrected their mistakes. This purification is given “according to personal efforts through God's grace. This is ‘practical knowledge’ for which the apostle uses the term ‘love’ [*caritas*]. It is to be preferred to all else . . . even a glorious martyrdom.”¹⁷⁹

173. Several *hapax legomena*: *dilatato*, *inenarrabili*, *dilectionis*, *dulcedine*.

174. RB 18.25; 40.6; 73.7.

175. RB 8.2; 10.2; 35.13; 66.5.

176. VPatr 5.2.9.

177. RB 64.19.

178. RB 58.8.

179. Conf 15.2.

b. As in Cassian, the attempt to purify oneself and to love are presented as the essence of asceticism. Love resulting in action is called by Cassian “practical knowledge” (in contrast to contemplation). This love stands higher than all other charisms. It will cost something. Because of it one is to renounce genuine human possibilities.¹⁸⁰ Toward the end of the Prologue the goal of the Christian as well as the monastic path appears, and that is love.

48-49

a. Changing the Lord’s wording about the “two paths”¹⁸¹ somewhat, Benedict restricts the narrowness of the path to its beginning. In trying to find the middle ground between decadence and being overburdened, he finds the images of forward movement and climbing helpful.¹⁸² Searching and making progress become possibilities. Mere permissiveness is not a genuine solution. But Benedict shows his humanity here. Beginners are expected to persist in the midst of the difficulties inherent in monastic life¹⁸³ and not to give up but rather to “make headway”¹⁸⁴ and finally reach perfection.¹⁸⁵

b. Monks are called to the path of salvation.¹⁸⁶ They are to grow in “faith” and in the “monastic way of life” (*conversatio*). God takes the lead, as Cassian also points out, he who in other places emphasizes the prospects of human freedom: “God’s Spirit has instilled in us the beginnings of good will. Perhaps he himself has led us directly onto the path of salvation. Perhaps he encouraged us through a good person or an act of divine providence. The perfection of all positive powers in us is itself God’s gift to us. It is our task to carry out what God invites us to and helps us with, whether we do our part with dedication or negligence.”¹⁸⁷

180. See commentary on RB 72.9-10; 73.8-9.

181. Matt 7:14.

182. See commentary on RB 4.1-9, 55-58; 7.5-9; 72.12; 73.8-9.

183. *Conversatio*: RB 58.17; 73.1-2.

184. RB Prol.22-27, 44; 5.10.

185. See commentary on RB 73.9.

186. “way to life”: RB Prol.20 and 5.11; “path to salvation”: RB Prol.48.

187. Conf 3.19.

c. In any case, there is no reason to recoil in panic or to flee¹⁸⁸ from this path when its difficulties become clear. Trust in God must increase: Abbot David, about whom Cassian reported, taught that “the beginning of our conversion and of our faith and the power to withstand our passions is given to us by the Lord.”¹⁸⁹

d. The phrase *inexpressible delight of love* recalls the Scripture verse characterized by eschatological hope: “You did not see him, and yet you love him; you do not see him now, but you believe in him and rejoice with inexpressible joy imbued with divine glory.”¹⁹⁰ When monks nurture their monastic way of life (*conversatio*) out of love, Augustine speaks of the “lovers of spiritual beauty.” He also writes, “The person who walks the path under stress will find it narrow, but the one who follows it with love will find it wide. The same path grows wide.”¹⁹¹ Benedict knows that true joy emerges in a monastic life that is lived dynamically, while the Master reserves joy for the life in the hereafter (Kardong).

e. The fathers often speak of a heart that is wide.¹⁹² It is wide because the “love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹³ Origen distinguished between the wideness and narrowness of the heart. He wrote of the God-given “wideness of saints’ hearts, in which God not only lives but also transforms the person.”¹⁹⁴ He also explained, “Evil works constrict the evil person to himself alone. . . . The love of God creates wide room in the human soul.”¹⁹⁵ Ambrose (d. 397) wrote, “Let the path be narrow and the heart be wide, so that it can withstand the indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹⁶ This theme has gone through many evolutions. Cassian believed that only the “wide heart” could obtain peace or rest¹⁹⁷ and that an impatient, timid, or narrow-hearted person would succumb to every torrent

188. See RB 64.19.

189. Conf 3.15.

190. 1 Pet 1:8. See commentary on RB 51.3.

191. Praec 8.1; En in Ps 30:2; S 1.15.

192. Ps 119:32.

193. Rom 3:5.

194. *Commentary on Romans* 2.6.

195. *Commentary on the Psalms* 118.45.

196. Expo Ps 119:32.

197. See Matt 11:28-29.

of aggressiveness or depression. In contrast, patience¹⁹⁸ and love create the spaciousness of a wide heart, in which the “torrents of the emotions” quickly subside.¹⁹⁹ The heart, then, is the place where harmony with God and with one’s neighbor is fine tuned; then it is the place of inner harmony within the person. Hilary of Arles (d. 449) wrote about his predecessor Honoratus (d. 430), who was also a monk of Lérins, that his traits were “inner purity” and “wideness of love.” This inner harmony, he said, was reflected on Honoratus’s face.²⁰⁰ Evagrius Ponticus explained in a section on aggressiveness, “A monk who is patient has become like a spring that runs peacefully and offers a drink to everyone in friendship.”²⁰¹ This is also a main theme in Benedict’s final chapter: love and peace among people and in God.

f. After Benedict, Gregory the Great also took up the theme of the wide heart, telling of a mystical experience Benedict had at the death of his friend, Bishop Germanus of Capua. While praying at night at the window, Benedict saw divine light streaming like daylight through the darkness and “the whole world united within it as within a single sunbeam.” Gregory explains this mystical and cosmic experience:

Everything is small and narrow to the soul that gazes upon its creator. If the soul is able to see even a little of the creator’s light, everything that is created becomes small. For in the light of interior vision the inner soul is expanded out and into God in such a way that it is lifted above the world. The soul of the one who sees transcends even itself. When it is embraced by the light of God and lifted out above itself, it is also widened within. Lifted above everything, it sees itself below and understands how small it is—something it could not grasp when it was still lowly. . . . When it is said that the world was united before his eyes, it does not mean that heaven and earth had been brought together. Rather, the interior of the seer had expanded. He was carried away into God and was easily able to see everything that is under God. In the light that illuminated the eyes of his body the inner light was present. It embraced

198. See commentary on RB Prol.37-38; 50.

199. Conf 16.27.

200. VHonor 6.26.

201. *De octo spiritibus malitiae tractatus* 4 (IX), 9.

the soul of the seer, lifted it, and showed it how narrow and small all low things are.²⁰²

The theme of the wide heart in this text of Gregory's segues into a statement about the mystical vision of divine light and about approaching God, even to the point of seeing together with God. According to Gregory's account, Benedict reached the highest peak of mysticism for only a short moment and only after years of preparation and ascent. Benedict first had to be tested and prove himself worthy. He had to master the temptations of arrogance, sexual desires, and aggressiveness. He had to become a teacher or spiritual father and, as carrier of the Spirit, to make present the life of the prophets and apostles through "signs of the Spirit and power." Only at this height could his soul be pulled out for a moment by God's light above itself and into God (Vogüé).

g. In general, the early church did not consider a charismatic experience a rare exception. Irenaeus writes, "We hear that many brothers have prophetic charisms. . . . The apostle also calls these 'spiritual' [*spirituales*] because of their participation in the Spirit of Christ."²⁰³ This recalls the term *religious (spirituales)* that the Master often uses for monks who are also spiritual people.²⁰⁴

50

a. The final sentence of the Prologue is one again taken from the Master. The phrase "persisting in the teaching of Christ," which fits with the image of the "school of the Lord,"²⁰⁵ recalls the description of the earliest church in Jerusalem.²⁰⁶ One does not want to "persevere" somewhere on the edge but rather in the center of the heart of the church. Irenaeus also wishes that his readers "would follow no one else but the true and loyal teacher, the Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, who because of

202. Dial 2.35.

203. *Adversus haereses* 5.6.1.

204. RM 15.21 (quoting Gal 6:1); 28.3; 56.1, 15; 57.20, 23; 61.6-12; 63.1; 78.25; 80.4; 81.20; 83.13; 85.3; 86.8. The new Latin creation *spiritualis* traces back to the Greek *pneumatikos*.

205. See commentary on RB Prol.45.

206. Acts 2:42. See commentary on RB 73.8-9.

his unending love became as we are so that he could completely transform us into what he is."²⁰⁷

b. Here Benedict uses the term *monastery* (*monasterium*) for the first time in the work. This concept is not found in Scripture. Only when the scriptural characteristics of the institution have been demonstrated is the designation to be applied. Thus the phrase provides a bridge to the following first chapter of the Rule. The monastery appears as a community of students of the Lord and constitutes a circle of disciples.²⁰⁸ Already Cassian thought of the monastery as both a "school and an athletic training field." The focus of training is the "powers" of "generosity" or "forbearance," of "unshakeable patience" or "perseverance."²⁰⁹ The Master appears to have been inspired by Cassian, who wrote, "The patience and tireless fidelity with which they persevere in the *professio* they once made, and their forgoing their own will, make them daily into those who have been crucified for the world²¹⁰ and living martyrs."²¹¹ These themes echo in the wording of the final sentence of the Prologue. The cross of Christ, his "obedience unto death,"²¹² are central themes of the spiritual chapters of the Rule.²¹³ Earlier Origen developed these same themes, in which he saw the transition from fear to love, the passage from the cross to the resurrection and to Easter newness of life in Christ.²¹⁴

c. Christians should assimilate themselves to Christ as the martyrs did. Jesus not only accepted suffering passively but also affirmed it obediently. Benedict hints at this active, voluntary entry into the battle of suffering with the concept of patience; it must be understood positively as a trusting perseverance or endurance

207. *Adversus haereses* 5 pr.

208. See commentary on RB Prol.45. The monastery is subsequently defined in RB 1.

209. Conf 19.11 (Cassian calls the communities "schools" and "drill grounds"); see RB 3.1; 19.4.

210. Gal 6:14.

211. Conf 18.7; see commentary on RB Prol.48-50; 58.1-4.

212. Phil 2:8.

213. RB 5 (hearing, obedience), RB 7 (humility, self-renunciation, *kenosis*).

214. *Commentary on the Psalms* 118.20.

in the sense of the New Testament *hypomone*.²¹⁵ Believing Christians certainly sense their limitations and weaknesses,²¹⁶ but because of their bond with Christ, an unforeseen power (*dynamis*) or patience and stamina (*hypomone*) grow within them—qualities that became evident in an exemplary way in the struggle of the martyrs.²¹⁷ Power, patience, and persistence or perseverance are gifts of the Spirit. They belong to new life in Christ.²¹⁸

d. Thus the last sentence of the Prologue reflects the longing of faithful Christians for a bond with the Easter Christ and his church, a bond that was characteristic of the martyrs. The *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, for example, reads, “We want to love the martyrs as students and imitators of Christ as they deserve . . . so that we might belong to their community [*koinonia*] and become their fellow students.”²¹⁹ In the Life of Bishop Cyprian of Carthage the people and bishop’s awareness of community expresses itself in the hour of death when martyrs equip themselves for meeting Christ: “In front of the judge a great crowd said, ‘We too want to be beheaded with him.’”²²⁰ The biography of Cyprian praises the publicly manifest compassion and sympathy of the entire community.²²¹ Gregory the Great later depicts how Benedict looked forward to his own last hour. Strengthened by having received the Body and Blood of Christ and supported by his brothers, praying with hands and eyes raised toward heaven, he breathed out his spirit.²²²

215. See, for instance, Matt 24:13: “He who endures [under persecution] to the end.”

216. The pagan Celsus mocked the weakness of the Christians, especially their lack of stoical calm when they called to Christ for help before their martyrdom: “Christ, help me, I pray to you! Christ, have mercy on me, I pray to you! Christ, give me strength!” Human feeling speaks in these words, not in fanaticism but trustful faith.

217. The letter to the churches of Lyon and Vienne concerning the martyrs of the year 177 mentions nothing about *andreia*, or masculine courage or the self-confidence of the Greeks, but rather only the New Testament *hypomone* (Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.1).

218. See commentary on RB Prol.37-38; 7.35-43; 72.11.

219. 17.3.

220. *Acta proconsularia* 5.

221. Pontius, *Vita Caecilii Cypriani* 18.

222. Dial 2.37.2.

e. Like the church, the monastery is a “school of the Lord” in which military service of the heart is rendered, not a battle with external persecutors. This school mediates the monks’ relationship with the Lord. He gives the band of disciples the “power” to “witness” (*martyrion*). Horsiesus (d. ca. 380) quotes the Acts of the Apostles: “With great power [*dynamis*] the apostles gave witness [*martyrion*] to the resurrection of Jesus, the Lord.”²²³ It is all about the exchange of the spiritual and life forces of a new existence: “Be glad that you can participate in the sufferings of Christ, for thus you are also able to rejoice with gladness when his glory is revealed!”²²⁴

223. Acts 4:33.

224. See 1 Pet 4:13. Also see commentary on RB 72.12.

[INCIPIIT TEXTUS REGULAE]

[Regula appellatur ab hoc quod oboedientum dirigat mores.]

[HERE BEGINS THE TEXT OF THE RULE]

[It is called a rule because it regulates the lives of those
who obey it.]

CHAPTER 1

The Types of Monks

De Generibus Monachorum

¹Monachorum quattuor esse genera manifestum est. ²Primum coenobitarum, hoc est monasteriale, militans sub regula vel abbate.

³Deinde secundum genus est anachoritarum, id est eremitarum, horum qui non conversationis fervore novicio, sed monasterii probatione diuturna, ⁴qui didicerunt contra diabolum multorum solacio iam docti pugnare, ⁵et bene exstructi fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam eremi, securi iam sine consolatione alterius, sola manu vel brachio contra vitia carnis vel cogitationum, Deo auxiliante, pugnare sufficiunt.

⁶Tertium vero monachorum taeterrimum genus est sarabaitarum, qui nulla regula approbati, experientia magistra, *sicut aurum fornacis*, sed in plumbi natura molliti, ⁷adhuc operibus servantes saeculo fidem, mentiri Deo per tonsuram noscuntur. ⁸Qui bini aut terni aut certe singuli sine pastore, non dominicis sed suis inclusi ovilibus, pro lege eis est desideriorum voluntas, ⁹cum quicquid putaverint vel elegerint, hoc dicunt sanctum, et quod noluerint, hoc putant non licere.

¹⁰Quartum vero genus est monachorum quod nominatur gyrovagum, qui tota vita sua per diversas provincias ternis aut quaternis diebus per diversorum cellas hospitantur, ¹¹semper vagi et numquam stabiles, et propriis voluntatibus et gulae illecebris servientes, et per omnia deteriores sarabaitis.

¹²De quorum omnium horum miserrima conversatione melius est silere quam loqui. ¹³His ergo omissis, ad coenobitarum fortissimum genus dispondendum, adiuvante Domino, veniamus.

The Kinds of Monks

¹There are clearly four kinds of monks. ²First, there are the cenobites, that is to say, those who belong to a monastery, where they serve under a rule and an abbot.

³Second, there are the anchorites or hermits, who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life. ⁴Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they are now trained to fight against the devil. ⁵They have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind.

⁶Third, there are the sarabaites, the most detestable kind of monks, who with no experience to guide them, no rule to try them *as gold is tried in a furnace* (Prov 27:21), have a character as soft as lead. ⁷Still loyal to the world by their actions, they clearly lie to God by their tonsure. ⁸Two or three together, or even alone, without a shepherd, they pen themselves up in their own sheepfolds, not the Lord's. Their law is what they like to do, whatever strikes their fancy. ⁹Anything they believe in and choose, they call holy; anything they dislike, they consider forbidden.

¹⁰Fourth and finally, there are the monks called gyrovagues, who spend their entire lives drifting from region to region, staying as guests for three or four days in different monasteries.¹¹Always on the move, they never settle down and are slaves to their own wills and gross appetites. In every way they are worse than sarabaites.

¹²It is better to keep silent than to speak of all these and their disgraceful way of life. ¹³Let us pass them by, then, and with the help of the Lord, proceed to draw up a plan for the strong kind, the cenobites.

O

a. This chapter is for the most part taken from the Master.¹ Benedict adheres to the objectives of the rule, focusing on the way of

1. RB 1.1-9 = RM 1.1-9; RB 1.10 = RM 1.13-74; RB 1.12 = RM 1.13; RB 1.13 = RM 1.75.

monastic life (*conversatio*).² With this concept, as well as with the idea of rendering service (*militare*),³ he is referring to concepts in the Prologue. In the monastery one serves not the powers of the evil one but rather the resurrected Christ. The end of the Prologue mentions making progress in *conversatio*. This is to be understood as faithful persistence (*hypomone*). The same keywords are found in the final chapter as well as in the chapter about receiving novices (Puzicha).

b. The Rule's "text" (taken from *texere*, to weave artfully)⁴ is an aesthetic piece of woven fabric whose threads—whether in ways of thinking or in the choice of words—have their origins in the Bible and in the spirituality of the early church.⁵

1

The monk.

a. The Master almost always avoids the term *monk*, preferring the name *brother*. Benedict does the same, but the word *monk* in Benedict sounds like an honorary title that he uses in weighty circumstances. The first chapter begins deliberately with this word, which refers to the individual.⁶

b. In monastic writings, the meaning of the term extends beyond the singularity of the individual. Without using the word *monk*, Origen adds these characteristics to the biblical word *man*:⁷ the integrity of the character, namely, a character that is not fragmented or fickle;⁸ then the unity of a community in its aspirations;⁹ and finally the unity in the triune God—"They seek one thing, they

2. V. 3. See RB Prol.49.

3. V. 2; see v. 5 (*pugnare*).

4. See the addendum to the *Incipit*, which can be found in some manuscripts.

5. Examples: *conversatio* (monastic lifestyle): RB Prol.49; 1.2, 12; 73.2; *procedere* (proceed): RB Prol.47, 49 (see *festinare* [hurry]: RB 73.2); *militare* (render a service): RB Prol.3, 40; 1.2; 58.10; *persevere* (persevere): RB Prol.50; 7.36; 58.3, 9; as regards "persevere," see Matt 10:22.

6. Greek: *monazon*, from *monos* (single person).

7. 1 Sam 1:1.

8. See Matt 6:22: "If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light."

9. See Acts 4:32: "one in heart and mind."

honor one God, they confess Jesus Christ as Lord, they are filled by one Spirit."¹⁰ This tradition tended to interpret the term *monk* in the context of "only one thing is necessary,"¹¹ or of an image of divine oneness, which is the opposite of fragmentation. According to Evagrius Ponticus, the monk unites two poles within himself: "A monk is someone who lives separated from everything but is also in harmony with everything."¹² The mystics strove to be "collected," that is, persons who did not exclude or turn anyone away.¹³

c. Augustine defends the *nomen unitatis*.¹⁴ The monastic community is not a collection of individuals but rather "one heart and one soul." Common life brings them together into a unity.¹⁵ This passage in the psalm gave birth to monasteries: "See how good and beautiful it is, when brothers live in unity."¹⁶ Augustine begins his monastic rule in a similar way: "Above all you have gathered yourselves into a unity [*in unum congregati*],¹⁷ so that you may live with one spirit in the house of God¹⁸ and be of one heart and soul,¹⁹ oriented toward God." In the introductory sentences Augustine uses the term *unus* several times. Derived from the paral-

10. 1 Reg Hom 1.

11. Luke 10:42.

12. *De Oratione* 24.

13. In 1467 Brother Nicholas of Flüe decided to become a hermit in order to "seek a unifying mode of being." For ancient Indian religiousness, the principle of "non-duality" is essential.

14. S 356.1.

15. Acts 4:32. Augustine, En Ps 132.6.

16. Ps 133:1. Augustine, En Ps 132.2: "These psalm passages, this sonority, this sweet melody, in singing as well as in intellect, has also given birth to monasteries." En Ps 132.3: "According to the words of the psalm they are now called monks." En Ps 132.6: "Some persons, but not just anyone, are called *monos*; for those living together, resulting in a single human being [*vivunt in unum*], the following applies: 'one heart and one mind,' therefore many bodies, but not many hearts. This very single human being is rightfully called *monos*."

17. See John 11:52: "in order that the scattered children of God be brought together and made one" (*congregaret in unum*).

18. See Ps 67:7: "bring home those who have been abandoned" (*unianimes habitare in domo*).

19. Acts 4:32, 35: "All the believers were one in heart and mind . . . they shared everything they had . . . it was distributed to anyone who had need."

the Greek word *monos* is the word *monachus*; the monk is a solitary; he makes his way toward the one God, as an individual, with an unfragmented, collected character and in a unified community.

d. For his list of the kinds of monks, the Master draws largely from Cassian,²⁰ who for his part is influenced by a description of the kinds of monks in Egypt written by Jerome in 384.²¹

2

Life in an organized community.

a. The *cenobite* lives in the *cenobium* (*koinobion*), meaning “life in common.”²² Benedict offers the word *monasterium* or “house of monks” as a synonym.²³

b. Other monastic rules develop the idea of “life in community” at the beginning of their rules. This is the guiding principle of Pachomian monasticism. Pachomius himself (d. 347) found his path toward Christian faith and the calling to monasticism by way of the experience of community virtues. As a twenty-year-old recruit in the Roman army, exhausted from a journey and from being treated badly, he experienced the altruistic love of neighbor and hospitality toward non-Christians shown by the Christians in an Egyptian city.²⁴ His second successor, Horsiesus, not only mentions that “father [Pachomius] was the first to found the cenobiums,”²⁵ but also describes them as “circles of community [*koinonia*]”: “The apostle taught us that our circle of community [*koinonia*], which binds us together, comes from God. The apostle says: ‘Do not forget to do good and to share what you have [*koinonia*], for God is pleased with such offerings.’²⁶ We also

20. Conf 18.4.

21. Ep 22.34. Jerome writes: *coenobium . . . in communi viventes*.

22. See RB 5.12; Greek: *coinos* (together), *bios* (life). Cassian (Conf 18.4) writes, *Koiniobiot*.

23. See Cassian, Conf 18.9-10. The meaning of the corresponding borrowed word *minster* has changed. Instead, the word *cloister* is used, which, by itself, means “closed area” (*claustrum*), even though no community lives in a *monasterium* (Cassian, Conf 18.10).

24. VPach (Latin) 4.

25. Lib 12.

26. Heb 13:16.

read in the Acts of the Apostles, ‘The community of the faithful was *one* heart and *one* soul. No one called what they had their possessions, but rather they held everything in common [*koina*]. With great power [*dynamis*] the apostles gave witness [*martyrion*] to the resurrection of Jesus.’”²⁷ Thus the *koinonia* or *communio* idea was the guiding principle of Pachomian spirituality.

c. Cassian adopts the description of the early Jerusalem community as a model:²⁸ “In those days the whole church lived like this, but today only a few people live in monasteries who lead this kind of life.”²⁹ Distilled in these few words is a certain nostalgia for the “apostolic life” of the early church. The idealized images of the Acts of the Apostles are inspiring. Cassian also has an unmistakable tendency to limit what he means by Christian community almost exclusively to monasteries, since they are the only place where he finds property in common.

d. *The Rule of the Fathers* from Lérins (ca. 410)³⁰ emphasizes other aspects of community life that are also mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles,³¹ for example, harmony, love, and joy: “The Holy Spirit says, ‘see how good and how pleasant it is when brothers live

27. See Acts 4:32. Horsiesus, Lib 50, where the words from Ps 133:1 follow: “How good and pleasant it is, when God’s people live together in unity!”

28. Acts 4:32-35; 2:42-47.

29. Conf 18.5. This recollection is already found in Jerome (*Vir inl* 11; PL 23:625–28). He mentions the *monasteria* of the Essenes in connection with a text by Philo about contemplative Therapeutae, also in connection with Eusebius (*Historia ecclesiastica* 2.17; SCh 31:72–76). Philo himself cultivated amicable contacts to Petrus, Paulus, and Marcus. It is said that Jewish-Christian communities followed this tradition and lived like the ancient Christians in Alexandria and other places for many centuries. The following are mentioned: joint property, doctrine, psalm praying, fasting, solemn vigils before feasts, ascetic abstinence. It seems that Jerome endeavors to prove a kind of apostolic origin of the monasteries and monks, therefore adding certain parts from the Acts of the Apostles to his description of Jewish-Christian monasteries. See Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire*, 2:262–65.

30. Pref: The peacefully assembled fathers are asking for the Holy Spirit, so that they can organize the brothers in a “monastic lifestyle” (*conversatio*) with a rule of life.

31. Acts 2:46.

in unity’;³² and similarly: ‘[The Spirit] has them live in harmony in one house.’³³ When this *Rule of Love*—set forth and approved by the Holy Spirit—is established, we can move forward and give well-founded instructions. Above all, we want the brothers to live harmoniously in a house where joy is at home.”³⁴ An ethos of harmony, love, and joy is the foundation of Christian community life.

e. The scriptural arguments for the community life are a common storehouse for monastic writers. Augustine held that the community life of the early church was the model for monastic life.³⁵ Probably influenced by Augustine, Benedict also invokes the common life of the early church, but with some hesitation.³⁶ He introduces the theme of fraternal love differently³⁷ and develops it especially at the end of the chapter on humility and at the end of the Rule.³⁸ For Benedict, love should be seen as the goal of the path that leads everyone together to God.³⁹

f. The definition of the monastery also includes “doing service” (*militare*) for the glorified Christ and in an ascetic effort against the evil one.⁴⁰ At the time of Benedict the original meaning of *militare* had faded. It had come to mean “to serve.” Today too the term “to serve” is used as a shortened form of “doing military service.” To a certain extent the idea of the spiritual battle is one of the connotations of this service.

g. Service is rendered “under the Rule.” Everyone stands under its authority, especially the abbot.⁴¹ In his description of the cenobites, Cassian does not yet mention the Rule: “They live together in community and are led by an elder [*senior*] with the gift of discernment.”⁴² The considerations that led to privileging the Rule,

32. Ps 133:1.

33. Ps 67:7 LXX: *qui habitare facit unianimes in domo*.

34. R4P 1.5-8.

35. According to Augustine, Ps 133:1 “gave birth to monasteries.”

36. See commentary on RB Prol.50 (a); 33.6.

37. RB Prol.47; 2.22; 35.6; 53.3; 64.14; 65.11; 66.4.

38. RB Prol.68-69; 7.8, 10.

39. RB 72.12.

40. See commentary on RB Prol.3, 28; 7.35-43.

41. RB 3.7, 11; 7.55; 23.1; 37.1; 58.9, 12, 13-16; 62.4, 7, 11; 64.20; 65.17-18; 66.8; see commentary on RB 73.3.

42. Conf 18.4.

especially in the monasticism of Southern Gaul, can be found in a section of the Master that precedes the chapter on the abbot:⁴³ “The Lord has appointed for his church . . . three offices for proclaiming teaching: ‘first prophets, second apostles, and third teachers.’⁴⁴ Through their guidance and teaching the communities [*ecclesiae*] and schools [*scholae*] are led by Christ.” Whoever listens to the “shepherds” and “our teachers” is listening to Christ himself.⁴⁵ In this view, the “teachings of Christ”⁴⁶ are the basic rule of the monastery. To an extent, this teaching has been included in the written Rule, which continuously relies on the “words of Scripture given to us by God.”⁴⁷ The Rule speaks to those who obey it, an idea that is established in the sentence that in many manuscripts precedes the title of the first chapter. It has authority to the extent that it is based on Scripture and hands down the scripturally based spiritual and disciplinary traditions of earlier times (which Benedict develops further with the help of his own experiences), namely, the *disciplina*.⁴⁸

h. By necessity, then, the abbot belongs to the very structure of the monastery. In the Master’s view, the abbot is among the teachers and shepherds who preside over the schools since the time of the apostles, just as bishops preside over the churches. The function of the abbot is understood as analogous to that of ecclesial leaders rather than being derived from a secular or family model. The author remains true to his understanding of the monastery as a “school of the Lord”⁴⁹ in which the abbot functions as teacher and shepherd.⁵⁰

3-5

Life in seclusion.

a. When the Master and Benedict speak positively about the eremitical life, they are certainly under the influence of Cassian. Cassian explained the origins of monasticism and the hermitic

43. RM 1.82-92.

44. 1 Cor 12:28.

45. See Luke 10:16.

46. RM 1.83.

47. RB 73.3.

48. See commentary on RB 23.2-3. In the RB *regula* and *disciplina* are often mentioned together, almost as synonyms, e.g., RB 60.2, 5.

49. See commentary on RB Prol.45-50.

50. See commentary on RB 2.1-10; 5.1-9.

life as the continuation, in some Christians, of an enthusiasm for the apostolic era:

After the death of the apostle the zeal of the multitude of believers began to cool. . . . But there were those in whom the fire of the apostolic times still glowed. In order to remain true to the original mission, they left the cities and company of those who believed that they and the church of God could establish themselves in a comfortable life without ascetic practices. A few moved into solitude and into the areas around the cities. They began to follow the rules they knew the apostles had established for the whole body of the church. . . . Because they lived solitary lives without family, they received the name monks, or *monazontes*, meaning “those who live in solitude.” Later they were called *coenobita* [cenobites] because of their communities, and their “cells” or residences were called *coenobien*. . . . The holy hermits sprang from this powerfully growing root like flowers and fruits. . . . They looked for solitude not out of fear or unhealthy zealotry but because they longed for higher perfection and to surrender themselves to God through contemplation. . . . For good reason, then, they are called *anchorites* or “people of the exodus.” For them it is not enough to wage successful war with others against the pursuits of the evil one. Instead, they want open warfare and the direct confrontation with the demons. That’s why they enter fearlessly into the endless desert.⁵¹

This enthusiastic and idealized description once again emphasizes “doing battle.”⁵²

b. The text also speaks about the battle against the “vices of the flesh and thoughts.”⁵³ This is an introduction. The Johannine term “flesh” does not mean humans’ biological nature but rather the egotistic, natural, earthly self.⁵⁴ The battle with one’s “thoughts” (*logismoí*) was originally directed at the psychological roots of sin. Origen wrote, “Bad thoughts are the root and beginnings of every sin.”⁵⁵

51. Conf 18.5-6.

52. See commentary on RB Prol.28.

53. V. 5.

54. See John 1:13: “nor of human decision.” Through the person’s desire, the flesh and desire may become a danger (see Rom 8:5-6).

55. See Mark 7:21. *Commentary on Matthew* 15.19.

c. The prerequisites for living as a hermit mapped out by the Master and Benedict can also be found in Cassian.⁵⁶ It is worth noting, however, how the explicit recognition of the “hermit”⁵⁷ becomes an *indirect praise of community life*, since this life imparts (1) “probation,” which is worth more than unenlightened zeal,⁵⁸ (2) “schooling,”⁵⁹ “good equipment,” and “preparation” for all confrontations, conditions possible only for the one whom the Spirit accompanies;⁶⁰ (3) “safety” and “support,” that is, reliable orientation through the “encouragement”⁶¹ of others in whom the Spirit is presupposed, or through fraternal “consolation” as needed by the mind and body; (4) the “line-up of brothers,” since community life⁶² imparts joy. Living “shoulder-to-shoulder with brothers” (Puzicha) is not merely an impersonal co-existence but rather a fellowship experienced with heart and soul. This life imparts feelings of security. The early Jerusalem community is the normative model.⁶³ No other sociological model applies. The religious-ecclesial core characteristic of a monastic community should not be overlooked. Anyone who looks to the monastery for a “warm nest”—in the sense of group psychology—will be disappointed. On the other hand, we can say that supportive energies, set free by community life, are at work in every church community, e.g., in the local parish or in one’s family.

d. Basil had already dealt intensively with the question of whether it is better to lead a religious-contemplative life alone and in solitude or together “with brothers” in a church community, without his thinking exclusively of the “monastery” when he used this term. In principle, he believed, “For many reasons it is better to live a common life with like-minded people.” He lists the following

56. Inst 5.36: “a very long period of probation in the monastery,” the “learning of the rule of patience and of the discernment of spirits” (see commentary on RB Prol.28, 50; 64.17-19), as well as “humility, renunciation of property and being free of errors” (see RB 7.33).

57. *Anachoret*: someone who retreats (*ana-choreo*). *Eremit* stems from *eremus* (“desert”).

58. See commentary on RB 72.1-3.

59. See commentary on RB Prol.45-50; 1.2.

60. Prol.28.

61. *Paraclesis*, consolation; see John 14:16.

62. See commentary on RB 1.2.

63. See commentary on RB Prol.45-50; 1.2; 33.6; 34.1-2.

reasons: (1) In material matters we are dependent on mutual help. (2) Because “love does not seek its own advantage,”⁶⁴ it turns toward others. (3) The criticism given by others is helpful. (4) One can carry out the commandments of loving one’s neighbor more efficiently in community through care of the sick, hospitality, etc. (5) Only in community do we live as “one body in Christ . . . with members belonging to one another,” and we can “rejoice with those who are joyful and weep with those who weep.”⁶⁵ (6) A single individual cannot receive all of the Spirit’s gifts.⁶⁶ In a community of charisms, one does not receive these gifts in vain, but rather they can be exchanged in order to be used by others. (7) Prayers (of thanksgiving) are especially valuable in community because of the grace that rests on each member. (8) Common life has its dangers: lack of vigilance against evil, uncritical self-aggrandizement, a merely theoretical Christian life rather than one that is practiced, and the impossibility of an ecclesial common life in community in the scriptural sense.⁶⁷

e. The Master and Benedict emphasize that God’s grace is essential if the hermit wishes to devote himself to absolute intimacy with God.⁶⁸

6-9

A self-indulgent life.

a. Here, Benedict begins to describe distortions of monasticism. He gives this topic more space than the topic of cenobitic life. In this way, indirectly, he warns monks against wrongheaded progress and attitudes.

b. According to Cassian, *sarabaites* are degenerate cenobites. Without a superior and without schooling, sarabaites easily distort the meaning of monasticism. They are not interested in spiritual matters. They are pseudo-monks interested in the advantages and comforts of the monastic status while avoiding everyday tasks and concerns.⁶⁹ In the context of tendencies toward fanaticism,

64. 1 Cor 13:5.

65. See Rom 12:5, 15.

66. 1 Cor 12.

67. RBasRuf 3.

68. V. 5.

69. “Sarabait”: Originally a non-pejorative, Coptic word for “monastery people,” probably from *sa(r)* (“people”) and *abet* (“monastery”). Jerome

sectarianism, and disintegration, Benedict requires that real monks follow a rule and accept the wisdom of lived experience,⁷⁰ which is mediated by a superior. According to Cassian, theoretical knowledge about monasticism is not enough. Grasping its true meaning “depends completely on practical experience.” The one who wants to convey this meaning or even understand it “has to make an engaged effort.” Monastic practice must, however, be linked with the continuous reflection required of religious.⁷¹

c. The Master and Benedict judge sarabaites harshly. They are monks caught up in their own egoistic religious masquerade. They circle around their own ego and its apparent freedom, which is actually a lack of religious orientation. The individualistic search for salvation and “egoism in pairs” or in a group are exposed as living lies. This contrasting image makes the positive characteristics of an authentic cenobitic life more clearly visible.

d. The theme of shepherd and flock⁷² is to be understood as a reference to Christ, and it determines the relationship of the community of monks with him. From Christ they expect nourishment, protection, and leadership; they are to listen attentively to his voice.⁷³

10-11

A restless life.

a. “Gyrovagues” are monks who like to “roam.” The Master gave this fourth type its name. Benedict briefly describes their egoism.⁷⁴ Cassian calls the evil this kind of monk typifies “the evil spirit of *acedia*,” that is, shallowness and a lack of spiritual interest. This spiritual weariness “leaves the monk sitting in his

(Ep 22.34) caricatures the *remnuoth* as unholy profiteers and brawlers in flowing robes. Augustine (Op mon 36) speaks of “good for nothings” who brag about their monks’ robes, trade in relics, or do other nonsense. They are migrating birds and beggars. They bring the name *monk* into disrepute. See Cassian, Inst 12.26–27.

70. Conf 19.7. See also Conf 12.16.

71. See Cassian, Inst Pref.4-5; 12; 27.2; Conf 18.3; see commentary on RB 2.11-15.

72. See RB 2.7, 10, 32, 39; 63.2, 18.

73. See Horsiesus, Lib 17; 40.

74. Vv. 10-11. Benedict briefly summarizes the Master’s lengthy and biting satire (RM 1.13-74).

cell without energy and without a desire for spiritual development—or it drives him out, making him an unstable traveler, who avoids work whenever he can, looking for those houses of brothers and those monasteries that will feed him.”⁷⁵ In this way Cassian rejects the kind of monasticism that lacks spiritual energy and is typified by work avoidance, alibis, and traveling around looking for better offers.

b. Along with the advantages of a self-indulgent life,⁷⁶ Benedict emphatically rejects instability. He does not further describe other dangers mentioned by Cassian, but he emphasizes stability, as Cassian does in other places.⁷⁷ There was certainly an itinerant kind of monasticism for spiritual purposes. We think, for example, of itinerant preachers⁷⁸ of the Gospel or ascetics who pursued anonymity and inner peace while on pilgrimage.⁷⁹

12-13

Life in the service of Jesus Christ.

The concluding remark about “the powerful kind of monk, the cenobite” shows where Benedict’s sympathies lie and provides a transition to the chapter on the abbot. The concise closing phrases of the first chapter, “with the help of the Lord,” and the last chapter, “with Christ’s help,” frame the entire Rule. This parallel also shows that Benedict understands the word *Lord* to mean *Christ* (Quartiroli). At the beginning and end of the Rule the word *venire* (to come, to arrive) is also used.⁸⁰

75. Inst 10.5-6.

76. See RB 4.12.

77. See commentary on RB 4.78; 58.13-16, 17-18; 60.6-9; 61.5.

78. See commentary on RB Prol.21; 67.6-7.

79. VPatr 7.32.6-7. The avoidance of any kind of fuss (*epideixis*) on one’s own behalf as a previously publicly known person as well as the disentanglement from one’s familiar environment and the search (*peregrinatio*) for the unfamiliar (*xeniteia*) was regarded as an ideal. See *Apophthegmes des Pères*, Coll syst 1.9 (SCh 387:107).

80. RB 1.13: *adiuvante Domino, veniamus*; RB 73.8-9: *adiuvante Christo, . . . pervenies* (Puzicha).