

THE CONCILIATION OF GRACE AND FREE WILL. CASSIAN'S *CONLATIO* 13 REVISITED

Cassian's two most significant works, the *De institutis coenobiorum* and the *Conlationes*, form a complete code of primitive monasticism¹, a doctrinal and practical summa which was never to be equalled in monastic literature.

The *De institutis coenobiorum*, written between 419-426, is made up of two parts: the first one (books I-IV) describes the external life of the monks, that is the monastic and liturgical institutions that Cassian saw among the eastern monks, especially in Egypt; the second part (books V-XII) deals more explicitly with the spiritual and inner life of the monks and tackles the presence of the eight principal vices² and the way of fighting them. The struggle against the vices, aiming at the purification of the soul in view of the contemplation of God, is made possible by the cenobitic discipline which constitutes the ascetic framework within which the *vita activa*, viz. the action exercised upon one's self, is lived out. Once this task of purification has been accomplished, the monk can gain access to the *vita contemplativa* where the ideal framework is now represented by hermitic life. And it is about the *vita contemplativa* – as Cassian says³ – that the 24 *Conlationes*, which constitute his most important work, are all about. They present, in a dialogical form⁴, the *inlustrium patrum scientiam atque doctrinam*⁵, a teaching that Cassian himself had assimilated while in Egypt, but which he certainly elaborated on the basis of his personal convictions and experience⁶.

¹ Cf. P. GODET, *Cassien Jean*, in *DThC* 2 (1905) 1823-1829, c. 1825; C. STEWART, *Cassian the Monk*, Oxford, 1998, pp. 29f.

² See n. 26.

³ Cf. CASSIAN, *Praef.* (to *Conlationes* 1-10) 5, SC 42, pp. 75-76.

⁴ Generally speaking, the style is that of the classical dialogue or erotapokriseis (question and answer session): see H. DÖRRIE-H. DÖRRIES, *Erotapokriseis*, in *RAC* 6 (1966) 342-370. Most of the conversation in the *Conlationes* begin with a question or a topic that Cassian and his friend Germanus submitted to the various elders who are in fact the real speakers.

⁵ CASSIAN, *Conlationes* 17,30, SC 54, p. 283.

⁶ What is certain is that "Cassiano intendeva trasmettere dottrine monastiche, d'origine principalmente egiziana. Tuttavia non si dice per ciò stesso che tutto quel che da Cassiano ci vien presentato, raccontato e riferito, sia sempre quel che egli ha udito e visto nella sua dimora in Egitto. Prima di tutto per uno che scrive dopo circa venti anni non sarebbe stato facile ricordare tutto e solo il sentito dei monaci Egiziani (...); secondo, bisogna pensare che la materia che egli ci dà, è elaborata in una forma tutta personale, e per ciò anche il pensiero ivi riprodotto può avere, e molto probabilmente

The *Conlationes* were written in different periods, ranging from 425/426 to 428⁷. The first group (1-10), which reports the teaching of the fathers of the desert of Scetis was meant to be a continuation of the *De institutis coenobiorum*. In point of fact this first series of conferences was devoted to Castor, the bishop of Apt who had commissioned the *De institutis coenobiorum*. However, since Castor's death had occurred in the interim, Cassian dedicated the first set of conferences to the bishop's brother, Leontius, and to Helladius. The second group of conferences (11-17), dedicated to Honoratus and

ha subito modificazioni (...); e terzo, non si deve omettere che alcune Collazioni sono semplicemente programmatiche: hanno cioè una determinata posizione da chiarire e da difendere" (S. MARSILI, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio. Dottrina sulla carità e contemplazione* (SA, 5), Rome, 1936, p. 79).

⁷ The writing of the *Conlationes* has been usually placed in 425-426 (cf. e.g. M. CAPPUYNS, *Cassien*, in *DHGE* 11 [1949] 1319-1348, c. 1331, or in 426-427 (cf. e. g. E. PICHERY, Introduction, in JEAN CASSIEN, *Conférences*/I, SC 42, pp. 28-30), following the traditional assumption that Honoratus had been elected bishop of Arles in 426, and relying on the piece of information given by Cassian in the preface to the third and last series of his conferences where Honoratus is addressed as a bishop: "beato episcopo ... Honorato" (*Praef. to Conlationes* 18-24, SC 64, p. 8). However, if we accept as genuine the reading of *elladium* of MS *Parisinus nov. acq. 1449* containing Prosper's *Ep.* 225, instead of *Hilarium* (see *infra* in the text, pp. 154-155), we may be confidently led to believe that the bishop of Arles Elladius or Helladius (since *elladius* is probably a scribal contraction of Helladius, we shall always use the latter's spelling) and the Helladius who is mentioned twice in Cassian's *Conlationes* (a first time as a hermit and a second time as a bishop) are the same person. That being the case, we could then date the different sets of Cassian's *Conlationes* with a high amount of certainty. In fact, when Helladius (who would have become bishop of Arles at the end of 426) was mentioned in the Preface to the first set of *Conlationes*, he was still an anchorite and was called *frater* ("sancte frater Helladi": *Praef. to Conlationes* 1-10, SC 42, pp. 74-75), which means that Cassian must have ended his *Conlationes* 1-10 by 426, before Helladius' election to the see of Arles. Besides, in the same year, the bishop of Apt (419-426) Castor had died (cf. R. VAN DOREN, *Castor*, in *DHGE* 11 [1949] 1455-1456, c. 1455; G. BARDY, *Castor*, in *Cath.* 2 [1949] c. 623; G. BATAILLE, *Castore*, in *BSS* 3 [1963] c. 941), which is why this first set of conferences was dedicated to Leontius (probably the bishop of Fréjus [419-432/33]: see O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian, A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, Cambridge 1968², p. 38; CH. PIETRI, *Roma Christiana. Recherches sur l'Eglise de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311-440)* (BEFAR, 224), Rome, 1976, T. II, p. 1037, n. 1) and to Helladius and not to Castor, as Cassian had originally intended (cf. CASSIAN, *Preface* [to *Conlationes* 1-10] SC 42, p. 74). The second series of *Conlationes* (11-17) ought instead to be placed during the time of Helladius' episcopate (in 427), since in the Preface to this second collection Cassian speaks of him as having become *episcopus* ("sanctis Helladio et Leontio episcopis": *Praef. to Conlationes* 11-17, SC 54, p. 99), whereas Honoratus is addressed as abbot ("ingenti [...] coenobio praesidens congregationem": *Ibid.*, p. 98). The third series of *Conlationes* must have followed the second

Eucherius of Lérins, contains the teaching acquired during the first period of Cassian's sojourn in Egypt, at Pannefisi. Finally, the third group of conferences (18-24), devoted to the four abbots of Lérins: Jovinian, Minervius, Leontius and Theodor, recalls the themes of the teachings heard at several stages of his stay in Egypt⁸.

Whether or not these two works of Cassian, the *De institutis coenobiorum* and the *Conlationes*, highlight his vocation as reformer⁹ or whether or not they translate his clear intention of reforming western monasticism¹⁰, it is certainly the case that he identified *tout court* monastic life with what he personally saw and experienced, especially in the Egyptian desert. In these two works one can indeed perceive his earnest desire to put his first-hand knowledge of monasticism, acquired in Egypt and in other parts of the eastern Church, not only at the disposal of Castor's *novellum monasterium* of Apt, but also at the service of other monasteries in Provence. Cassian, a disciple in the East and a master in the West, did in fact conform and adapt to western mentality and practice¹¹ the spiritual treasure of the desert Fathers, transposing what was the essential of Egyptian and Palestinian hermitic life into the cenobitic settlements of southern Gaul, which at the time (if we have to believe Cassian) were characterized by a sort of looseness (*arbitrium*), probably due to the absence of binding norms and regulations¹².

one shortly after for in the Preface to the second set of *Conlationes* Cassian had mentioned another collection of seven conferences on which he was presumably already working ("septem aliae conlationes, quae ad sanctos qui in Stoechadibus consistunt insulis emittendae sunt fratres, desiderium ut arbitror uestri ardoris explebunt": *Ibid.*, p. 99). A possible date for this third series could therefore be 428, namely after Helladius's death and the election of Honoratus of Lérins to the see of Arles who, in the preface to the third collection of conferences is reported as having already become bishop (see *supra* in this same note).

⁸ See A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Pour comprendre Cassien. Un survol des Conférences*, in CCist 39 (1977) 250-272.

⁹ Cf. G. M. COLOMBÁS, *El monacato primitivo. Vol. I: Hombres, hechos, costumbres, instituciones* (BAC, 351), Madrid, 1974, p. 253.

¹⁰ "Son programme monastique était audacieux et précis: réformer le monachisme occidental, - qu'il critique volontiers, - par le retour éclairé aux traditions des temps apostoliques - *ab exordio praedicationis apostolicae* - tout en adaptant l'austérité des Orientaux aux exigences particulières de l'Occident" (M. CAPPUYNS, *Cassien (Jean)*, cit., c. 1327). "Personne n'a autant que lui [Cassian] contribué à la formation et au développement du monachisme occidental (J. M. BESSE, *Les moines de l'ancienne France [periode gallo-romaine et merovingienne]* [AFM, 2], Paris, 1906, p. 50).

¹¹ Cf. CASSIAN, *De institutis coenobiorum*, Praef. 9, SC 109, pp. 30. 32.

¹² *Ibid.* Praef. 8, SC 109, p. 30: "Si quid forte non secundum typum maiorum antiquissima constitutione fundatum, sed pro arbitrio uniuscuiusque instituentis monasterium uel deminutum uel additum in istis regionibus conprobauero, secundum

Such an action was going to influence in a very particular way the growth and coordination of western cenobitism and, indeed, constituted Cassian's great intuition¹³, which gave to his monastic literary work a paramount importance. In this sense, in fact, we can truly regard him as the great organizer of western cenobitism before St. Benedict¹⁴, and not only because he contributed to its development as the *législateur et le peintre*¹⁵ of monastic life in southern Gaul, but also – as already hinted – because of his capability of acting as *porte-parole*¹⁶ of eastern monasticism, as *liaison exceptionnelle*¹⁷ or *Bindeglied*¹⁸ between it and the monastic world of the West¹⁹. Besides, his *De institutis coenobiorum* and *Conlationes*

eam quam uidimus monasteriorum regulam per Aegyptum uel Palaestinam antiquitus fundatorum fideli sermone uel adiciam uel recidam, nequaquam enim credens rationabilius quippiam uel perfectius nouellam constitutionem in occiduis Galliarum partibus reperire potuisse quam illa sunt instituta...". Cf. S. PRICOCO, *L'isola dei santi. Il cenobio di Lerino e le origini del monachesimo gallico*, Rome, 1978, pp. 93f.

¹³ His "grande trouvaille", as it has been defined (M. CAPPUYNS, *Cassien* (Jean), cit., c. 1327). See also: "Redevenu cénobite par conviction, après une longue expérience de la vie solitaire, il élabore la synthèse des deux états et jette les bases spirituelles d'une réforme monastique qui trouvera son couronnement dans l'œuvre de S. Benoît" (*Ibid.*, c. 1347).

¹⁴ "Kassian (...) ist der große Ordner des abendländischen Cönobitentums vor Benedikt" (M. VILLER-K. RAHNER, *Ascese und Mystik in der Väterzeit. Ein Abriss*, Freiburg i. Br., 1939, p. 185).

¹⁵ P. GODET, *art. cit.*, c. 1823.

¹⁶ A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité. Vol. III/1: Le monachisme latin*, Paris, 1996, p. 90.

¹⁷ P. COUSIN, *Précis d'histoire monastique*, Tournai, 1956, p. 48.

¹⁸ M. VILLER-K. RAHNER, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹⁹ "Cassien fut à cette époque, le principal intermédiaire entre l'Orient et l'Occident. Il chercha surtout, dans ses Institutions, à mettre la vie des Pères du désert à la portée des Gallo-Romains ses compatriotes" (J.-M. BESSE, *Les moines de l'ancienne France*, cit., p. 50). See also É. GRIFFE, *Saint Martin et le monachisme gaulois*, in *Saint Martin et son temps. Méorial du XVIe centenaire des débuts du Monachisme en Gaule 361-1961* (SA, 46), Rome, 1961, pp. 3-24, p. 13; F. PRINZ, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich. Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung (4. Bis 8. Jahrhundert)*, München, 1965, p. 96, n. 34. It is difficult to assess whether or not the ascetical/monastic life somehow already present in Gaul exercised some influence on the monastic ideas of Cassian. The communities of Lérins and of the isles of Hyères had only been recently founded, but above all they lacked the rich and first-hand knowledge of Eastern monasticism which Cassian possessed and thanks to which he set in motion the monastic renewal in southern Gaul. Also saint Martin's foundations of Ligugé and Marmoutier, of almost a half a century earlier, represented too loose a form of monasticism to appeal to Cassian's formation. They were in fact more pastorally aimed, a sort of 'seminarium' preparing monks that would also give their active contribution to the evangelisation of the countryside.

have imposed themselves since their appearance as classics of Christian spirituality. And their influence has not only been incalculable in western monasticism, which shall be affected in a very profound and lasting manner²⁰, but has also been felt in an enduring and impressive way through the centuries in the western Church as a whole²¹.

Among the various aspects of Christian thought where Cassian was most influential in Gaul, during the 5th century, we must mention his doctrine of grace. Against the background of the ascetical life of the monastic communities, motivated by a pragmatic and masculine spirituality resting on the ideal of the monks of the desert, his views on grace, and a sort of rehabilitation of the free will, must be seen both in the light of the influence of eastern theology (upon whose perspectives Cassian heavily depends) and as a reaction to some extreme conclusions drawn by Augustine's own theology of grace.

Although they showed respect and payed homage to Augustine and his works, it is above all with the circulation of the *De correptione et gratia* that the monastic communities of Marseilles and Lérins were unsatisfied²². They could not agree with his theories on

²⁰ Their reading and assimilation will be warmly recommended, for instance, by BENEDICT OF NURSIA, *Regula monachorum* 42,3.5 and 73,5, SC 182, pp. 584 and 672: "...sedent omnes in unum et legat unus Collationes uel Uitas Patrum..."; "...dicta uespera paruo interuallo mox accedant ad lectionem Collationum..."; "Necnon et Collationes Patrum et Instituta et Uitas eorum ... quid aliud sunt nisi bene uiuentium et oboedientium monachorum instrumenta uirtutum?". See also CASSIODORUS, *De institutione diuinarum litterarum* 29: "Cassianum presbyterum, qui conscripsit de Institutione fidelium monachorum sedulo legite, et libenter audite" (PL 70, c. 1144). Moreover, as P. Rousseau points out: "The Institutes and Conferences stand as a complete and entirely literary creation, exerting upon their readers the influence of a rule of life. For this reason, the study of early monastic history reaches, with Cassian, a point de départ, rather than a conclusion" (P. ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, Oxford, 1978, p. 236). For a brief overview of the influence exercised by Cassian's work upon western monasticism, see O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian*, cit., 1950, 2nd ed. 1968, pp. 148-162; M. CAPPUYNS, *Cassien (Jean)*, cit., cc. 1343-1347; M. OLPHE-GALLIARD, *Cassien (Jean)*, in *DSP* 2 (1953) 214-276, cc. 267-274; C. STEWART, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²¹ See P. GODET, *art. cit.*, c. 1825. M. Cappuyns even compares Cassian's influence to that of some Church Fathers: "Par la profondeur et la pérennité de son influence, il appartient au petit groupe de Pères occidentaux qui ont marqué d'une empreinte originale la vie de l'Eglise, les Jérôme, les Augustin, les Grégoire le Grand" (M. CAPPUYNS, *Cassien (Jean)*, cit., c. 1347).

²² See, for instance: "Sed plane illud tacere non debeo, quod se dicant tuam sanctitatem hoc excepto in factis et dictis omnibus admirari" (HILARY, *Ep.* 226,9, *CSEL* 57, p. 479). Cassian's unease with Augustine's views on grace can be immediately linked to his reaction to the *De correptione et gratia*, but clearly this conclusion was reached also thanks to the knowledge of Augustine's earlier works, where some of

predestination and irresistible grace. In fact, the way Augustine had explained predestination and God's salvific will was regarded by them as unhinging the very *raison d'être* of their *monastica vivendi forma*, that is the ascetic efforts aiming at acquiring virtues and merits while striving for perfection²³. The very fact that perseverance was considered by Augustine purely as divine gift, provoked a deep uneasiness in the monastic environments of southern Gaul, where the necessity of an active and unceasing participation of the will in the process of salvation was considered to be the norm and where a conversion occurring in the last moment of one's life was, on the contrary, regarded with suspicion and considered ineffective²⁴. Furthermore, the theory of predestination, together with a restricted vision of universal salvation, was suspected of leading to a fatalistic attitude and to a state of inertia. It is not surprising then that such ideas did stir the minds of people who were so used to making pragmatic virtues the aim of their daily life²⁵.

It is against this background that Cassian, conscious of his spiritual authority, stands out as the most outspoken representative of the monastic milieu of southern Gaul and its uneasiness about the question of grace. Traces of this question can be found here and there in both his *De institutis coenobiorum* and *Conlationes*, and above all in the *Conlatio* 13.

GRACE AND FREE WILL IN CASSIAN'S *DE INSTITUTIS COENOBIORUM* AND *CONLATIONES*

At the very beginning of the second section of the *De institutis coenobiorum* (books 5-12), Cassian affirms that the first step for a monk endeavouring to reach perfection consists in engaging himself in a 'psychomachy', that is in fighting against those passions which

these thoughts began to emerge. The *De correptione et gratia* must indeed have constituted the 'immediate' cause, the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back!

²³ "Leur intention profonde est de défendre la légitimité de leur effort ascétique, menacée à leurs yeux par les conséquences extrêmes des théories augustinienne" (A. SOLIGNAC, *Semipélagiens*, in *DSp* 14 (1990) 556-568, c. 559). "Partnership between divine grace and human will which they had always hitherto taken for granted was in danger of being undermined" (B. R. REES, *Pelagius. A Reluctant Heretic*, Woodbridge, 1988, p. 105).

²⁴ Cf. CAELESTINUS, *Ep.* 4, *PL* 50, cc. 431f.; LEO THE GREAT, *Ep.* 108, *PL* 54, cc. 1012f.

²⁵ See also, to this regard, PROSPER, *Ep.* 3 (to Rufinus), *PL* 51, cc. 77-90.

are identified with the eight principal vices²⁶. Man must recognize them, see what they are caused by and find the just remedies in order to overcome them.

Most interesting for its doctrinal implications is the way Cassian deals, in the twelfth book of the *De institutis coenobiorum*²⁷, with the last of these principal vices, the *spiritus superbiae*. From the chronological point of view, this vice comes first. In fact, Lucifer's fall and his banishment from heaven were due to his *superbia*, for he believed that the perfections he possessed were not the result of God's gratuitous gift (*gratia*) but pertained to his very nature. Consequently, he was convinced that he could procure by himself and enjoy perfect virtue and eternal bliss merely by trusting in his own free will (*liberi scilicet arbitrii facultate confisus*²⁸). Lucifer stands out as a negative example to man who, wrapped as he is in the fragility of his flesh, experiences the need for God's merciful protection and the impossibility of reaching out for perfection by means of mere human efforts. To stress this point Cassian quotes one of the sentences which were also dear to Augustine: *Quid habes quod non accepisti?* (1Cor 4,7)²⁹.

The episode of the robber who was hanged with Jesus on Calvary and was saved after his last minute repentance, shows the role played by God's mercy in the work of salvation, beyond any human merits whatsoever³⁰. On the other hand Cassian is at pains to avoid a devaluation of human efforts. On the contrary, basing himself on the tradition of the Fathers, he affirms that God's grace and mercy are

²⁶ They are: 1) gastrimargia or gulae concupiscentia 2) fornicatio 3) filargyria or auaritia 4) ira 5) tristitia 6) acedia or anxietas sive taedium cordis 7) cenodoxia or uana seu inanis gloria 8) superbia (cf. CASSIAN, *De institutis coenobiorum* 5,1, SC 109 p. 190). A summary of these eight vices can be found in *Conlatio* 5 (abba Serapion), SC 42, pp. 188-217. This list of vices is probably taken from EVAGRIUS PONTICUS, *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus*, PG 40, cc. 1272-1276, a work which, in its turn, was influenced by Origen: see I. HAUSHERR, *L'origine de la théorie orientale des huit péchés capitaux*, in *OC(R)* 30 (1933) 164-175. Also the influence of Stoicism ought to be taken into account, especially when Cassian deals with "the connections between ethics and anthropology that mark the original Stoic position. He is interested in the genesis and dynamics of the vices, the virtues and the passions as well as in practical guidelines for applying ethical principles in daily life. Cassian has learned much from Stoic psychology and casuistry alike" (M. L. COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*. Vol. 2. *Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century*, Leiden, 1990, p. 115).

²⁷ See D. J. MACQUEEN, *John Cassian on Grace and Free Will. With particular Reference to Institutio XII and Collatio XIII*, in *RThAM* 44 (1977) 5-28.

²⁸ CASSIAN, *De institutis coenobiorum* 12,4, SC 109, p. 454.

²⁹ Cf. *Ibid.* 12,10, p. 464.

³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.* 12,11, p. 464.

accorded to those who labour and strive for perfection³¹. In other words, God's grace is ready to intervene and lead to perfection those who implore, who knock and seek by means of their good will, for God is present to impart all these things if only our good will affords him the opportunity³². The latter then seems to retain an initial active power independent from God's graceful action.

Since the *Conlationes* were meant to be "the indispensable complement and crowning"³³ of the *De institutis coenobiorum*, and since the first series of the *Conlationes* was composed when the writing of the *De institutis* was still being formed (whereas the other two series were written not long afterwards) we might well expect nothing substantially new with respect to what Cassian had already expressed in his *De institutis*. In fact, in the *Conlationes* he does develop themes akin to those tackled in the second part of his other monastic work.

The *Conlatio* 3 (*De tribus abrenuntiationibus*)³⁴ by abba Pafnutius, establishes that the triple *abrenuntiatio* to the wordly riches and goods, to the spiritual and fleshy passions of the past and to visible things (in that they impede the mind to be raised towards the invisible and eternal goods)³⁵ is a 'must' for all those who wish to attain a perfect life. Abba Pafnutius concludes by saying that it is God himself who makes this possible. It is He, in fact, who calls man to conversion, who guides him along the path to salvation, who crowns him with final perseverance and finally introduces him to eternal and blissful life³⁶. The beginning and perfection of good will are the work

³¹ "Vt enim dicimus conatus humanos adprehendere eam per se ipsos non posse sine adiutorio Dei, ita pronuntiamus laborantibus tantum ac desudantibus misericordiam Dei gratiamque conferri et, ut uerbis Apostoli loquar, uolentibus et currentibus inpertiri" (*Ibid.* 12,14, p. 468).

³² "Dicimus enim secundum Saluatoris sententiam dari quidem petentibus, aperiri pulsantibus et a quarentibus inueniri, sed petitionem et inquisitionem et pulsationem nostram non esse condignam, nisi misericordia Dei id quod petimus dederit uel aperuerit quod pulsamus uel illud quod quaerimus fecerit inueniri. Praesto est namque, occasione sibi tantummodo a nobis bonae uoluntatis oblata, ad haec omnia conferenda" (*loc. cit.*).

³³ "Le complément indispensable et le couronnement" (M. CAPPUYNS, *Cassien* (*Jean*), *cit.*, cc. 1329-1330).

³⁴ CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 3, SC 42, pp. 138-165.

³⁵ "Prima est qua corporaliter uniuersas diuitias mundi facultatesque contemnimus, secunda qua mores ac uitia affectusque pristinos animi carnisque respuimus, tertia qua mentem nostram de praesentibus uniuersis ac uisibilibus euocantes futura tantummodo contemplamur et ea quae sunt inuisibilia concupiscimus" (*Ibid.* 3,6, p. 145).

³⁶ "Quemadmodum inspiratione domini prouocati ad uiam salutis adcurrimus, ita etiam magisterio ipsius et inluminatione deducti ad perfectionem summae beatitudinis peruenimus" (*Ibid.* 3,10, p. 155).

of grace. The striving of human efforts must be placed within this framework provided by grace itself.

At this point, Cassian's friend Germanus asks abba Pafnutius what is the role of free will and human efforts. What is their purpose if it is God who starts and brings to an end the work of man's perfection³⁷? The reply of the venerable abba is unequivocal. There is, he says, an intermediary stage (*quaedam medietas*) which pertains to man, and where he is asked to give his assent to God's call³⁸.

No doubt, Cassian feels it his duty to stress the necessity of God's grace by underlining, through scriptural quotations, that man's efforts alone are not enough to lead him to salvation. God is and remains the guide and the master of man's efforts. He enlightens his footsteps giving him the grace of faith and perseverance³⁹. Free will alone, in fact, would spontaneously lean towards evil rather than good⁴⁰. In other words, divine action seems to be present at the beginning and end of man's good will⁴¹. Yet, further on, Cassian reiterates that there is a very short interval belonging to man's initiative and which is located between the *initium voluntatis bonae*, inspired by God, and the *perfectio virtutum*, which is also the work of God. This short interval consists in the capability of man, if he wills, to accept with zeal the invitations of grace or, if so he decides, to ignore them. Reward or punishment follow as a direct consequence of how man uses his moral responsibility. In other words, it is up to him, at this level, to pursue or otherwise the demands of God's kingdom⁴².

³⁷ "In quo ergo liberum consistit arbitrium nostraeque quod laudabiles sumus reputatur industriae, si deus in nobis omnia quae ad nostram perfectionem pertinent et incipit et consummat?" (*Ibid.* 3,11, p. 155).

³⁸ "Hoc uos recte mouisset, si in omni opere uel disciplina principium tantum esset ac finis et non etiam quaedam medietas interesset. Itaque sicut occasiones salutis diuersis modis deum cognoscimus operari, ita nostrum est occasionibus a diuinitate concessis uel enixius uel remissius famulari" (*Ibid.* 3,12, p. 155).

³⁹ "Certos tamen esse non conuenit, quod omnem uirtutem indefessis conatibus exercentes nequaquam diligentia uel studio nostro perfectionem possimus adtingere nec sufficiat humana sedulitas laborum merito ad tam sublimia beatitudinis praemia peruenire, nisi ea Domino nobis cooperante et cor nostrum ad id quod expedit dirigente fuerimus indepti" (*Ibid.* 3,12, p. 156). Cf. also: "Quamobrem certos esse nos conuenit tam ipsis rerum experimentis quam innumeris scripturae testimoniis eruditos, nostris nos uiribus, nisi Dei solius auxilio fulciamur, tantos hostes superare non posse et ad ipsum cotidie summam uictoriae nostrae referre debere" (*Ibid.* 5,15, pp. 206-207).

⁴⁰ "Nostrum arbitrium (...) procliuius uel ignorance boni uel oblectatione passionum fertur ad uitia" (*Ibid.* 3,12, p. 156).

⁴¹ Cf. *Ibid.* 3,12-18 *passim*, pp. 156ff.

⁴² "Quibus manifestissime perdocemur et initium uoluntatis bonae nobis domino inspirante concedi, cum aut per se aut per exhortationem cuiuslibet hominis aut per

It is, however, in the *Conlatio* 13 (*De protectione divina*)⁴³ that we find the theme on grace and free will that Cassian had already tackled in the second part of *Conlatio* 3 even more fully developed. But the emphasis is now different. Whereas in *Conlatio* 3 Pafnutius wanted to demonstrate the necessity of divine aid, now, in *Conlatio* 13, Chaeremon tries to delimitate the place and role of both grace and free will. It is for this very reason that *Conlatio* 13 has deserved much attention since its appearance. In it, in fact, we find Cassian's considered attempt to define a coherent doctrine of grace in its relationship to free will, a doctrine where, on some points, he shows his reaction to and his distance from Augustine's views, especially from his treatise *De correptione et gratia*.

IS CONLATIO 13 A REACTION TO AUGUSTINE'S *DE CORREPTIONE ET GRATIA*? THE PROBLEM OF ITS DATING.

It is the opinion of some scholars that the *Conlatio* 13 ought to be regarded as the 'immediate' cause of Cassian's explicit reaction to some of the views on grace and predestination forwarded by Augustine in his *De correptione et gratia*⁴⁴. We believe, *salvo meliori*

necessitatem nos ad salutis adtrahit uiam, et perfectionem uirtutum ab eodem similiter condonari, nostrum uero hoc esse, ut adhortationem auxiliumque dei uel remissius uel enixius exsequamur, et pro hoc nos uel remunerationem uel supplicia dignissime promereri, quod eius dispensationi ac prouidentiae erga nos benignissima dignatione conlatae uel negleximus uel studuimus nostrae oboedientiae deuotione congruere" (*Ibid.*, 3,19, p. 162).

⁴³ *Ibid.* 13, SC 54, pp. 147-181.

⁴⁴ See, for instance: "It seems extremely probable that Cassian's thirteenth Conference was written in 427 under the direct stimulus of the *De correptione*" (N. K. CHADWICK, *Poetry and Letters in Early Christian Gaul*, London, 1955, p. 179). "In his [Cassian's] opposition comes the explicit rejection of the (...) doubtful theology contained in *De correptione et gratia*" (O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian*, cit., p. 126). And again: "The accepted chronology places the publication of *Coll. XIII* in 426, before the controversy broke out. I regard this dating as erroneous and consider *Coll. XIII* to have been a work evoked by the controversy" (*Ibid.*, p. 129, n. 1). "Contro l'opera di Agostino *De correptione et gratia* è diretta la *Conlatio XIII* di C." (F. PRINZ, *Cassiano*, in *DIP* 2 (1975) 633-638, c. 637). According to Kemmer, the *Conlatio* 13 "zeigt sich unverkennbar die polemische Tendenz gegen Augustin" (A. KEMMER, *Charisma maximum. Untersuchung zu Cassians Vollkommenheitslehre und seiner Stellung zum Messalianismus*, Louvain, 1938, p. 30). And Butler affirms: "I am ready (...) to believe that the thirteenth Conference was written to combat some of St Augustine's positions on free-will, grace and predestination, and that its language is coloured by the Semipelagian controversy which was then raging" (C. BUTLER, *The Lausiac History of Palladius* (TaS, 6/1-2), Cambridge, 1898-1904,

iudicio, that such an opinion can be proved by external and internal evidence.

The first evidence comes from a letter that Prosper of Aquitaine sent to Augustine⁴⁵, to report to him on the theological view held by the monastic milieu of Provence. The assumption that Prosper's letter was written and sent to Augustine in 429 rested upon an explicit reference to bishop 'Hilary' of Arles⁴⁶, given by all but one manuscript, containing Prosper's letter, and enforced by the conviction that Hilary had succeeded Honoratus to the see of Arles in January 429. This state of affairs had been taken for granted until it was challenged by an article of O. Chadwick⁴⁷ claiming that the manuscripts of Prosper's *Ep.* 225 all read *Hilarium* in the passages concerned, except one, the MS *Parisinus nov. acq. 1449*, which has *elladium*⁴⁸ instead of *Hilarium*. Furthermore, in the dyptics of an ancient episcopal catalogue of the see of Arles, dating back to the 9th century, we find between Patroclus and Honoratus a certain Euladius in the genitive form *Euladii*⁴⁹. Elected to the see of Arles after the murder of Patroclus, this Elladius/Euladius or Helladius must have been governing his diocese for a short time, presumably from the end of 426 to the end of 427/beginning of 428. But the general assumption that Honoratus had been the immediate successor of Patroclus, made the presence of the name Helladius in the catalogue obtrusive. So much so, that even Duchesne, at the beginning of this century, hastily and self-assuredly dismissed the hypothesis of him having been bishop of Arles, and expunged his name from the episcopal list on the ground that it had been unreasonably added⁵⁰. However, after Chadwick's article, an increasing number of scholars have accepted the reading 'Helladius' (instead of 'Hilary') thus accepting the general rule that the *lectio difficilior* should be preferred⁵¹. Moreover, the fact that MS

Vol. I, p. 205). See also L. WRZOL, *Die Psychologie des Johannes Cassianus*, in *DT* 7 (1920) 70-96, p. 74; Ch. PIETRI, *Roma Christiana, cit.*, T. II, p. 1028, n. 3 and p. 1029.

⁴⁵ See PROSPER, *Ep.* 225 (among the Augustinian letters), *CSEL* 57, pp. 454-468.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 225,9, p. 467.

⁴⁷ O. CHADWICK, *Euladius of Arles*, in *JThS* 46 (1945) 200-205 (the same standpoint is taken up in his book *John Cassian, cit.*, p. 128).

⁴⁸ Cf. also PROSPER, *Ep.* 225,9, *CSEL* 57, p. 467, footnote to line 14.

⁴⁹ Cf. L. DUCHESNE, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule. T. I: Provinces du Sud-Est*, Paris, 1907, 2nd ed., pp. 5, 250, 251, 254.

⁵⁰ "Après Patrocle [Patruli, n° 15], on trouve un Euladius, qui n'a nul droit de figurer ici, car Patrocle eut sûrement saint Honorat pour successeur immédiat". *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁵¹ "Il serait surprenant – as it has been written – que le copiste ait changé un nom aussi courant qu' "Hilarius" [ou "Hillarius"] pour un nom aussi rare que celui

Parisinus n. a. 1449 bears traces of complete independence from the other manuscripts which, although earlier, belong to the same family⁵², is a further indication that *elladium* is a genuine reading and not a mere copyist's error! For this reason J.-R. Palanque has maintained the name of bishop Helladius in the episcopal list of Arles⁵³, whereas Duchesne's peremptory conviction that the name of Helladius had been added to the list together with other names of bishops not belonging to the see of Arles, is counteracted by É. Griffe⁵⁴. If Hella-dius did actually occupy the see of Arles, then the death of Honoratus, which occurred in mid-January after a couple of years of episcopate⁵⁵, ought to be moved forward from January 429 (the traditionally accepted date)⁵⁶ to January 430⁵⁷.

d'Helladius: la lectio difficilior est préférable" (P.-A. JACOB, *Introduction*, in HONORAT DE MARSEILLE, *La vie d'Hilaire d'Arles*, SC 404, Paris, 1995, p. 29).

⁵² Cf. A. GOLDBACHER, *S. Aureli Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Epistulae*, Praef., CSEL 58, pp. xliii, lxx, lxxiii.

⁵³ Cf. G.-R. PALANQUE, *Les évêchés provençaux à l'époque romaine*, in *Provence historique* 1 (1951) 103-143, p. 132.

⁵⁴ "Les noms ajoutés – he writes – sont le plus souvent des noms de personnages illustres: Martin, Ambroise, Augustin. Le nom d'Euladius n'entre pas dans cette catégorie. Cela seul mérite qu'on ne l'exclue pas aussi facilement que l'a fait Mgr Duchesne" (É. GRIFFE, *La Gaule chrétienne à l'époque romaine, T. II: L'Église de Gaule au Ve siècle*, Paris, 1957, 2nd ed. 1966, p. 192, n. 10). Chadwick's conclusion has been endorsed, among others, by: S. CAVALLIN, *Vitae Sanctorum Honorati et Hilarii Episcoporum Arelatensium* (SVSL, 40), Lund, 1952, who writes: "O. Chadwick (...) optimo ut videtur iure contendit inter Patroclum et Honoratum Euladium quendam sedem Arelatensem occupavisse" (*Ibid.*, p. 13); see É. GRIFFE, *op. cit.*, p. 121 and above all pp. 191-193; G. BONNER, *St. Augustin of Hippo. Life and Controversies*, Norwich, 1963, reissued and revised 1986, p. 350; Ch. PIETRI, *Roma Christiana*, cit., T. II, p. 1028, n. 3; B. R. REES, *op. cit.*, p. 104; S. PRICOCO, *op. cit.*, pp. 36 and 43; W. J. COLLINGE, *Introduction*, in *Saint Augustine. Four Anti-Pelagians Writings*, Washington, 1992, pp. 187f.; J. FONTAINE-L. PIETRI, *Les grandes Églises missionnaires: Hispanie, Gaule, Bretagne*, in J.-M. MAYEUR et al., *Histoire du Christianisme. T. II: Naissance d'une Chrétienté (250-430)*, s. 1., 1995, pp. 813-860. M.-D.

Valentin considers as plausible the episcopate of Helladius in Arles, (cf. M.-D. VALENTIN, *Introduction*, in HILAIRE D'ARLES, *Vie de Saint Honorat*, SC 235, Paris, 1977, p. 22). Also Ph. Rousseau thinks that Chadwick was probably right (cf. PH. ROUSSEAU, *Cassian: Monastery and World*, in M. FAIRBURN-W. H. OLIVER [eds.], *The Certainty of Doubt. Tributes to Peter Munz*, Wellington, 1995, pp. 68-89, p. 70).

⁵⁵ Cf. HILAIRE D'ARLES, *Vita Honorati* 29,3, cit., p. 150.

⁵⁶ Cf. e. g., L. DUCHESNE, *op. cit.*, p. 250; A. GOLDBACHER, *Index III*, in CSEL 58, pp. 60-61; J. CHÉNÉ, *Occasion de la controverse entre Augustin et les moines de Provence*, in BA 24, pp. 385-390, p. 390.

⁵⁷ Cf., e. g., O. CHADWICK, *Euladius of Arles*, cit., p. 205; É. GRIFFE, *op. cit.*, p. 242; H. I. MARROU, *Nouvelle Histoire de l'Église. T. I: Des origines à Grégoire*

From the above arguments, we come to the conclusion that if Prosper's letter to Augustine mentioned bishop Hilary of Arles, then we would be compelled to place it in 430, within the few months between the accession of Hilary to the see of Arles (January 430) and Augustin's death (August 430). A very short time indeed for Augustine, old and infirm, to sit down and write the *De praedestinatione sanctorum* and the *De dono perseverantiae*. Moreover, the length of the sail from Gaul to Africa, and the limitation imposed by the *mare clausum* (11 November – 10 March)⁵⁸, together with the fact that communications with some parts of Africa had by that time already been affected by the Vandalic invasion (Hippo shall be besieged in June of the same year) plus the danger posed by travel, would further restrain the chances of a written exchange between Prosper and Augustine. Finally, it should be born in mind that during the very last years of his life Augustine was not only engaged in writing the *De haeresibus* (in 429)⁵⁹, but was also working, probably since 428, on his ponderous *Contra secundam responsionem Iuliani opus imperfectum*⁶⁰, which remained unfinished at the time of his death.

On the contrary, if we hold to the hypothesis that Prosper's reference in his letter to Augustine was not to Hilary but to Helladius, the *Ep.* 225 (and Hilary's *Ep.* 226) ought then to be placed at the heart of Helladius' episcopate (end of 426-end of 427/beginning of 428).

Moreover, the presence of Helladium in the see of Arles, would enable us to identify in the two Helladius that are mentioned respectively in the preface to the first set of *Conlationes* as a monk (*frater*) and in the preface to the second collection as a bishop (*episcopus*) as being the same person⁶¹. The monk to whom Cassian addressed his

le Grand, Paris, 1963, p. 481; M.-D. VALENTIN, *Introduction*, in HILAIRE D'ARLES, *Vita Honorati*, cit., p. 9; M. LABROUSSE, *Saint Honorat fondateur de Lérins et évêque d'Arles. Étude et traduction de textes d'Hilaire d'Arles, Fauste de Riez et Césaire d'Arles* [VieMon, 31], Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 1995, p. 15). "Hilaire (...) lui succède [to Honoratus] en 430" (Ch. PIETRI, *Roma Christiana*, cit., T. II, , p. 1030). Other scholars content themselves with giving a vague reference (429/430), as to the date of Honoratus' death: cf., e. g.: "Nous savons (...) qu'immediatement après l'intermède d'un nommé Euladius ou Helladius, le choix d'un successeur de Patrocle au siège d'Arles se porta sur l'abbé de Lérins. Honorat ne fut pas longtemps évêque: en 430, au plus tard, et dès le début de l'année, il s'éteignit" (M. JOURION, *Honorat d'Arles*, in *DSp* 7/1 (1969) 717-718, c. 717); R. GAZEAU, *Honorat (Saint) d'Arles*, in *Cath* 5 (1963) 918-919, c. 918; R. AUBERT, *Honorat (Saint), évêque d'Arles*, in *DHGE* 24 (1993) 1027-1028, c. 1027.

⁵⁸ See O. PERLER, *Les voyages de saint Augustin*, Paris, 1969, pp. 68-74.

⁵⁹ See *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 386 and 475.

⁶¹ Cf. *supra* n. 7.

first 10 conferences in 425/426, had become bishop of Arles while he, in 427, was still writing the second set of conferences in which our *Conlatio* 13 is embedded.

Moreover, from Prosper's complaint about bishop Helladius and the latter's request of Augustine for clarification on some controversial points of the *De correptione et gratia*⁶² can be inferred that Helladius was not only condescending but fully in agreement with the views professed by Cassian and the *Massilienses*. By the fact that he is mentioned twice in the preface of both the two first sets of Cassian's *Conlationes*, we can assume that between the two there was a friendly relationship and a mutual esteem which might as well be interpreted as the result of a convergence upon monastic ideals and perspectives.

Thus, some time in 427 two independent reactions took shape: Prosper's and Hilary's letters to Augustine, on one side, and Cassian's *Conlatio* 13, on the other. The second being a reasoned reaction to Augustine's *De correptione et gratia* extreme views on grace and predestination⁶³. We can assume, in other words, that the composition of *Conlatio* 13 found place right in the context of the controversy and was thus very relevant to it, and that the relations between the *De correptione et gratia* et the *Conlatio* 13 were not merely accidental.

It is also worth noticing that we do not find any specific reference to Cassian's *Conlatio* 13 in Prosper's *Ep.* 225, nor verbal similarities. This means that by the time Prosper wrote to the bishop of Hippo, *Conlatio* 13 was still being published. Moreover, the teaching attributed to the *Massilienses* by Prosper seems to be more Pelagian

⁶² "Sanctum Helladium, Arelatensem episcopum, sciat beatitudo tua admiratorem sectatoremque in aliis omnibus tuae esse doctrinae et de hoc quod in querelam trahit, iam pridem apud sanctitatem tuam sensum suum per litteras uelle conferre" (PROSPER, *Ep.* 225,9, CSEL 57, p. 467).

⁶³ See O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian, cit.*, p. 126 and p. 129, n. 1; F. PRINZ, *art. cit.*, c. 637. In the meanwhile, both the *De gratia et libero arbitrio* and the *De correptione et gratia*, written in 425/426 (Cf., H. MARROU-A.-M. LA BONNARDIÈRE, *Saint Augustin et l'augustinisme*, Paris, 1955, pp. 183-184; S. M. ZARB, *Chronologia operum sancti Augustini*, Rome, 1934, p. 73; J. CHÉNÉ, *Aux moines d'Adrumète et de Provence* [BA, 24], Paris, 1962, pp. 44-45; *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215), must have reached the monasteries of Provence either in the second half of 426 or, at the latest, by mid 427, viz. during Helladius' episcopate. (The *De praedestinatione sanctorum* and the *De dono perseverantiae* must have been written by Augustine, on the request of Prosper and Hilary, in 428, and not in 429 [As argued, for instance, by S. M. ZARB, *op. cit.*, p. 85; H. MARROU-A.-M. LA BONNARDIÈRE, *op. cit.*, 184-185] or in the last months of 430 [As argued, for instance, by J. CHÉNÉ, *Aux moines d'Adrumète...*, *cit.*, p. 438; O. PERLER, *op. cit.*, p. 475 opts for 429/430]).

and much less nuanced than that forwarded by Cassian's *Conlatio* 13. In fact, in Prosper's letter the first stage towards God is always attributed to the agency of the human will, whereas the latter in Cassian happens only sometimes and not always (cf. *infra*). Besides, Prosper never mentions Cassian's arguments on *torpor*⁶⁴ and *tepor*⁶⁵ which in the mind of the divine of Marseilles represent an insidious consequence of a predestinarian view. Also the quotation of Rom 9,16 used by Cassian⁶⁶, unlike what it is said in Prosper's letter⁶⁷, is not interpreted by the divine of Marseilles in relation to predestination, but as testimony to the power of grace subsisting beside that of man's free will. Moreover, Prosper speaks of the 'hypothetical merits' of unbaptized infants, a subject which is never dealt with in *Conlatio* 13. This means that the latter had not yet been published and it is therefore possible that Prosper was simply referring to the ongoing discussions that were taking place in the monastic and ecclesial milieu of Provence. We may thus conclude that Prosper must have written to Augustine in the year 427, during Helladius' episcopate, when the second series of Cassian's *Conlationes* had not yet seen the light of the day – and not in 429 as had been traditionally thought. By 429, in fact, such a crucial and relevant piece of work as the *Conlatio* 13, could not have escaped the watchful and attentive inquisition of Prosper, nor would he have failed to mention it in his letter to his African heros!

There are, however, some scholars who reject the hypothesis that Cassian wrote his *Conlatio* 13 as a rebuttal of Augustine's *De correptione et gratia*. They believe that the second series of Conferences (to which belongs the 13th) were written around 426-427, before the *De correptione et gratia* arrived in Gaul⁶⁸. Moreover, since it ties up naturally with the preceding twelfth conference on chastity, and fits so well into the overall scheme of the conferences, *Conlatio* 13 – as Stewart has argued – should be better seen as "a general response to aspects of Augustine's thought – already well known in Gaul – rather than as a tactical move in response to Augustine's latest

⁶⁴ Cf. CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,13, SC 54, p. 168.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Ibid.* 13,11, p. 164: "Si nos nolle uel intepuisse perspexerit".

⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.* 13, 9, p. 159.

⁶⁷ Cf. PROSPER, *Ep.* 225,3, CSEL 57, p. 459.

⁶⁸ See J. CHÉNÉ, *Les origines de la controverse semi-pélagienne*, in *AthA* 14 (1953) 56-109, p. 102; P. GODET, *art. cit.*, c. 1825; A. SOLIGNAC, *art. cit.*, c. 559; A. HAMMAN, *Scrittori della Gallia*, in A. DI BERARDINO (ed.), *Patrologia*, Vol. III: *Dal Concilio di Nicea (325) al Concilio di Calcedonia (451)*. I Padri latini, Casale M., 1978, p. 489.

works, (...) the culmination of Cassian's teaching on grace and free will, not an initial foray"⁶⁹. This view, already advanced by É. Amann⁷⁰, is shared by other scholars⁷¹.

What is however unacceptable, so it seems to us, is the suggestion advanced by R. Markus and according to which the controversial passages of *Conlatio* 13 should not be so much interpreted as a reaction to some Augustinian views as an attack to Pelagianism, which had seemed to find support in Gaul also after the rescript of Valentinian III in 425 and with which Cassian must have had the chance to be confronted⁷². According to Markus, the passages of *Conlatio* 13 dealing with the relationship between grace and free will would have come to be considered as part of the antipredestinarian attack (viz. against Augustine's predestinarian views) only after the controversy had arisen in the monastic milieu of southern Gaul. We believe that such a conjecture can be rebuked on the account of Cassian own's uneasiness (as it emerges from *Conlatio* 13), itself the result of Cassian's confrontation with Augustine's view of encompassing grace and the predestinarian shape that ultimately ensued from it. In such a context, Cassian's efforts were not so much directed towards restoring the necessity of God's acting grace against Pelagianism (as Markus argues) as towards the recognition of the value and the role that the agency of free will, in its relationship with grace, can and has to play within a framework whereby its goodness can be truly safeguarded and enhanced.

⁶⁹ C. STEWART, *op. cit.*, p. 20. Stewart, however, avows that "the interplay of these events [the relations between the *De correptione et gratia* and *Conlatio* 13] remains unclear" (*Ibid.*, p. 154, n. 176). In the end, in saying so he does not rule out (so it seems to us) the feasibility of an alternative explanation.

⁷⁰ "Tout l'ensemble de cette littérature ascétique [*Institutiones* and *Conlationes*] était composée avant l'apparition du *De correptione et gratia* d'Augustin. Mais Cassien avait certainement eu connaissance d'autres ouvrages du maître africain" (É. AMANN, *Semi-Pélagiens*, in *DThC* 14/2 (1941) 1796-1850, 1803).

⁷¹ R. MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 177-179; Ph. ROUSSEAU, *Cassian: Monastery and World*, *cit.*, pp. 82-83; R. H. WEAVER, *Divine Grace and Human Agency. Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (PatMS, 15), Macon, 1996, pp. 96-97.

⁷² "It seems more natural to interpret the *Conference* in the context of the Pelagian views apparently held in Gaul which were condemned by legislation in 425 (...), as an attack not on Augustine's, but on Pelagian, views, albeit from a point of view more in line with a pre-Augustinian theological tradition than with Augustine's anti-Pelagian theology" (R. MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 178; cf. *ID.*, *The Legacy of Pelagius: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Conciliation*, in R. D. WILLIAMS (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 214-234).

GRACE AND FREE WILL IN *CONLATIO* 13.
A SEARCH FOR A CONCILIATORY APPROACH.

The protagonist of this conference, Abba Chaeremon, who in the previous *Conlatio* 12 (*De castitate*) had stressed the necessity of divine action and protection as a *conditio sine qua non* in order to attain to chastity⁷³, is now faced with Germanus' question: if chastity can be lived out only on account of God's gratuitous mercy, what about human efforts and merits? Would they not be emptied of their inner motivations and reduced to a vain and valueless exercise whose success depends only on God? Would that not destroy man's free will?⁷⁴ And why then are there heathens who, without possessing the notion of the true God, and ignoring what grace is all about, do manage to live chastely⁷⁵?

The objections made by Germanus to abba Chaeremon bear the imprint of Cassian's reaction to Augustine⁷⁶ (although the bishop of Hippo is never mentioned⁷⁷) and introduce the topic that *Conlatio* 13 is going to develop, viz. the conciliation of grace with man's free will.

⁷³ "Certos tamen esse nos conuenit, quod, licet omnem continentiae distractionem, famem scilicet ac sitem, uigilias quoque et operis iugitatem atque incessabile subeamus studium lectionis, perpetuam tamen castimoniae puritatem horum laborum merito contingere nequeamus, nisi in his iugiter desudantes experientiae magisterio doceamur incorruptionem eius diuinae gratiae largitate concedi. Ob hoc sane solummodo se unusquisque infatigabiliter in his exercitiis perdurare debere cognoscat, ut per illorum afflictionem misericordiam domini consecutus de inpugnatione carnis ac dominatione praepotentium uitiorum diuino mereatur munere liberari, non quo adepturum se per illa confidat istam quam cupit inuiolatam corporis castitatem" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 12,4, SC 54, pp. 124-125).

⁷⁴ "Illud uidetur obsistere quod ad destructionem liberi tendit arbitrii" (*Ibid.* 13,4, p. 151).

⁷⁵ Cf. *Ibid.* 13,4 pp. 151-152.

⁷⁶ "Bien que ce ne soit pas lui [Cassian] qui parle en cette XIIIe Conférence, mais le très vénérable Chérémon, il est permis de lui attribuer les propos de cet entretien, en ce sens tout au moins qu'il les approuve sans réserve; mais en outre il est sûr qu'il a mêlé ses pensées personnelles aux siennes: les allusions à l'hérésie de Pélage et aux exagérations de saint Augustin son trop transparentes pour qu'on puisse douter de cette osmose" (J. CHÉNÉ, *Les origines de la controverse semipélagienne*, cit., p. 103). "He [Cassian] set out his counter-propositions on the vexed question of grace and free will, placing them in his *Conlatio* XIII in the mouth of the abbot Cheremon of Panephyss in the Delta of Egypt. This was a mere literary device: in reality he was tilting at St Augustine" (J. DANÉLOU-H. MARROU [eds.], *The Christian Centuries, Vol. I. The First Six Hundred Years*, London, 1964, 2nd impression, 1978, p. 406).

⁷⁷ The opposition that took shape against Augustine's doctrine of grace was in fact generally respectful of his person and of the role that he played within the Church.

Chaeremon – who had already underlined that God's grace inspires the beginning of man's good will and helps it bringing it to fulfilment⁷⁸, but is not irresistible and does ultimately leave the choice to man of adhering to it or not⁷⁹ – replies to Germanus' question by pointing out that a perfect purity belongs only to Christian chastity (*summa castimoniae puritas*)⁸⁰ and is the result of God's gift. The chastity of the pagan philosophers (like Socrates and Diogenes) was a mere fragile and provisional discipline of continence⁸¹. In fact, chastity is the domain in which man's frailty is made more manifest and where it appears clearly that man needs helping by the divine grace in order to achieve salvation, as he could never achieve it by his own efforts⁸². God's immutable plan that nobody should perish and all should be saved accounts for his gratuitous intervention on behalf of all men, without exception⁸³. All men are in fact under the burden

⁷⁸ "Initia sanctae uoluntatis inspirat (...) qui et incipit quae bona sunt et exsequitur et consummat in nobis" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13, SC 54, p. 151). Prosper promptly qualified this formulation a definitio catholicissima (PROSPER, *De gratia Dei et libero arbitrio contra Collatorem* 2,2, PL 51, c. 218).

⁷⁹ "Nostrum uero est, ut cotidie adtrahentem nos gratiam Dei humiliter subsequamur, uel certe (...) eidem resistentes" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,3, SC 54, p. 151). Augustine had instead stressed the invincibility of grace with regard to those who had been elected. See, for instance: "Subuentum est igitur infirmitati uoluntatis humanae, ut diuina gratia indeclinabiliter et insuperabiliter ageretur; et ideo, quamvis infirma, non tamen deficeret neque qdversitate aliqua vinceretur" (AUGUSTINE, *De correptione et gratia* 12,38, PL 44, c. 940).

⁸⁰ CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,4, SC 54, p. 152.

⁸¹ They only possessed – says Cassian – a partial chastity (*portiuncula castitatis*), viz. the continence of the flesh (μετῃκῆν), but not that of the soul (cf. *Ibid.* 13,5, p. 152). "Cassian affirms a qualified natural capacity for good. The pagans, by refraining from immoral behavior, are doing good inasmuch as they restrain their evil impulses. There is no question here, however, of acts tending toward salvation" (L. PRISTAS, *The Theological Anthropology of John Cassian*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston, 1993, p. 276).

⁸² "Ei idcirco licet in multis, immo in omnibus possit ostendi semper auxilio Dei homines indigere nec aliquid humanam fragilitatem quod ad salutem pertinet per se solam, id est sine adiutorio Dei posse perficere, in nullo tamen euidentiùs quam in acquisitione atque custodia castitatis ostenditur" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,6, SC 54, pp. 153-154); "Nec sufficere nobis id quod possumus certum est, nisi etiam oportunitas peragendi ea quae nobis utique possibilia sunt a Domino tribuatur" (*Ibid.* 13,6, p. 155).

⁸³ "Propositum namque Dei, quo non ob hoc hominem fecerat ut periret, sed ut in perpetuum uiueret, manet immobile (...) uolens omnes homines saluos fieri" (*Ibid.* 13,7, p. 155). "Qui enim ut pereat unus ex pusillis non habet uoluntatem, quomodo sine ingenti sacrilegio putandus est non uniuersaliter omnes, sed quosdam saluos fieri uelle pro omnibus? Ergo quicumque pereunt, contra illius pereunt uoluntatem (...). Praesto est ergo cotidie Christi gratia, quae, dum uult omnes homines saluos fieri et ad agnitionem ueritatis uenire, cunctos absque ulla exceptione conuocat" (*Ibid.* 13,7, p. 156).

of either original or actual sin⁸⁴ and they all need to be delivered from it by the grace of Christ which is always at their disposal⁸⁵ and which at times may even act independently of their consciousness⁸⁶. Certainly, the allusion to original sin in the light of the call to universal salvation (rather than as a reminder of the sinfulness in which all humanity shares) and the double quotation of 1 Tim 2,4, interpreted in an optimistic and all-embracing way, are evidences of Cassian's explicit reaction to the Augustinian predestinarian view⁸⁷.

According to the divine of Marseilles, then, all who opt for perdition do so against the will of God⁸⁸, who wants that all men be saved. For that very reason he does not cease to come to their help, being ready to enkindle with his light and strengthen with his grace any small hint or beginning of good will. Yet, if the latter is normally prompted by God himself, it may well be that in some cases the beginning of good will be the direct result of man's efforts, due to the fact that he is endowed with a "spark of good will" (*scintilla bonae voluntatis*). A spark which can be enkindled either by God himself, who strikes it from the "hard flint of our heart"⁸⁹, or by man's own

⁸⁴ "Si autem non omnes uniuersaliter, sed quosdam aduocat, sequitur ut nec omnes sint onerati uel originali uel actuali peccato nec uera sit illa sententia: omnes enim peccauerunt et egent gloria Dei" (*loc. cit.*).

⁸⁵ "Praesto est ergo cotidie Christi gratia" (*loc. cit.*).

⁸⁶ "Dominus (...) nonnumquam perniciosas dispositiones nostras letalesque conatus ab effectu detestabili retardat ac reuocat, ac properantes ad mortem retrahit ad salutem et de inferni faucibus extrahit ignorantes" (*Ibid.* 13,7, p. 157).

⁸⁷ We may not forget Augustine's idiosyncratic exegesis of 1 Tim 2,4, a text which he eventually interprets in a predestinarian perspective. Cf., for instance: "Omnes homines uult saluos fieri, ut intellegantur omnes praedestinati; quia omne genus hominum in eis est" (AUGUSTINE, *De correptione et gratia* 14,44, PL 44, c. 943). We cannot but share the conviction that Augustine's exegesis of 1 Tim 2,4 is indeed "embarrassée et ne peut satisfaire" (P.-M. HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae*, cit., p. 315). See also the conclusions drawn by A. Sage after a detailed analysis of sixteen commentaries of Augustine on 1 Tim 2,4 (See A. SAGE, *La volonté salvifique universelle de Dieu dans la pensée de saint Augustin*, in *RechAug* 3 (1965) 107-131).

⁸⁸ "Ergo quicumque pereunt, contra illius [God's] pereunt uoluntatem" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,7, SC 54, p. 156); "Et in tantum omnes qui pereunt contra Dei pereunt uoluntatem" (*loc. cit.*).

⁸⁹ "Cuius benignitas cum bonae uoluntatis in nobis quantulamcumque scintillam emicuisse perspexerit uel quam ipse tamquam de dura silice nostri cordis excuderit, confouet eam et exsuscitat suae inspiratione confortat, uolens omnes homines saluos fieri et ad agnitionem ueritatis uenire" (*Ibid.* 13,7, p. 155). Scintilla is a term already used in this respect by the Stoa which had no little impact on monasticism. According to Colish, "it was Cassian more than any other single figure who monasticized Stoicism in the west and who produced one of its most original and durable reformulations in this period" (M. L. COLISH, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 114-115). We may as well point out, however, that the Stoa was not the only philosophical school to

efforts. On the one hand, divine providence, out of love for man, forestalls his action, whereas on the other God leans on his creature with the only aim of enlightening and strengthening any beginning of good will (*ortum quendam bonae uoluntatis*) that comes from the human soul. In other words, God incites to salvation either by helping that seed to grow which he himself has sown, or by enlightening human efforts themselves responsible for germinating the seed⁹⁰.

To show the presence of this double reality, Cassian puts on the lips of Chaeremon some scriptural quotations⁹¹ that seem to stand in opposition to one another because of the value attached to either grace or free will, regarded as two realities existing side by side. This means that man's free will can at times (*interdum*) rise autonomously and desire a virtuous life by its own movement (*suis motibus*), although it always needs the help of God in order to fulfil such a desire⁹². There remains operative a synergism or co-operation between the human will and grace⁹³.

have influenced Cassian. His thought, either through his mentors or by a direct access to the sources, shows in fact "un fondo di dottrina eclettica, diffusa ai suoi tempi, risultante di stoicismo, aristotelismo, neoplatonismo" (C. TIBILETTI, Giovanni Cassiano. *Formazione e dottrina*, in *Aug.* 17 [1977] 355-380, p. 356).

⁹⁰ "Adest igitur inseparabiliter nobis semper diuina protectio tantaque est erga creaturam suam pietas creatoris, ut non solum comitetur eam, sed etiam praecedat iugiter prouidentia, quam expertus propheta apertissime confitetur dicens: Deus meus misericordia eius praeueniet me. Qui cum in nobis ortum quendam bonae uoluntatis inspexerit, inluminat eam confestim atque confortat et incitat ad salutem, incrementum tribuens ei quam uel ipse plantauit uel nostro conatu uiderit emersisse" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,8, SC 54, p. 158).

⁹¹ Is 1,19 (Si uolueritis, et audieritis me, quae bona sunt terrae manducabitis) and Rom 9,16 (Non uolentis neque currentis, sed miserentis sit Dei); Rom 2,6 (Reddet [Deus] unicuique secundum opera eius) and Phil 2,13 / Eph 2,8-9 (Deus est qui operatur in uobis et uelle et perficere, pro bona uoluntate / Hoc non ex uobis, sed Dei donum est: non ex operibus, ut ne quis gloriatur); Jam 4,8 (Adpropinquate Domino, et adpropinquabit uobis) and Jn 6,44 (Nemo uenit ad me nisi pater qui me adtraxerit eum); Pr 4,26 [LXX] (Rectos cursus fac pedibus tuis, et uias tuas dirige) and Pss 5,9 / 16,5 (Perfice gressus meos in semitis tuis / ut non moueantur uestigia mea); Ez 18,31 (Facite uobis cor nouum, et spiritum nouum) and Ez 11,19-20 (Dabo eis cor unum, et spiritum nouum tribuam in uisceribus eorum: et auferam cor lapideum de carne eorum, et dabo eis cor carneum: ut in praeceptis meis ambulent, et iudicia mea custodiant); Jer 4,14 (Laua a malitia cor tuum Hierusalem, ut salua fias) and Ps 50,12,9 (Cor mundum crea in me Deus - Lauabis me, et super niuem dealbabor); Hos 10,12 [LXX] (Inluminat uobis lumen scientiae) and Pss 93,10. 145,8. 12,4 (Qui docet hominem scientiam - Dominus inluminat caecos - Inlumina oculos meos ne umquam obdormiam in mortem) (*Ibid.* 13,8, pp. 159-160).

⁹² Cf. *Ibid.*, 13,9, p. 160.

⁹³ Although an evaluation of Augustine's views on the relationship between grace and free will cannot be fully dealt with within the restricted aim of the present

Moreover, the beginnings of good will (*bonarum uoluntatum principia*) are made possible because of the *naturae bonum* which is connatural to human nature, a primordial gift of God the creator⁹⁴. Here, in the optimistic outlook about the graced status of human nature itself, is the ultimate reason, the key that enables us to understand why it is possible that sometimes the power of the will acts alone, independently of God's intervention, although the accomplishment of what is willed (*communicatio uirtutum*) pertains always to God's grace by which human will is fruitfully assisted until the end⁹⁵.

Cassian's use of the expression *naturae bonum* reveals, once again, his theological background. Generally speaking, for the Church Fathers of the *pars Orientis* (on which Cassian seems to depend heavily) nature was a synonym for good and was directly connected with the goodness of creation⁹⁶. Also for Cassian the principle of good

article, we must nevertheless do justice to the bishop of Hippo's concern about free will. Indeed he never denied the latter's place and role in the life of man and he also attempted to describe the co-operation between grace and free will (cf., for instance, his *De gratia et libero arbitrio*). We must, however, agree that in Augustine free will comes into the picture as ultimately relative to the priority and primacy of overwhelming grace.

⁹⁴ Cassian thinks of *natura* in terms of the reality created by God, from whom the principle of good reaches out to all creation. However, apart from the theological meaning of nature (whose goodness is attached to the goodness characterizing all of God's creation) Cassian does not develop the concept of *natura* from a philosophical and autonomous point of view. We should remember that Pelagius too had assumed the *naturae bonum* to be a capital tenet of his ascetical theology. He would have certainly agreed with Cassian's connection to such a concept. In his letter to Demetrias, for instance, the *naturae bonum* is often pointed to as the reason around which hinges and is made possible any ascetical effort (cf. PELAGIUS, *Ep. ad Demetriadem* 2.3.4.8, PL 33, cc. 1100-1105 passim). Most probably Pelagius too must have been acquainted with the eastern theological thought and have cultivated some conceptual ties with it (cf. H. I. MARROU, *Les attaches orientales du Pélagianisme*, in *Patristique et Humanisme* [PatSor, 9], Paris, 1976, pp. 331-344, pp. 341 and 344), as in this specific case of the *naturae bonum*. See also his expression *naturalis quaedam sanctitas* (the equivalent of the *naturae bonum*): "Et enim, inquam, in animis nostris naturalis quaedam, ut ita dixerim, sanctitas, quae velut in arce animi praesidens, exercet mali bonique iudicium" (PELAGIUS, *Ep. ad Demetriadem* 4, PL 33, c. 1101).

⁹⁵ "Ut autem euidentius clareat etiam per naturae bonum, quod beneficio creatoris indultum est, nonnumquam bonarum uoluntatum prodire principia, quae tamen nisi a domino dirigantur ad consummationem uirtutum peruenire non possunt, apostolus testis est dicens: uelle enim adiacet mihi, perficere autem bonum non inuenio" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,9, SC 54, p. 160).

⁹⁶ "Bien rares – writes Hausherr – sont ceux qui admettraient des expressions telles que «nature mauvaise», «nature viciée». La *ψύσις* est bonne, étant l'œuvre de Dieu. Aucun mal ne peut venir d'elle, ni avant ni après le péché originel. Dire le contraire, leur

abides in human nature as something connatural; it does not come from outside but it is inserted into man's soul⁹⁷ at the very moment of creation as a pathway along which man can reach out to his creator, with God's grace.

Through the words of Chaeremon, Cassian has thus attempted to define the status of both free will and divine grace and their mutual relationship. It is certainly worth noting that he does not try to tackle the problem from an ontological point of view, by asking which of the two (grace or free will) comes first in actual life. Such an approach would in fact inevitably jeopardize the mutual interaction existing between the two by assuming that there is a primacy/priority of one of the two terms over the other⁹⁸.

As a matter of fact, grace and human will are so much interwoven (*permixta atque confusa*) that it is not always clear when it is one or the other that operates first⁹⁹. The problem, he argues, cannot be solved either by a juxtaposition, or a generalization that would fail to take into account the value of each one of them, as the *ecclesiasticae fidei regula* invites us to do¹⁰⁰. Holy Scripture itself teaches that

paraîtrait rendre responsable du mal le Créateur lui-même" (I. HAUSHERR, *L'erreur fondamentale et la logique du Messialisme*, in *OCP* 1 [1935] 328-360, p. 334).

⁹⁷ Cassian speaks of the *uirtutum semina* which every soul possesses because they have been inserted in it by the benevolence of the creator: cf. CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,12, SC 54, p. 166 (see n. 107). See also: "Id quod per naturam conditionis insertum est" (*Ibid.*, 3,15, SC 42, p. 158); "Deus hominem creans omnem naturaliter ei scientiam legis inseruit" (*Ibid.*, 8,23, SC 54, p. 31). The same verb *inserere* indicates that the knowledge of good and the capability of following it are inscribed in man's created nature. Perhaps we should add that Cassian employs the term *natura* in its original, pre-Augustinian meaning, indicating the goodness attached to man's original state at the moment of creation, a goodness which is not completely lost after Adam's fall (see *infra*).

⁹⁸ As it has been rightly noted: "Ce qu'il [Cassian] rejette (...) c'est l'effort théorique qui sous-tend la systématisation augustinienne, c'est-à-dire la scission rationaliste de l'union de la liberté et de la grâce et sa mise en question en termes de primauté absolue. La théorisation de cette union occulte sa nature énigmatique, telle que l'Écriture nous la révèle dans des textes qui paraissent contradictoires" (M. ZANANIRI, *La controverse sur la prédestination au Ve siècle: Augustin, Cassien et la Tradition*, in P. RANSON (ed.), *Saint Augustin*, s. l. s. d., p. 260).

⁹⁹ "Et ita sunt haec quodammodo indiscrete permixta atque confusa, ut quid ex quo pendeat inter multos magna quaestione uoluatur, id est utrum quia initium bonae uoluntatis praebuerimus misereatur nostri deus, an quia deus misereatur consequamur bonae uoluntatis initium. Multi enim singula haec credentes ac iusto amplius adserentes uariis sibiue contrariis sunt erroribus inuoluti" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,11, SC 54, p. 162).

¹⁰⁰ "Haec ergo duo, id est uel gratia dei uel liberum arbitrium sibi quidem inuicem uidentur aduersa, sed utraque concordant et utraque nos pariter debere suscipere pietatis ratione colligimus, ne unum horum homini subtrahentes ecclesiasticae fidei

in some cases it is God who takes the initiative (*e. g.* the call/conversion of Matthew the tax collector [cf. Mt 9,9] or that of Saul the persecutor of Christians [cf. Ac 9,3ff]), whereas in other instances the initiative is ascribed to man (*e. g.* Zacchaeus [cf. Lk 19,2] and the robber crucified with Jesus [cf. Lk 23,40ff])¹⁰¹. Thus, sometimes God's grace intervenes to help man's free will, when the latter had taken the first move; at other times it is grace which not only inspires but even decisively acts through man's free will¹⁰², causing it to take the first step on the way to God. Good will, therefore, must not always be attributed either to God's grace or to man's free will¹⁰³. From a rationalist point of view Cassian's approach may seem confusing, in that he wants to remain faithful to the apparent contradiction of Scripture which stresses the value and role of both grace and free will without being concerned with a rationalist systematisation of their mutual relationship in terms of primacy.

Through the mouth of Chaeremon, Cassian stresses the fact that free will stands out as a demonstration of the ultimate goodness of human nature. With a certain optimism with regard to the latter, he reaffirms that man is not only responsible for the evil that he does but also for the good that he is able to choose and do¹⁰⁴. In point of fact,

regulam excessisse uideamur" (*Ibid.* 13,11 p. 163). Cf. also *Ibid.* 13,13, p. 168; 3,19, SC 42, pp. 162-163; 7,8, p. 254.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Ibid.* 13,11, SC 54, p. 163. The attempt at solving the use of these and other opposed biblical loci by explaining them through the distinction *praktiké* (*scientia actualis*) – *theoretiké* (*scientia contemplationis*) employed by Cassian in Conlatio 14 (cf. M. SPINELLI, Teologia e «Teoria» nella Conlatio De Protectione Dei di Giovanni Cassiano, in Ben. 31 [1984] 23-35) is not wholly convincing. The fact, for instance, that Cassian interpretes the *scientia actualis* and the *scientia contemplationis* as two successive stages on the way to perfection does not do justice to the interplay in human life of God's agency and man's agency.

¹⁰² Cf. CASSIAN, Conlatio 7,8, SC 42, p. 254: "Nam bonorum rerum non tantum suggestor, sed etiam fautor atque impulsor est Deus, ita ut nonnumquam nos etiam inuitos et ignorantes adtrahat ad salutem".

¹⁰³ "Nam cum uiderit nos Deus ad bonum uelle deflectere, occurrit, dirigit atque confortat: ad uocem enim clamoris tui statim ut audierit, respondebit tibi, et inuoca me, inquit, in die tribulationis: et eripiam te, et glorificabis me. Et rursus si nos nolle uel intepuisse prespexerit, adhortationes salutiferas admouet cordibus nostris, quibus uoluntas bona uel reparetur uel formetur in nobis" (*Ibid.* 13,11, SC 54, pp. 163-164). Prosper, instead, was convinced that Cassian's attempt at keeping in balance the two principles of good was a sign of contradiction (cf. PROSPER, *De gratia Dei et libero arbitrio contra Collatorem* 4,2, PL 51, c. 224).

¹⁰⁴ "Nec enim talem Deus hominem fecisse credendus est, qui nec uelit umquam nec possit bonum. Alioquin nec liberum ei permisit arbitrium, si ei tantummodo malum ut uelit et possit, bonum uero a semetipso nec uelle nec posse concessit" (CASSIAN, Conlatio 13,12, SC 54, p. 164).

the knowledge and the capability of doing good has not been irretrievably lost after Adam's fall, even though man's will has suffered infirmity¹⁰⁵ ever since and has to contend with the presence of evil, a condition unknown to Adam before his prevarication¹⁰⁶. Thus, although not incapable of choosing and doing good, the human creature has nevertheless to resist the sinful desires that pull against the spiritual ones making it more difficult to choose what is good¹⁰⁷. Surely – Cassian asserts –, we must avoid carefully the unilateral position which awards to God all the good merits done by the saints, and to man all the evil that is done¹⁰⁸.

In Cassian's eyes, therefore, the *naturae bonum* – a goodness which was not destroyed by the fall of Adam – does not only presuppose God the creator who created everything good, including man, but it is also the *conditio sine qua non* for man's moral agency through the exercise of his free will. The latter is, in fact, regarded as being integral to man's God-given nature¹⁰⁹.

Besides, continues abba Chaeremon, no one should doubt that each man possesses *naturaliter* the *uirtutum semina* which God has placed in every soul and which are 'awakened' and brought to perfection by God's own intervention (*opitulatio*)¹¹⁰. Yet man retains

¹⁰⁵ Cf. what Cassian had said about man's infirmity in *Ibid.* 3,12, SC 42, pp. 155-157 *passim*.

¹⁰⁶ "Concepit ergo Adam post praeuaricationem quam non habuerat scientiam mali, boni uero quam acceperat scientiam non amisit" (*Ibid.*, 13,12, SC 54, p. 164).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁸ "Vnde cauendum nobis est, ne ita ad dominum omnia sanctorum merita referamus, ut nihil nisi id quod malum atque peruersum est humanae adscribamus naturae" (*Ibid.* 13,12, pp. 165-166).

¹⁰⁹ In eastern theology the potentialities of free will have always been intimately linked to the goodness of creation. More particularly it is in the tradition of Origenism that human free will has been emphasised as a basic reality stemming from the "fundamental nature of the soul as a self moving agent" (G. BOSTOCK, *The Influence of Origen on Pelagius and Western Monasticism*, in W. A. BIENERT-U. KÜHNWEG [eds.], *Origeniana Septima. Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts*, Louvain, 1999, pp. 381-396, p. 387). This same belief was shared by the Pelagians for whom the goodness of the free will was connatural to the goodness of man's creation and therefore could not possibly perish through the sin of Adam: "Liberum arbitrium in omnibus esse naturaliter nec Adae peccato perire potuisse" (reported by AUGUSTINE, *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* 1,29, CSEL 60, p. 447). As Pelagius himself has written, there is a *naturalis quaedam sanctitas* in our minds which, presiding in the mind's citadel, judges the evil and the good (cf. n. 94). As it has been remarked, "the keystone of his [Pelagius] all system is the idea of unconditional free-will and responsibility" (J. N. D. KELLY, *Early Christian Doctrines*, London, 1958, p. 357).

¹¹⁰ "Dubitari ergo non potest inesse quidem omni animae naturaliter uirtutum semina beneficio creatoris inserta: sed nisi haec opitulatione dei fuerint excitata, ad

always the freedom to neglect or to love the divine grace that comes to his help¹¹¹. Moreover, occasionally (*nonnumquam*) it happens that, instead of forestalling man's will, God's grace is expecting from man some efforts in order to bestow upon him his saving protection¹¹², although human efforts do not obviously diminish the power and gratuity of grace¹¹³.

To back up all these considerations, abba Chaeremon affirms that at times temptations themselves have to be regarded as being allowed by God so that man's free will be put to the test and spurred into action. More subtly still, God's move must be interpreted as a way of preventing man's will from becoming imprisoned by idleness and laziness (*torpor*)¹¹⁴. There are scriptural instances where it can be

incrementum perfectionis non poterunt peruenire, quia secundum beatum apostolum neque qui plantat est aliquid, neque qui rigat, sed qui incrementum dat Deus" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,12, SC 54, p. 166). See also the *naturalia uirtutum semina* in *Ibid.* 23,11, SC 64, p. 154. The metaphor of the *uirtutum semina* is Stoic but its interpretation in Cassian relies upon Christian faith and revelation. In fact, although Cassian partly shares the Stoic optimism linked to the concept of *semina* and the goodness of the human nature, the latter is not a self-evident and autonomous reality, for it depends ultimately upon God and his providence. See C. TIBILETTI, *Giovanni Cassiano, cit.*, pp. 360-362; 372-373.

¹¹¹ "Et idcirco manet in homine liberum semper arbitrium, quod gratiam Dei possit uel neglegere uel amare" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,12, SC 54, p. 167).

¹¹² "Et ita semper gratia dei nostro in bonam partem cooperatur arbitrio atque in omnibus illud adiuvat, protegit ac defendit, ut nonnumquam etiam ab eo quosdam conatus bonae uoluntatis uel exigat uel expectet, ne penitus dormienti aut inerti otio dissoluto sua dona conferre uideatur" (*Ibid.* 13,13, p. 168). See also: "et gratia eius in me uacua non fuit, sed abundantius illis omnibus laboraui: non autem ego, sed gratia dei mecum. nam cum dicit laboraui, conatum proprii signat arbitrii: cum dicit non autem ego, sed gratia dei, uirtutem diuinae protectionis ostendit: cum dicit mecum, non otioso neque securo, sed laboranti ac desudanti eam cooperatam fuisse declarat" (*Ibid.* 13,13, p. 170).

¹¹³ "Quantumlibet ergo enisa fuerit humana fragilitas, futurae retributionis par esse non poterit nec ita laboribus suis diuinam imminuet gratiam, ut non semper gratuita perseueret" (*Ibid.* 13,13, p. 169).

¹¹⁴ "Occasiones quodammodo quaerens quibus humanae segnitiae torpore discusso non inrationabilis munificentiae suae largitas uideatur, dum eam sub colore cuiusdam desiderii ac laboris inperit" (*Ibid.* 13,13, p. 168). The mention of *torpor* betrays Cassian-the-monk's fear of moral ease or spiritual relaxation and of what that might imply for a monastic community. It is easy to see in Cassian's mind a possible connection between laziness and a wrongly-understood absolute dependence on grace. See also the references to *tepor*: "Tepidum nostrae uoluntatis arbitrium" (*Ibid.* 4,12, SC 42, p. 177); "Essemus itaque penitus absque remedio tepidi, utpote non habentes indicem neglegentiae nostrae..." (*Ibid.*, 4,16, p. 181); "Et ita inuenti in illo tepido statu, qui deterimus iudicatur" (*Ibid.*, 4,19, p. 183), and the verbal form *intepuisse* (*Ibid.*, 13,11, SC 54, p. 164).

clearly observed that testing and proving by God are meant for the benefit of the soul and for the prompting of the will. This is the case, for example, with Job and Abraham. Satan himself recognized that he had been defeated by the sole endurance of Job who had been deliberately abandoned by God in order to be tempted¹¹⁵. Likewise, the faith and faithfulness shown by Abraham in obeying the divine request to sacrifice his only son Isaac, was not inspired by God (who had put him to the test) but was the fruit of his own free will¹¹⁶. Temptations are therefore a test allowed by God, who occasionally steps back in order to stimulate man's free will not to feel exempted, because of divine help, from making some efforts itself. Man's capacity to endure the attacks of the devil, has a role to play on its own. It is on the role of man's free will and his ability to endure temptations in the midst of trials that lies the ultimate moral responsibility¹¹⁷, even though such a role is undertaken under the vigilant eyes of a God who, like a nursemaid (*nutrix pia atque sollicita*)¹¹⁸, never ceases to watch over man.

Furthermore, there is a variety of ways in which God's intervention occurs, either by preceeding man's free will (e. g. the vocation of Peter and Andrew [cf. Mt 4,18] and of Paul [cf. Ac 9,3ff]) or by confirming and rewarding man's efforts (e. g. Zacchaeus [cf. Lk 19,2ff] and Cornelius [cf. Ac 10]), always according to the circumstances and

¹¹⁵ "Non Dei, sed illius se euictum uiribus" (*Ibid.* 13,14, p. 170). See O. CHADWICK, *John cassian, cit.*, p. 125.

¹¹⁶ "Non enim illam fidem quam ei Dominus inspirabat, sed illam quam uocatus semel atque inluminatus a domino per libertatis arbitrium poterat exhibere, experiri uoluit diuina iustitia" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,14, SC 54, p. 171).

¹¹⁷ "Et quid eos necesse est uel temptari, quos ita infirmos nouit ac fragiles, ut nequaquam uirtute sua ualeant resistere temptatori? sed utique nec temptari eos iustitia domini permisisset, nisi parem in eis resistendi scisset inesse uirtutem, qua possent aequitatis iudicio in utroque merito uel rei uel laudabiles iudicari" (*Ibid.* 13,14, p. 172). See also *Ibid.*, p. 173. The experience of being abandoned by God's grace for the sake of testing, is also present in the well known episode of Antony's trial: cf. ATHANASIUS, *Vita Antonii* 10, SC 400, pp. 162.164.

¹¹⁸ *Conlatio* 13,14, SC 54, p. 173. A similar metaphor can be found in PSEUDO-MACARIUS, *Homilia* 27,3 (Coll. III), SC 275, pp. 320-322; Hom. 46,3 (Coll. II) (PTS, 4), p. 302. See also CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,17, SC 54, p. 179 where God's loving care for man is compared to the tender heart of a mother (*tenerrimis pia matris uisceribus* [cf. Is 49,15]). "Our author – writes Macqueen – sees God everywhere active among sinners, restraining some, pushing others forward in his merciful concern to guide them all from the jaws of hell to the gates of heaven. It is apparently difficult, on the other hand, for Cassian to conceive of sinners who would actually refuse saving grace: this is again another source of tension between his modes of thought and Augustine's" (D. J. MACQUEEN, *art. cit.*, p. 23, n. 78).

the capacities of each man and the degree of their faith¹¹⁹. This way of intervening is ultimately inscrutable, but always aims at drawing men to salvation¹²⁰.

Having dissociated himself from the opinion of those who believe that the *summa salutis* depends on man's efforts, and that grace is accorded on account of his merits¹²¹, Chaeremon insists that in some cases God considers man's good will and desires, and encourages them. In some other cases it is he himself who inspires them from the very beginning and brings them to completion¹²². In fact, not only does God exercise a direct saving action by playing his role of *protector et saluator*, but he also relates to man as *adiutor ac susceptor*, namely by confirming and rewarding man's own efforts¹²³.

¹¹⁹ "Secundum capacitatem uniuscuiusque" (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,15, SC 54, p. 175). "Secundum capacitatem humanae fidei" (*Ibid.* 13,15, p. 176).

¹²⁰ "Euidenter ostenditur inscrutabilia esse iudicia Dei et inuestigabiles vias eius, quibus ad salutem humanum adtrahit genus" (*Ibid.* 13,15, p. 174). It is very interesting to see the different way the quotation of Rom 11,33 is used by Cassian and Augustine. Cassian refers to it in a positive way to support the general principle that God's grace acts, although at times mysteriously, so as to bring all men to salvation (see also *Ibid.* 13,17, p. 178, where he speaks of the *dispensationis Dei multiplicis largitas* and of his *interminabilis pietas*). Augustine's use of Rom 11,33 in his works addressed to the monks of Hadrumetum and to those of Marseilles, has instead a negative connotation. It is employed to answer to the question of why sometimes the grace is accorded to the infants of heathen people and not to those of the believers (cf. AUGUSTINE, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 22,44, PL 44, c. 909); to back up his conviction that perseverance is not given to those who have not been chosen (cf. *ID.*, *De correptione et gratia* 8,17-19, PL 44, cc. 926-927; *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 6,11, PL 44, c. 969); to assert once again, especially about infants, that God delivers those he wants while he does not help those he does not wish to help (cf. *ID.*, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 8,16, cc. 972-973; *De dono perseverantiae* 11,25, PL 45, c. 1007; *Ibid.* 12,30, c. 1011). Cassian had also stated that it would be a grievous blasphemy (*ingens sacrilegium*) to imagine that God wills only some men to be saved and not all of them (cf. 1 Tim 2,4; CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,7, SC 54, p. 156).

¹²¹ Cf. *Ibid.* 13,16, p. 176. Although he does not mention them by name, Cassian is obviously alluding to the Pelagians.

¹²² "Nunc quidem ut impleantur ea quae utiliter a nobis desiderata perspexerit adiuuare, nunc uero etiam ipsius sancti desiderii inspirare principia et uel initium boni operis uel perseuerantiam condonare" (*Ibid.* 13,17, p. 178). See also: "Nunc quidem salutis inspirare principia et inserere unicuique bonae uoluntatis ardorem, nunc uero ipsius operationis effectum et consummationem donare uirtutum"; "Et alios quidem uolentes currentesque suscipere, alios uero nolentes resistentesque pertrahere et ad bonam cogere uoluntatem" (*Ibid.* 13,18, p. 180).

¹²³ "Inde est quod orantes non solum protectorem ac saluatorem, sed etiam adiutorem ac susceptorem dominum proclamamus. In eo enim quod prior aduocat et ignorantes nos atque inuitos adtrahit ad salutem, protector atque saluator est, in eo autem quod adnitentibus nobis opem ferre refugientesque suscipere ac munire consuevit, susceptor ac refugium nominatur" (*Ibid.* 13,17, p. 178).

This is what we can deduce from Holy Scripture about the divine economy of salvation. To believe that man can properly understand and explain the way God saves men is to pretend to know the mind of God and his impenetrable judgements¹²⁴. What must be retained, instead, as the most trustworthy reality, proved also by experience, is the fact that the God of the universe acts towards everybody as the most tender of fathers, who expresses no preferences between people¹²⁵.

Abba Chaeremon, then, concludes his conference by appealing to tradition in order to support his conclusions and by comparing them to what he claims are the definitions of the catholic Fathers about the issue of grace and free will (*hoc ab omnibus catholicis patribus definitur*)¹²⁶. These definitions are as follows: 1) it is by a gift of God that man is enlightened with the desire of good, but man's will remains entirely free either to follow it or not; 2) it is by grace that man is capable of practising virtues, and yet his free will is never annihilated; 3) once virtues have been acquired, it depends on God to give perseverance to man's engagement but his will remains free and never subdued in slavery¹²⁷.

It must not be forgotten that appealing to tradition was not an unusual move, especially in controversies¹²⁸. No doubt Cassian and

¹²⁴ "Euacuare conabitur, quisque crediderit illius inaestimabilis abyssi profunditatem humana ratione se posse metiri. Nam qui ad plenum dispensationes Dei, quibus salutem in hominibus operatur, uel mente concipere uel disserere se posse confidit, procul dubio inopugnans apostolicae sententiae ueritatem scrutabilia esse Dei iudicia et uestigabiles uias eius profana pronuntiabit audacia" (*Ibid.* 13,17, p. 179). Cassian is again alluding to Augustine against whom he employs the pauline text of Rom 11,33, that same quotation to which the bishop of Hippo had turned several times in order to justify predestination (cf. *supra*).

¹²⁵ "Et idcirco fide non dubia et ut ita dicam palpabili experientia conprobatur uniuersitatis Deum uelut piissimum patrem benignissimumque medicum secundum apostolum indifferenter omnia in omnibus operari" (*Ibid.* 13,18, p. 180).

¹²⁶ Loc. cit. Cassian had already claimed to present in his works the teaching of the Fathers by their very words ("ut ipsis quibus tradunt uerbis patrum sententiam proferamus": *ID.*, *De institutis coenobiorum* 12,13, SC 109, p. 466); the teaching of the elders ("seniorum sententia": *Ibid.* 12,14, p. 468); the genuine faith of the most ancient Fathers ("haec est antiquissimorum patrum sincera fides": *Ibid.* 12,19, p. 478).

¹²⁷ "Diuini esse muneris primum ut accendatur unusquisque ad desiderandum omne quod bonum est, sed ita ut in alterutram partem plenum sit libere uoluntatis arbitrium: itemque etiam secundum diuinae esse gratiae ut effici ualeant exercitia praedicta uirtutum, sed ita ut possibilitas non extinguatur arbitrii: tertium quoque ad Dei munera pertinere ut acquisitae uirtutis perseuerantia teneatur, sed ita ut captiuitatem libertas addicta non sentiat" (*ID.*, *Conlatio* 13,18, SC 54, p. 181).

¹²⁸ Augustine himself made use of this claim, especially in his works against Julian of Eclanum.

his followers "regarded themselves as the conservative representatives of traditional Christian theology against dangerous innovation"¹²⁹. The teaching of Augustine on predestination must have appeared to them a novel doctrine from the very start. Yet, significantly, Cassian never appeals explicitly, in *Conlatio* 13, to any authoritative voice of the Church¹³⁰. Cassian's only quotations in this conference are from Scripture, a clear sign that he never actually "succumbed to treating doctrines as hard external propositions"¹³¹.

Finally, however difficult or enigmatic it may be to understand how everything is done by God acting in us and how at the same time everything has to be attributed to man's free will¹³², we must retain that God operates everything in everybody by protecting and confirming, without taking away the freedom with which he has endowed man¹³³.

¹²⁹ O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian, cit.*, p. 119. Cassian's expression *ab omnibus catholicis patribus* reminds us of his contemporary Vincent of Lérins' criteria by which the authenticity of a doctrine ought to be defined, namely when it is taught *ubique, semper, ab omnibus*: "In ipsa item catholica ecclesia magnopere curandum est, ut id teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est" (VINCENT OF LÉRINS, *Commonitorium* 2,5, CCL 64, p. 149). See also: "Necesse est profecto omnibus deinceps catholicis, qui sese ecclesiae matris legitimos filios probare student, ut sanctae sanctorum patrum fidei inhaereant, adglutinentur, inmoriantur, profanas uero profanorum nouitates detestentur" (*Ibid.*, 33,6, pp. 194-195). Besides, we ought to remind ourselves that the question of the conciliation between grace and free will had never posed problems to the Fathers of the Church prior to Augustine. If they ever tackled the question, it was precisely out of their concern to defend the autonomy of the free will. It was with Pelagius' stress on the sufficiency of the latter that the problem of its relationship with grace was forced into the thinking process on a new ground. And it is in answering to the Pelagian standpoint that Augustine took his teaching to some extreme consequences.

¹³⁰ The only exception is a reference to the Pastor of Hermas about man's neutrality of choice between the two angels who watch over him, one good and one bad (cf. CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,12, SC 54, pp. 166-157; cf. *Pastor Hermae* 36 [Praec. 6,2], SC 53, p. 172). Prosper of Aquitaine will judge this reference as "nullius auctoritatis testimonium" (PROSPER, *Contra Collatorem* 13,6, PL 51, c. 250).

¹³¹ O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian, cit.*, p. 120. See *infra* in the Conclusion.

¹³² Cf. CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,18, SC 54, p. 181.

¹³³ "Universitatis Deus omnia in omnibus credendus est operari, ut incitet, protegat atque confirmet, non ut auferat quam semel ipse concessit arbitrii libertatem" (*loc. cit.*).

THE 'PRACTICAL' CONCERN OF *CONLATIO* 13

At the end of this short exposition of *Conlatio* 13, we might be left with a feeling of uneasiness with regard to Cassian's lack of systematic thinking and metaphysical strength¹³⁴, for his attempt to save human agency from being annihilated before the power of grace, seems to give way to some contradiction. Although he had formally stated, somehow with "emphatic delight"¹³⁵, man's absolute dependence on God's grace and his constant need for God's helping protection¹³⁶, he tries nevertheless to save a little segment of power for the will to the initiative of man in making a tiny turn of his heart in the direction of God. As we have seen, Cassian grounds this optimistic anthropological outlook on the concept of the *bonum naturae*, the goodness of human nature which, despite the consequences of Adam's fall, he does not consider – unlike Augustine – as irreparably perverted and incapable of anything good without the help of grace¹³⁷.

Despite Cassian's concern to balance the grace of God and the human agency, there remains some uncertainty as to the theoretical development of this assumption. It seems to us that that there are two reasons.

¹³⁴ The point was already made by A. HOCH, *Lehre des J. Cassianus von Natur und Gnade. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Gnadenstreites im 5. Jahrhundert*, Freiburg i. Br., 1895, pp. 109ff; A. KEMMER, *op. cit.*, p. 39. See also: "Telle est cette fameuse conférence XIII, où la multiplicité des détails, la finesse même de certaines analyses psychologiques, n'arrivent pas à masquer l'incertitude de la pensée métaphysique" (É. AMANN, *art. cit.*, c. 1808); "D'une page à l'autre, on voit l'auteur tenir des positions contradictoires, impuissant à les concilier dans une synthèse plus vaste (...). La synthèse théologique qu'il tente ici manque au moins de vigueur et de solidité" (E. PICHERY, *Jean Cassien, cit.*, pp. 149 and 151, in the footnote).

¹³⁵ O. CHADWICK, *John Cassian, cit.*, p. 126. And again: "Often it sounds [the *Conlatio* 13] more like a hymn in praise of God's grace" (*Ibid.* p. 120).

¹³⁶ Cf., for instance, CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,3, SC 54, p. 151: "Manifeste colligitur non solum actuum, uerum etiam cogitationum bonarum ex deo esse principium, qui nobis et initia sanctae uoluntatis inspirat et uirtutem atque oportunitatem eorum quae recte cupimus tribuit peragendi: omne enim datum bonum et omne donum perfectum de sursum est descendens a patre luminum, qui et incipit quae bona sunt et exsequitur et consummat in nobis". Cf. also *Ibid.* 13,6, pp. 153f. On this central point about man's dependence upon God's grace, Cassian certainly aligns with Augustine.

¹³⁷ According to Augustine, "natura sana non est" (AUGUSTINE, *De natura et gratia* 3,3, CSEL 60, p. 235) and needs to be totally renewed by grace: "Nec sane isto modo naturam siue animae siue corporis, quam Deus creauit et quae tota bona est, accusamus, sed eam dicimus propria uoluntate uitiatam sine Dei gratia non posse sanari" (ID., *De perfectione iustitiae hominis* 6,12, CSEL 42, pp. 11-12).

First of all, Cassian's preoccupation about how to avoid the polarization of Pelagianism and Augustinianism, the echo of whose controversy remains in the background¹³⁸. Rejecting the former and feeling uneasy about some excesses and rigidities of the latter, Cassian – under the influence of the eastern Christian and monastic traditions in which he was formed – seems to search for a *via media* or a synergetic solution¹³⁹. A solution where some room might be reserved for the power of man's free will, without being constrained to appeal to God's prevenient grace, and at the same time without doing away with the necessity and sovereignty of grace. To keep the balance is exactly what made it difficult to find a clear-cut definition of grace vis-à-vis free will, and what accounts for a lack of formal precision. When viewed from the perspective of Cassian's particular assumptions and goals, however, his attempt at giving reasons for the interaction of grace and moral freedom betrays no lack of *inner* logic¹⁴⁰.

This leads us to the second reason which can explain Cassian's seemingly unsteady and confusing way of presenting his thoughts. The lack of a strong metaphysical thinking in Cassian's *Conlatio* 13 must in fact be interpreted in the light of the 'practical' nature of his teaching¹⁴¹. Alongside the monks' severe education which focused on the merit of pragmatic virtues, such as obedience and humility, vigils and fasting, Cassian intends to emphasize the psychological features¹⁴²

¹³⁸ "La controverse Pélagie-Augustin est à l'arrière-plan" (A. DE VOGÜÉ, Pour comprendre Cassien, cit., p. 261). We may well believe that this same background had influenced not only the *Conlationes* – and in particular *Conlatio* 13 –, but also the *De institutis coenobiorum* – especially the chapters devoted to the energetic struggle against the eight principal vices. "There can be no doubt – it has been noted – that a deeply serious preoccupation with the controversy between Augustine and the Pelagians on the subject of the necessity of divine grace for all human endeavour towards perfection underlies the whole of the *Institutes* also, and may well have been the principal incentive in the composition of this work" (N. K. CHADWICK, *op. cit.*, p. 221).

¹³⁹ "What Cassian proposes – writes Colish – is the synergistic interaction between God and man typical of the Byzantine Church Fathers and the eastern orthodox tradition as a whole. Stoicism provides him with a way of conceptualizing the human contribution to this ethical enterprise. But it would be incorrect to suppose that he sees man as ethically autonomous" (M. L. COLISH, *op. cit.*, p. 116).

¹⁴⁰ "Admittedly, indeed, his discussion of the topic (...) is deficient in the method and precision appropriate to a formal treatise on theology. It does, however, exhibit an underlying unity and coherence" (D. J. MACQUEEN, *art. cit.*, p. 24).

¹⁴¹ "The essentially practical nature of his teaching accounts for the underlying apparent inconsistency of his theory of Free-Will and Grace, and of the absence of logic in his argument" (N. K. CHADWICK, *op. cit.*, p. 237).

¹⁴² See M. OLPHE-GALLIARD, *art. cit.*, cc. 237ff. According to J. Cl. Guy the fact that Cassian leans towards the level of a psychological description diminishes the power of his speculative thought (cf. J. CL. GUY, *Jean Cassien. Vie et doctrine*,

and the moral responsibility of their religious commitment. Rather than theological speculation, the know-hows of the journey of the soul towards perfection was the moral question his fellow monks were mostly concerned with. Cassian addresses them as an experienced master¹⁴³ and with a clear pedagogical purpose in mind: he offers the monks practical guidelines that can help them to reconcile concretely their ascetical efforts with their trust in God's grace.

Furthermore, the fact that Cassian recalls several times, in the last paragraph of *Conlatio* 13, the priority of experience (*re atque opere*) over against an excessive and sometimes vane confidence on thinking (*inani disputatione uerborum*)¹⁴⁴ seems to prove his ultimate concern. Let alone that God's grace is necessary in the struggle for man's moral perfection, the attainment of which remains ultimately a theandric phenomenon, he thinks it more important to highlight the part the monks have to play in it through ceaseless toil¹⁴⁵. To stimulate

Paris, 1961, p. 58). Tibiletti does not agree with this conclusion (cf. C. TIBILETTI, *Giovanni Cassiano*, cit., p. 369, n. 108).

¹⁴³ "Scripsit, experientia magistrante..." (GENNADIUS, *De viris inlustribus* 62, in E. Richardson (ed.), (TU, 14/1), p. 82).

¹⁴⁴ "Per quod euidenti ratione colligitur ab his qui non loquacibus uerbis, sed experientia duce uel magnitudinem gratiae uel modulum humani metiuntur arbitrii..." (CASSIAN, *Conlatio* 13,18, SC 54, pp. 179ff); "Et idcirco hoc ab omnibus catholicis patribus definitur, qui perfectionem cordis non inani disputatione uerborum, sed re atque opere didicerunt..." (Ibid. pp. 180f); "Si quid sane uersutius humana argumentatione ac ratione collectum huic sensui uidetur obsistere, uitandum magis est quam ad destructionem fidei prouocandum..." (Ibid. p. 181). Many other times Cassian speaks of experience as a constitutive part of the monastic teaching which, as he writes in the preface to the third group of *Conlationes*, comes down from "antiqua traditio et longae experientiae ... industria" (Ibid., *Praef.* [to *Conlationes* 18-24], SC 64, p. 9). Thus, about the goal of chastity: "Haec de castitatis fine, quantum potuimus, non uerbis, sed experientia magistrante digessimus" (Ibid. 12,16, SC 54, p. 145); or about the goal of cenobitic and hermitic life: "Nulli namque dubium est neminem de his uel fidelius posse uel plenius disputare quam illum, qui utramque perfectionem longo usu ac magistra experientia consecutus meritum earum ac finem ueridica potest insinuare doctrina" (Ibid. 19,7, SC 64, p. 45). Integrity, which is the gift of grace, can only be learned "experientiae magisterio" (Ibid. 12,4, SC 54, p. 125). Also how to pray can only be taught by those who have experienced in themselves the reality of prayer: "In quantum experti sumus" (Ibid. 9,31, SC 54, p. 66). Generally speaking, the "experientia cotidiana" plays an important role in the life of the monk (Ibid. 9,7, p. 48). Finally, the spiritual masters have reached a life of perfection "non uaniloqua disputatione somniantes, sed re atque experimentis" (ID. *De institutis coenobiorum* 12,15, SC 109, p. 470).

¹⁴⁵ With regard to the emphasis on the human initiatives and responsibilities in this process, a sort of "monasticisation" of Stoic ethics can indeed be detected (see C. TIBILETTI, *art. cit.*, pp. 358ff) although – and we are at pains to underline it –

them to a patient life-long effort and endeavour is the only alternative to a dangerous state of torpidity. In this sense the ethical attitude is, in fact, far more important for a monastic community, in its struggle for perfection, than metaphysical deduction, philosophical logic or polemical dialectic¹⁴⁶. Religious and ascetical experience appears indeed to be the privileged source for knowing God and divine truths far more than the intellectual knowledge. Finally, the central place and role accorded to experience emphasise further the underlying principle of monastic life shared by Cassian and which his unsystematic thought helps to make manifest, namely that spiritual life, rather than being intellectually elaborated, has to be lived out and, as it were, 'measured' *sur le terrain*. We ought not to forget that this indeed is the ground on which Cassian stands and from which, as an 'ascetic theologian', he does theology¹⁴⁷. It is on this same ground that his attempt to provide an alternative theology of grace as an echo of eastern views and as a counter to some of Augustine's, ought to be properly understood.

Noci (Bari)

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Cassian "eschews the psychic autarchy that is the main thrust of Stoic ethics" (M. L. COLISH, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116).

¹⁴⁶ "His own position owed little to cautious logic or skilful compromise in argument. His great fear was that experience would not play a sufficient part in the formulation of theological positions" (Ph. ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church...*, *cit.*, p. 231). It does not follow, however, that Cassian was an anti-intellectualist. It has rightly been written: "Point de préjugés anti-intellectualistes chez Cassien, mais une méfiance pour la spéculation, dont la logique risque de durcir toute la souplesse de l'expérience" (P. MIQUEL, *Un homme d'expérience: Cassien*, in *CCist* 30 [1968] 131-146, p. 146).

¹⁴⁷ Cassian "writes as a participant in a process of spiritual growth that is a mysterious interplay of human and divine elements. He describes rather than prescribes, teaches rather than defines" (C. STEWART, *op. cit.*, p. 78).