Christian monasticism in the West from the mid-fourth through the early sixth century: The tendency toward community

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CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM IN THE WEST FROM THE MID-FOURTH THROUGH THE EARLY SIXTH CENTURY:
THE TENDENCY TOWARD COMMUNITY

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This paper examines the development of Christian monasticism in the Western half of the Roman Empire during the late antique-early Medieval period. The underlying theme is that societies create or adapt institutions to suit their needs. This notion necessitates a brief examination of the period covered, the early fourth to the early sixth century, to determine the conditions under which monasticism developed. Next follows a section on the Eastern origins of Christian monasticism and on what needs it filled in late antique-early Medieval society. Sections III and IV cover the development of Western monasticism: its founders and its communal tendencies. The monastery became the principal religious institution of the West from at least the sixth to the twelfth century and the rise of the cathedral Church. The origins of such a powerful force in Western Civilization provide an intriguing topic for study.

Christian monasticism emerged during the late third century into a world disrupted by political, military, economic, social, and religious problems. From the fourth century onwards, various emperors attempted to revive the moribund Roman Empire. Part of the solution involved splitting it in half, into Eastern and Western districts.
Although not the intent, the effect was the creation of two distinct political and social entities; ergo monasticism developed differently in those two areas. The first Christian monks fled to the deserts of Egypt where they lived as solitaries or eremites. These "Desert Fathers" established the ideals and standards of Christian monasticism. Christians came to view the monastic life as the ideal Christian existence, and as an essential component of late antique-early Medieval religiosity.

During the fourth century, the monastic movement disseminated throughout the Roman Empire. Although Western monasticism stemmed from the Eastern origins, it was from the start cenobitical in nature. This communal nature of Western monasticism marked a critical difference and it depended upon the conditions of the late antique world.
I. THE CONDITION OF THE EMPIRE

The great variety of interpretations regarding the collapse of the Roman Empire and the emergence of the Middle Ages points to the complexity of that evolution. A general examination of those interpretations reveals three important characteristics of late antique-early Medieval society: 1) the desire to maintain the Empire; 2) the gradual Christianization of the Empire; and 3) the barbarization of the Empire. That these three characteristics affected and effected the development of Christian monasticism lies at the heart of this study. Monasticism responded to the changing conditions and needs of the late antique-early Medieval world.

Discussions regarding the decline of the Roman Empire generally begin with the political, social, economic, military, and religious problems experienced in the Empire during the third century, hence the label "Crisis of the Third Century." These problems demonstrated the existence of certain inherent weaknesses in the imperial system which ultimately led to its end. Various emperors instituted reforms in an effort to save the Empire; they accomplished the temporary abatement of decline. In The End of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages, Ferdinand Lot credited Aurelian with the restoration
of the unity of the Empire in 274, but it was with
Diocletian that significant attempts at reform began. The
most lasting and significant of Diocletian's reforms came
when he divided the Empire in half, East and West, as he
realized that it had become too large for a single emperor
to administer adequately. Later, in 293, he divided the
imperial power even further with each emperor or Augustus
taking on a lieutenant, titled caesar. In theory the
caesar was to complement and assist the Augustus in his
imperial duties, and then succeed to the imperial throne
upon the death or abdication of his Augustus. This
system, known as the Tetrarchy, did not work as Diocletian
had intended. Soon after his retirement in 305, and that
of his colleague Maximian, civil war ensued over control
of the Empire. Constantine emerged as victor and by 324
had taken control of the entire Empire. Constantine ruled
as sole emperor, but willed that upon his death, in 337,
that the Empire again be divided. Ferdinand Lot argued
that by 364 the division of the Empire into two halves had
become an imperial necessity. Only once after that year
would the entire Empire be reunited under the authority of
a single emperor; briefly from late September of 394 to
January of 395 under Theodosius.\textsuperscript{1} The two halves
gradually drifted apart, eventually becoming two distinct
political and social entities. The circumstances of this division affected Western monasticism.

Following the lead of Diocletian, the new Emperor Constantine continued to make changes in the imperial system in the attempt to salvage the Empire. Two changes he instituted stood out as being especially important to the development of Christian monasticism. First, in 313, he issued the Edict of Milan which granted religious freedom to all citizens. Second, he moved the capital of the Empire from the pagan stronghold of Rome to the new, Christian city of Constantinople. These two moves provided great impetus toward the further Christianization of the Roman Empire, as well as generating certain political changes. Constantine wanted to unify and to stabilize the Empire in his efforts to save it. He saw that an alliance between himself and Christianity provided one possible means to that end.

The Edict of Milan had the effect of legalizing the Christian Church and of bringing it into the State. Ferdinand Lot listed several cloudy gains and losses for the State and clear ones for the Church which resulted from this union. The State disarmed the hostility of a small but vocal section of subjects. The major gain came when Christianity emerged as the religion of the Empire
and as a powerful force in society from which the holders of secular power could receive assistance in temporal affairs. This gain rested upon the formation of a unified Church with a single orthodoxy, a requirement never really fulfilled but especially difficult in a period marked by numerous theological controversies. The State lost the support of many in the senatorial class who remained pagan and sought to restore the old Empire. From the early fourth to the late seventh century various secular leaders, emperors, and barbarian chiefs attempted to revive paganism or force some Christian heresy upon the people. This resulted in constant secular battles over religion.

The much clearer gains and losses to the Church from the union included the Church becoming the first institution of the State from Constantine onwards allowing it to triumph over its competitors. No longer harassed by the State, Church leaders began to develop an orthodoxy and to effectively battle heresies which Lot believed would have emerged with or without Constantine's conversion. The Church turned to the State to achieve unity, at times a loss to both when conversions were forced. Such converts rarely made good citizens. By entering the State the Church became worldly necessitating
some code of public and private law. Lot noted that such
da law existed, Roman law, the most perfect ever known.
The Church adopted Roman law, adapting it to fit its own
needs. The Church lost flexibility as it quickly became
intolerant and persecuting trying to achieve unity. Also,
the Church now had to submit to the State, relinquishing
certain freedoms as the secular powers used the Church as
a power base and as a means to achieve conformity. The
major loss of the Church was spiritual. By becoming a
majority, at times through forced conversions, the moral
level of Christians declined. This became the primary
factor in the development of Christian monasticism. The
legalization of Christianity by Constantine held important
consequences for the evolution of late antique-early
Medieval society.²

Constantine hoped that moving the capital to the new
city of Constantinople would enable him to assert greater
control over the new force of Christianity he had adopted.
In Constantinople he could avoid conflict with the pagan
senators who remained important politically.
Significantly, Rome eventually became a stronghold of
Christianity in the West when those senators converted
along with the Empire. With the imperial power
transferred to another city the bishop of Rome had no
serious challenger to religious supremacy in the city. The emergence of a theological controversy around 318 quickly dashed the hopes of Constantine for the unifying force of the Church. Theological controversies had previously emerged among Christians, but during the periods of the persecutions their main concern centered upon survival. Now, brought into and protected by the State, Church leaders could concentrate upon forming an orthodoxy. One churchman living in Alexandria, named Arius, questioned the divinity of Christ which resulted in the Arian heresy. To squelch the blooming controversy Constantine called for an ecumenical council which met at Nicaea in 325, setting the important precedent of imperial involvement in theological interpretation. Approximately 220 bishops, almost all Greek, attended the Council which issued the "Nicene Creed" that dominated theological controversies for several centuries.

That bishops attended the Council points to an important development within the growing Church structure. Bishops emerged as important spiritual and secular figures in late antique society. The growth in spiritual as well as secular authority in bishops took place simultaneously and was self-reinforcing. In The Early Church, Henry Chadwick wrote that when varying interpretations over the
Bible arose after the apostolic age, the question of authority emerged as the central issue. Ignatius of Antioch argued for the local bishops as the focus of unity in the Church as they stood as God's representatives on earth. Then Church leaders in Rome raised the idea of bishops as apostolic successors which enabled them to know the truth. Roman conceptions of authority also played a major role in the rise of the bishop.

The general Roman populace viewed the exercise of supreme secular authority as something to be feared. They could not approach the emperor directly, preferring instead to seek the aid of intermediaries — oftentimes a senator. The bishops assumed the role of intermediary for their flock in spiritual and secular affairs due to their pastoral responsibilities. By 300 the bishops existed in most towns. During the last part of the fourth century, Christianity became the majority religion of the Empire. The town remained the foundation of the Empire, now with bishops acting as the leading citizens. People expected their bishop to act as advocate in their secular interests as well as in their spiritual ones. Henry Chadwick noted that the episcopate offered a career to many not driven solely by spiritual reasons. During the course of the fourth century the episcopacy became an
avenue of great power. The Church had captured society, and the bishop had captured the Church.

The rise of episcopal authority in spiritual and secular affairs became especially important in the West. As the influence of imperial authority waned, the bishop emerged as an even more powerful figure. The bishop worked with, and sometimes against, secular authorities for political along with spiritual and religious reasons. The Eastern bishops remained under tighter control of the emperor which helped in the development of a split between the Eastern and Western Church. In *The Early Church*, Chadwick noted that the manner in which the Church defeated the Arian heresy ensured that tension between East and West would continue after the controversy ended. The controversy moved quickly from purely theological questions to questions of order, discipline, and authority. The Western bishops resisted the strong imperial involvement and resented the dominance of the Eastern bishops in the affair.  

The difference between East and West stemmed in part from their conflicting views on society. Henry Chadwick argued that the Byzantine world did not see itself as two societies -- sacred and secular -- whereas the Western world tended to do so. In the East the result was the
acceptance of imperial involvement in Church affairs, such as in the Arian controversy. The more dualistic Western theory could produce ecclesiastical domination over lay society so Western bishops tended to combat imperial involvement in Church doctrinal affairs. Western bishops became embroiled in the various secular problems of the late antique-early Medieval period. Examples include St. Ambrose of Milan and St. Martin of Tours who sought to influence imperial decisions. In the West the secular authorities did play a major role in Church decisions, for example with the Merovingians. But the difference in world perception helped to create the East-West split, ensured by the handling of the Arian controversy.

Henry Chadwick described the Arian controversy in three stages after Nicaea: 1) to the death of Constantine in 337; 2) from the accession of Constantine's sons to the death of Constantius II in 361; and 3) from the accession of Julian to the suppression of Arianism under Theodosius I in 381. While Constantine remained alive, the Nicene Creed stood as the main criterion of true faith. Afterwards, the Arian leadership gained the support of two sympathetic emperors, Constantius II (337-361) and Valens (364-378). They exiled several bishops who continued to support the Nicene orthodoxy. Pope Julius (337-352)
welcomed two of them, Athanasius of Alexandria and Marcellus of Ancyra, to communion in Rome resulting in conflict with the emperor and the Eastern bishops. The conflict continued until Theodosius called an ecumenical council to Constantinople in 381. They reaffirmed the Nicene Creed, effectively ending the Arian controversy within the Empire. No one from Rome attended. The final solution to the controversy was an Eastern one. The tension between East and West in matters of theology and authority remained. The question over matters of episcopal authority enhanced the growing East-West political division. Western monasticism developed in response to the different religious and spiritual conditions in the West.

Another East-West division stemmed from the lack of a distinct Latin theology. The great thinkers of the early Christian era had been primarily Eastern. This raised questions regarding the stature of the Western bishops relative to the Eastern bishops. The final solution regarding the Arian heresy helped to demonstrate the lack of Latin involvement in such matters as Greeks or Easterners dominated in the debates. Henry Chadwick noted that gradually during the second half of the fourth century Western theologians began to acquire greater
self-confidence. This was partly due to the efforts of Pope Damasus who stressed the importance of Rome's Peter and Paul, and hence the notion of Petrine supremacy. Western scholars emerged who could claim equality with anyone in the East, and who criticized the Eastern tradition. St. Jerome involved himself in many of the theological questions of his day, and translated the Bible into Latin. The task of forming a specifically Latin or Western theology fell upon St. Augustine of Hippo, the greatest of the Western Church Fathers. With the development of a Western theology and the growing self-confidence of Westerners the gulf between East and West widened.

The barbarian migrations of the late fourth and fifth centuries further complicated the problems of the Roman Empire. Politically, the Empire had again been divided into East and West after the death of Constantine, each half with an emperor. As the Roman authority declined in the West, barbarians came to prevail. Eventually the Western emperor was replaced by Germanic kings, effectively ending the existence of the Roman Empire in the West.

The Empire had already experienced problems with various barbarian tribes and had solved them in part by
settling some in the Empire as Federates. But in 376 the Huns began to move driving the Germanic Ostrogoths further into the Empire and into armed conflict with the Roman army. A major battle took place near Adrianople in 378 where the Roman army suffered defeat and a Roman emperor was killed. From then on the Eastern and Western provinces found themselves open to attack and plunder. Eventually the Eastern provinces learned to turn the barbarians away, often through bribery. The barbarians generally turned west in their search for food, land, and security.

Unable to buy the barbarians off, the Western emperor brought some of them into the imperial service to defend the Empire -- a move which resulted in the barbarization of the army. In The Barbarian West, J. M. Wallace-Hadrill argued that this also resulted in the transferal of all effective power from the emperors to the barbarian chiefs. The Vandal Stilicho provides an excellent example of this Western development. He came to power in 395, upon the death of the Emperor Theodosius, claiming that the Emperor had asked him to supervise his sons, Arcadius in the East and Honorius in the West. Stilicho achieved good success in defending the Western half of the Empire from his fellow barbarians, but he eventually
fell prey to governmental problems and the jealousy of Honorius who had him executed in 408.  

Problems in the West mounted throughout the fifth century with usurpers, ineffective emperors, and continued barbarian invasions. In 476 a barbarian chief named Odoacer took control of the Western half of the Empire informing the Eastern emperor that he need not send a replacement for the recently deceased Western emperor. Odoacer intended to establish himself as sole master in the West, nominally acknowledging the Eastern emperor as his superior. Ferdinand Lot considered this action as marking the end of the Roman Empire in the West. In the sixth century the Emperor Justinian attempted to reunite the Empire through conquest. His attempt failed, and resulted in the creation of even greater problems for the West. Even if one disagrees with Lot's assessment, the events of 476 demonstrated that the West had become quite distinct from the East. 

The emperor in the East, and many leaders in the West, resented Odoacer's brash usurpation of power and sought to displace him. In 475 the Ostrogoths had been united under Theodoric who had been raised in Constantinople and had come to appreciate the advantages of the Roman traditions. In 488 the emperor sent
Theodoric, with the official title of magister militum, against Odoacer. By 493, Theodoric had defeated Odoacer and had taken control of Italy. Theodoric's title legitimated his rule in Italy as residents saw him as the emperor's representative. Nominally a Roman official, Theodoric had established an Ostrogothic kingdom and ruled as their king. Other Germanic tribes had moved into the regions, some establishing kingdoms. There were Burgundians, Alemanni, and Franks in Gaul; Visigoths in Southern Gaul and in Spain; and Vandals in Northern Africa. The Western half of the Roman Empire had become barbarized.

The barbarization of the West held several important consequences for the future of Christian monasticism there. As the influence of the barbarians within the Empire had grown, the imperial had waned. John Matthews argued that with the decline in imperial authority the traditional upper classes increased their influence and acted as guarantors of the maintenance of Roman traditions in the West, so threatened by the barbarian invasions. These members of the senatorial class dominated the Western Church and Western monasticism transmitting their traditions to Western Christianity. As imperial power eclipsed in the West the Church offered one of the few
avenues left for these men to maintain their traditions of authority. With the decline in the civil authority in the West the bishop tended to become an increasingly important figure in secular as well as spiritual matters. The monastic movement, dominated by the bishops and the senatorial class, became an important tool in the solving of religious problems in the West.

The barbarians brought with them serious religious problems. Some had remained pagan so the bishops sought to convert them to Christianity. The major religious problem, however, involved those barbarians who had already converted. A Goth named Ufílas brought Christianity to his tribe making them the first Germanic people to convert to Christianity. From them, Christianity spread to most of the other Germanic tribes who had settled in the West. Problems arose because Ufílas had propagated the Arian brand of Christianity causing difficulties — political and religious — with the catholic Christians. The catholic Church used every means possible to eradicate the Arian heresy among the barbarians, a process still not complete by the late sixth century. One means used was the Christian monk in the West who played an important role in the conversion of the West to Christianity. The assistance of the monastic
movement in conversion also applied to the Romans in the West who had remained pagan. The problems of conversion meant a greater sense of unity between the organized Church and the ascetic movement in the West than in the East where Christian monasticism originated.

From the late third century onward the Roman Empire had begun to split into East and West. The Roman emperors attempted to salvage the Empire; in the East they succeeded but in the West they failed. The West gradually became Christianized and barbarized, eventually evolving into a distinct political and social entity. The senatorial class there tried to maintain its Roman traditions, in part through the traditional means of authority and in part by taking control of the Christian Church. The religious problems of the West created an alliance between the organized Church and the growing force of monasticism. Western monasticism developed in response to the conditions of the West. Now an explanation of Christian monasticism in general, and its Eastern origins in specific, is necessary to show how monasticism was altered upon its transmittal to the West.
II. "EVERYTHING" for 'NOTHING':

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM

Christian monasticism originated in the Egyptian deserts during the late third century, spread rapidly through the Roman Empire during the fourth and fifth centuries, and became one of the most potent societal forces in the late antique–early Medieval world. The word "monk" stemmed from the Greek "monos" meaning alone or solitary, signifying the eremitic beginnings of the movement. 16

The essence of the monastic life involved withdrawal from this world, a life of asceticism and devout prayer, with the ultimate end being the monk's salvation and quest for and knowledge of God. 17 Since the early days of the Christian Church some members had practiced, and many revered, the ascetical life within a Christian community. The notion of "flight from the world" distinguished the monastic movement from the earlier ascetics of Christianity. At first the flight referred to a literal flight to the desert to escape civilization. Later, due to cultural and societal changes, the phrase took on the figurative sense of flight from earthly cares even within the Christian's home. The "flight to the desert" became internalized, a development critical in the development of 19
monasticism in the West. People drew the monk back into society, a permissible destination only if his flight could be an internal one.

Students of monasticism disagree over which one of two individuals correctly deserves the title of "First Christian Monk," St. Paul the Hermit or St. Antony, also spelled Anthony. The more important title of "Father of Christian Monasticism" goes to St. Antony (251-356) as he provided the ideals of and the standards for the Christian monk. Taking literally the words of Christ: "If you will be perfect go, sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me..." Antony, in 271, fled society to the deserts of Egypt. A bishop of Alexandria named Athanasius, also a leading opponent of the Arian heresy, recorded the life of St. Antony in a famous hagiography. The Life of St. Antony helped to establish the hagiographical standards of the late antique-early Medieval world, and placed Antony in his exalted position by making his life so famous. Many other young, devout Christians followed Antony's example of flight to the desert resulting in what David Knowles in Christian Monasticism identified as the Golden Age of the Desert Fathers, running roughly from 330 to 440. In the first half of the fourth century monasticism became an important
aspect of Eastern religiosity and spirituality. The events of the time period indicate various reasons for the rise and the triumph of the monastic movement in the moribund Roman Empire.

By issuing the Edict of Milan the Emperor Constantine had, in effect, legalized the Christian Church and had brought it into the State. This move generated certain positive and negative results for the Church. The major loss was spiritual. During the periods of persecution only very sincere and devout people remained Christian. When the emperor legalized the Church, many less concerned people entered the Church leading to a decline in the quality and a general decline in the spirituality of Christians. Also, by becoming part of the State the Church became tainted by things secular and distracted from its spiritual duties. Many Christians expressed their disdain and disappointment for these developments by fleeing to the desert, away from the organized Church, and becoming monks. The belief developed that the monk had returned to a more pure and true Christian existence. They led a life of poverty, denied themselves the pleasures of this world concentrating on God, and separated spiritual from secular.

Peter Anson, in *The Call of the Desert*, noted that
not all who fled to the desert did so for such high spiritual reasons. Monks, exempt from military service and taxation, escaped many of the Empire's growing problems of defense and economic woes. Also, with the attempted formation of an orthodoxy, for reasons of unity, the State gradually began to force uniformity. Some heretics fled to the desert to avoid persecution. For example, some desert monks were accused of following certain heretical teachings of Origen. Still, most of the Desert Fathers accepted the orthodox doctrines and had taken up the ascetic calling for deep spiritual reasons.

Many came to regard the monastic life as the ideal Christian existence and the monk as a very special person. In *The Early Church*, Henry Chadwick alluded to the importance of special persons in Christianity when he cited Tertullian. He wrote that the Church had been built on the blood of the martyrs.\(^{20}\) This points out that the success of Christianity was due in large part to special people who had sacrificed their lives for their faith. With the end of the persecutions came the end of the age of martyrs. The notion of needing a group of special people, however, remained strong in Christianity. The monk filled that need. The ascetic sacrificed all earthly pleasures in the cause of his or her spirituality. Though
not literally dead, the monk entered upon a mystical death by his flight from the world. In *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, Jean Leclercq noted how crucial the idea of mystical death was to monasticism for with the mystical death the monk anticipated the life to come.\(^\text{21}\)

By such sacrifices, the desert monks were highly revered by Christians of the late antique-early Medieval period. Very few people can or will make such sacrifices for their religious beliefs. The human tendency to admire someone for doing what most cannot heightened the prestige of the ascetics. As the monastic movement developed, people began associating these special people with miraculous events.

The mystical death of the monks and their ability to perform miracles resulted in their inclusion into the "Cult of the Saints." Late antique-early Medieval piety associated the graves of saints with miraculous events. The performance of a miracle, a gift from God, provided people with a link between heaven and earth.\(^\text{22}\) The saint, holy man, and monk tended to coalesce into a component of the general monastic movement. The ability of certain ascetics to perform miracles heightened the prestige and impact of the monastic movement. Examples of these early miracles include water springing suddenly from the dry
desert. Or a young monk who watered a dead branch, to demonstrate his obedience, for a year and having the branch bear bud. Stories flourished about holy men who shared their food with vicious beasts, with those same beasts protecting and following the commands of the desert monks. Another common activity for these very pious ascetics involved their battling demons sent against the most holy by the devil. In each case, the monks possessed a special nature for reasons that went beyond their having replaced the earlier martyr.

One reason that this special nature of the monk became so important to the monastic movement stemmed from the Roman notions of authority which had assisted in the rise of the bishops. Peter Brown and Henry Chadwick noted that Roman Christians transferred their perceptions of secular authority to the heavens. Just as the emperor was all powerful on earth, so God in heaven was even more powerful and all-knowing, a celestial emperor. The average Roman citizen feared such authority and dared not address its possessor directly, leading to the need for intercessors. Just as the bishop and civil servant served as the intercessor of the people with the emperor, the monk served as intercessor with God because of the monk's special nature.
Peter Brown wrote, in *The World of Late Antiquity*, that the "appeal and significance of the asceticism that swept the Roman world in the fourth century lies precisely in this: it was a grouping of self-styled 'displaced persons', [sic] who claimed to have started life afresh." As misfits in their societies monks gained *parrhesia*, freedom to speak before the celestial emperor, God. The monk sought to know God through prayer so people asked the monk to pray for them too. Also, the ability to perform miracles showed that the saint stood closer to God than the average Christian. A saint could act as one's intercessor with God in spiritual and temporal matters. The monk, as a special person, filled an important need in late antique-early Medieval society.

The special nature of the monk assisted in the transition from polytheism to monotheism, a transition hampered by conditions in late antique-early Medieval society. Accustomed to polytheism, the people of that society -- barbarian and Roman -- found the switch to monotheism difficult. In *The Cult of the Saints*, Peter Brown looked to David Hume to help explain the problems involved in the transition. In his essay *The Natural History of Religion*, Hume argued that humans were, by nature, polytheistic due to the intellectual limitations
of the average mind. The move to monotheism required trained intellectuals with the time to form a coherent, rational view of the world. Vulgar societies lacked these intellectuals trained to think in abstract terms, Hume argued, and could not conceive of a single God. The barbarians fit Hume's definition of a vulgar society; they lacked the tools to move from polytheism to monotheism.²⁶

Such trained intellectuals did exist within the Roman Empire, however the confused condition of the period hampered their efforts to promote the worship of a single deity. Brown pointed out that the late antique individual had long believed in the existence of invisible companions or spirits.²⁷ In Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety, E. R. Dodds showed the importance of demons or spirits to late antique men, pagan and Christian. They believed that these demons functioned as mediators between the human and the divine.²⁸

In this world of demons, spirits, and multi-gods the special person, able to perform miracles, filled an important need in the conversion to monotheism. The vulgar could view the saints as semi-divine because they performed miracles. The saints allowed the vulgar to see God active on earth. The monk fit into the sphere of spirits and could act as mediator between heaven and
earth. The bishops and intellectuals could accept the saint through whom God performed miracles. The rise of the monk, that special Christian, helped to bridge the gap from the traditional polytheism of the Romans and the barbarians to Christian monotheism.

The triumph of Christian monasticism rested upon the fame of the Desert Fathers, spread orally by travellers and through a variety of written records. The written records appeared in two basic forms. One form, the *Apophthegmata Patrum* or "Sayings of the Fathers," came from travellers and young ascetics who sought the advice of the Desert Fathers. They recorded the wise words uttered by the desert ascetics to assist others in learning of the monastic life. The multitudinous Lives of the Saints, the hagiographies, comprised the second major means of spreading the fame of monks in writing. The early Eastern writings maintained the eremitical or solitary life as the monastic ideal which St. Antony had established by his flight to the desert in 271. In *The Call of the Desert*, Peter Anson credited the *Life of St. Antony* with playing a major role in the dissemination of knowledge about eremitical monasticism throughout the Roman Empire. The eremitical movement, once established, spread rapidly through the Eastern half of the Empire.
Within a century of the issuance of the Edict of Milan the monastic life, based on the Egyptian model, had become an integral aspect of the Christian culture.\(^{29}\)

Peter Anson dealt primarily with the solitary life in monastic culture but did note the beginnings of cenobitism in the East, what he termed the semi-solitary life. One aspect of this tendency involved groupings of hermits in an area, often around some great master. For example, around 305 Antony organized a colony of hermits in Pispir who had flocked to him in order to learn how to live the monastic life. This became a fairly common element in the monasticism of the desert. Still, the ideal remained the eremite as the monks often lived as hermits, separate from each other even though they resided in the same general area. Also, the ultimate goal of the monks, after having learned from a master, was to seek solitude for themselves.

Out of this activity there naturally evolved monastic communities. Pachomius, sometimes viewed as the founder of cenobitic monasticism, and St. Basil established monastic communities believing that the solitary life often tended toward excesses. Pachomius stressed the notion of obedience for the monks. He urged them to abandon their self-will so that they might give their will
entirely to God. St. Basil stressed the Christian idea of charity, a virtue more easily practiced by a cenobite than by an eremite. While Basil criticized the eremitical life, in the East it remained the ideal. Peter Anson regarded the communities of Pachomius as essentially eremitical although they did represent a movement toward cenobitism. Each group had its own abbot, usually a famous ascetic. He did provide for a monk who desired to leave the community in the quest for solitude. In the East, even with the nascent cenobitic aspects, the monastic ideal and goal remained the eremitical life.

In concluding his chapter on "The First Christian Solitaries" Anson wrote:

What was common to all this primitive monastic life in the deserts was that the ascetics, filled with the idea of striving after perfection, were convinced that forsaking 'everything' involved flight to a place where there would be 'nothing', [sic] i.e. the wilderness. This complete abandonment of 'everything' for 'nothing' should be regarded as the source of Christian monasticism, and indeed, of the religious life in general.

The fame and renown of these holy men spread throughout the Roman Empire leading to the triumph of Christian monasticism. Seeking a higher spirituality than the secularized Christian Church could offer, the ascetic fled society only to be drawn back into society to fill certain
religious needs. The monk replaced the martyr in Christian thought performing miracles by God's grace. Standing closer to God, the monk could act as intercessor between the people and the celestial emperor. The saint, as a special person, made the conversion to monotheism easier for traditionally polytheistic people. Whether in the East or West, the monk continued trying to flee society. Drawn back into society, the monk's flight often became internalized. This trend was especially important in the West where the monastic movement became an integral part of Western civilization.
III. THE TRANSMITTAL OF CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM FROM EAST TO WEST

The development of Christian monasticism in the West differed from that of the East. It did not depend so heavily upon one individual as it had in the East upon St. Antony. In concluding his book *Monks and Civilization*, Jean Décarreaux wrote that Western monasticism developed rather haphazardly and as the result of numerous initiatives. Western monasticism did stem from and always remained dependent upon the Desert Fathers. Unlike the monasticism of the Eastern deserts, Western monasticism was firmly tied to the organized Church from the start. Western monasteries were often located in or near cities, necessitating the internalization of the monastic flight. Finally, many Western monastic leaders stressed the importance of education for monks, a further distinction from the East. These characteristics stemmed largely from unique conditions in the West and impelled Western monasticism toward cenobitism.

Just as in the East, some very devout Western Christians practiced a life of asceticism before the monastic movement became entrenched in Christian spirituality and religiousity. The introduction of the monastic ideals there altered the direction of Western
asceticism. The fame of the Desert Fathers spread to the West as it had in the East, by word of mouth and through written records. As stories about the feats of the desert holy men disseminated through the West, converted later than the East, Christians there began to desire holy men of their own. In Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, Philip Rousseau believed that four individuals in particular deserved credit for altering Western asceticism during the fourth century: Athanasius, Peter, Jerome, and Rufinus. Each had lived in or visited the Eastern deserts, learned of the holy men, and carried their knowledge to the West.

Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, chief defender of the Christian orthodoxy against the Arian heresy and author of the Life of St. Antony, had the greatest impact of the four. Exiled by the eastern emperor in 329 for his anti-Arian stands, Athanasius journeyed to Rome bringing the ascetic ideals of Antony which he transmitted to the ascetic movement already there. In 373 Peter, successor of Athanasius in Alexandria, also journeyed to Rome with further information on Eastern monastic developments. In 382 Jerome arrived in Rome bringing his perceptions of the ascetic life to Westerners; and in 397 Rufinus returned to the West after having spent many years in the deserts of
Egypt and Syria.  

Two other key figures added to the importance of the Desert Fathers to Western monasticism: Hilary of Poitiers in the fourth century, and John Cassian in the early fifth century. Both had lived in the East and had accepted the ideals of the desert holy men as the proper ideals for Christian monasticism, Eastern and Western. Both moved to the West where they propagated the teachings of the Desert Fathers. For example, John Cassian provided much of the information known today about Eastern asceticism. Each of these six men, along with others less notable, helped to disseminate the stories and ideals of the Desert Fathers in the West generating the desire there in some to have their own holy men and in others to be monks.

The most popular of the early Western monks was St. Martin of Tours (316-397). Sulpicius Severus wrote the Life of St. Martin, providing the West with its own great ascetic, equal to St. Antony. Sulpicius held that Martin demonstrated a special nature even before he had converted; after conversion Martin performed numerous miracles which spread his fame. Born to a military family, Martin entered the imperial army but realized that he must leave to do God's work. Attempting to leave the army presented a rather difficult task, but thanks to a
miracle Martin acquired his freedom. Obviously, to Sulpicius, God wanted Martin out so he could do His work. An admirer of Hilary of Poitiers, then a bishop in Gaul, Martin journeyed to the West to become a monk, settling near Tours, in Gaul. As a result of his ability to perform miracles and of his leading such a pious life, Martin became a very popular figure. The people of Tours desired Martin as their bishop. At first Martin resisted for becoming a bishop would draw him back into the world, distracting him from his monastic pursuits. Yet Martin could not deny the wishes and needs of his fellow Christians. He finally accepted ordination as bishop of Tours. Martin remained a monk and continued his monastic orientation at his monastery near Tours at Marmoutier. Jean Décarreaux noted that Martin's example became infectious as many Westerners followed his lead. Martin stood out as the first great, specifically Western, holy man who could claim equality (or so Sulpicius suggests) with the Desert Fathers.

St. Martin as bishop indicates an important distinction of Western monasticism: its alliance with the organized Church. None of the Desert Fathers entered the episcopacy. The first desert monks had fled what they viewed as a corrupted Church, corrupted by its affiliation
with the State after the Edict of Milan. Gradually, Eastern bishops brought the Eastern ascetic movement back into the Church, but monasticism there never became as influential as it became in the West. The circumstances in the West led bishops to seek greater control of and to become involved in the growing monastic movement.

As the conditions of the West continued to deteriorate through the fourth century, the bishop became an increasingly important figure in spiritual and secular matters. The traditional civic leaders began to flee to the country during the late antique period leaving a power vacuum in the cities, the power base of the bishop. With the ever mounting problems of barbarian invasions, a barbarized military, economic collapse, and political disruption, civic responsibilities had become too great a burden. Bishops, spiritual leaders and guardians of their flocks, inherited added responsibilities taking on civic duties. This stemmed in part from the established perceptions of authority of the time. The people needed intercessors with the emperor and his officers. In The World of Late Antiquity, Peter Brown stressed the importance of the rise of the bishops in the West, men usually from the upper class. This class, long accustomed to power and authority, logically sought to control the
increasingly potent force of Christianity, accomplished in part by becoming bishops. Brown held that these bishops stood as heirs of the Roman Senate.\textsuperscript{38} By moving the imperial capital to Constantinople, Constantine began a process of diminishing imperial authority in the West. John Matthews showed how the senatorial class increased its authority as imperial authority waned in the West. The Western bishops likewise benefitted from the diminishing imperial authority which allowed them a freer hand in their activities to increase their authority.

In \textit{The Cult of the Saints}, Peter Brown showed how these Western bishops sought to control the cult of the saints which had replaced the martyrs.\textsuperscript{39} The bishops realized the potential power and importance of the saints and the ascetic movement, and sought to tie individual saints to their church. To do so they often buried the relics of a saint in their church grounds and built a monastery around the relics. John Matthews provided the example of St. Ambrose who discovered the remains of the martyred saints Gervasius and Protasius. He had them buried in his church at Milan, thus increasing his and Milan's prestige.\textsuperscript{40} In Tours, the bishops and the people treasured the bones of St. Martin. Rome honored the saints Peter and Paul.
Western monasteries, therefore, were often located near or in cities, an important difference from the Eastern origins of Christian monasticism. Antony had fled the city. In order to better control the monastic movement, Western bishops preferred that monasteries be established close to them. Eusebius built a monastery in Vercelli, St. Augustine in Hippo, and John Cassian near Marseilles. Because of the alliance between the organized Church and the monastic movement in the West, the essential monastic flight had to be internalized. Drawn back to the city by the bishops, the Western monk developed an inner sense of solitude. The Western bishops did not seek to control the monastic movement simply to increase their authority. They harnessed the cult of the saints and monasticism to deal with the unique conditions of the West.

Philip Rousseau argued that, in addition to bringing the monastic ideals of Antony, the arrival of Athanasius in the West marked the beginning of a specifically Western Arian conflict. The Eastern debate over Arianism centered primarily upon theology, but in the West it affected the structure and organization of the Church. In *The Barbarian West*, J. M. Wallace-Hadrill expressed the belief that the full doctrine of the Trinity lay at the heart of
Western Christianity. The barbarians threatened not merely the life of the Empire, they also threatened the existence of catholic Christianity due to their conversion to Arianism and by their maintenance of paganism. The bishops, generally of the upper class, wished to protect their Roman traditions and, more importantly, to protect their new religion. They turned to every means possible to secure the victory of their faith. The monastic movement provided a strong force to combat heresy as well as the lingering paganism of the Western half of the Empire. In Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, John Matthews wrote that conversion in the West generally depended upon the conversion of the upper class of an area with the local people following suit. The monastic movement provided the bishops with a powerful means of converting pagans and heretics to catholic Christianity.

Philip Rousseau looked to Bishop Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315-c. 367) to provide one example of the link between the bishops and the ascetics. Rousseau argued that Hilary's experiences in the East led him to ponder the diminished virtue of the Church leading him to question the proper relationship between himself as bishop and the civil authority. The Eastern ascetics provided him with a new source of authority which he harnessed to the politics
of the Church in the West producing a new program of pastoral organization and government.\textsuperscript{44} John Matthews also pointed to Hilary as a bishop very active in the attempt to convert aristocrats in the Western half of the Empire knowing that the rest of the populace would follow.\textsuperscript{45}

The \textit{Life of St. Martin} by Sulpicius Severus provided more specific examples of the bishop-monk link generating conversion to Christianity. Martin destroyed several pagan idols through performing some miracle causing the people of the area to convert to Christianity. In one case, Martin performed a miracle in the exorcism of a serf of an aristocrat pagan named Tetradius. The performance of this miracle caused the aristocrat to convert to Martin's faith.\textsuperscript{46} As a bishop Martin propagated his faith among the people of Gaul; as a monk Martin enjoyed a higher prestige making the job of conversion easier.

The link between the episcopacy and monasticism had a long life. In 410 Honoratus founded a monastery at Lérins which became a sort of training ground for bishops in Gaul. Augustine established a monastery in Hippo; St. Ambrose acted as a patron for several monasteries around Milan. Later, during the sixth century, Gregory of Tours lived as a monk-bishop. For him the ability to perform miracles became a sign of orthodoxy and a useful tool in
converting heretics and the remaining pagans in his area. In 590 Gregory the Great began his pontificate making him the first monk-pope. By allying themselves with the cult of the saints, and hence monasticism, bishops provided themselves with a new source of authority enabling them to perform their pastoral duties better. By keeping the monastic movement within the Church they maintained the orthodoxy of the ascetics whose prestige helped the bishops strengthen catholic Christianity in the West. It was mutually beneficial.

The barbarian migrations and settlements continued the gradual decrease in imperial authority in the West. The bishops continued to fill the expanding power vacuum. The Arian and pagan barbarians also presented a threat to the Christian orthodoxy. The presence of the barbarians in the West caused the Roman people there to band together more than in the East; this sense of common need and identity helped to maintain the strong alliance between the monastic movement and the organized Church. Eventually, being Christian and being Roman became synonymous terms. By maintaining orthodox Christianity, the senatorial bishops also protected their Roman traditions against the barbarization of the Empire.

Because Western monasticism had been harnessed to
episcopal needs there, education played a more prominent role than in the East. The Desert Fathers had discounted the need for education as it distracted them from their prayer. They had stressed extreme asceticism instead, such as fasting for forty days or loading oneself down with so many chains that movement became almost impossible. One sat on a pillar for thirty years; others sat in tiny huts in which they could not stand and only barely move. In the West, the leaders of the ascetic movement discouraged such extreme acts of self-denial.

Because the development of Western monasticism became tied to the theological and organizational makeup of the Church, monks needed to be educated to avoid error. Also, the senatorial class dominated the Western monastic movement, a class with a long tradition of education. They tended to carry this tradition to their cells, often combining Christian and pagan learning. Examples in this characteristic included St. Jerome, St. Augustine, Paulinus of Nola, and John Cassian. Each of these monastic figures possessed a good education and encouraged their followers to educate themselves.

These general characteristics dominated the formation of Western monasticism upon its transference from East to West. The ties to the Desert Fathers, the alliance with
the organized Church, the internalization of the monastic flight, and the stress on education. Not every individual initiative in Western monasticism contained each characteristic. There were degrees, variations, even deviations from the theme, yet the following lives demonstrate the general rule.

Paulinus of Nola, who belonged to the first enthusiastic wave of Christian monasticism in the West, provides a good example. Born to a senatorial family around 355 in the province of Aquitaine in Gaul, the early years of his life typified that of his fellow aristocrats. He received his education at Bordeaux according to the standards of the time, and then held several secular offices including the governorship of Campania in 381. Gradually Paulinus converted to Christianity, which for him meant simultaneous conversion to the monastic life. In 394 Paulinus received ordination as a priest and in 395 moved permanently to Nola where he led a life of monastic asceticism. Sometime between 404 and 415 he rose to become the bishop of Nola, and died in 431. Paulinus, never a leading monastic figure, looked to men such as Sulpicius Severus, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Martin, and St. Ambrose for his understanding of the monastic life. Although Paulinus believed that by his conversion
he had rejected his former world, Joseph Lienhard, in his biography of Paulinus, demonstrated that his lifestyle retained the old Roman traditions. Paulinus continued to correspond with his old acquaintances while turning his learning efforts to Scripture. His understanding of the monastic life originated in the religious fervor which stemmed from the examples of the Desert Fathers, but Paulinus stood firmly in the Western monastic tradition. He came from a senatorial family, combined the monastic with the clerical life, and sought to know Scripture to make himself a better Christian.\textsuperscript{47}

St. Jerome (347-419), who lived earlier than Paulinus, ranks as one of the Great Church Fathers. He lived as a monk and strongly advocated the monastic life as the ideal Christian existence, shown in part by his convincing various noble women to become ascetics. Although he did spend much of his life in the East, Jerome always remained a Westerner so his views on Church and spiritual matters stemmed from his Western background. For a time Jerome believed that the monastic and clerical life must remain separate as the first involved flight from the world and the latter demanded involvement in the secular world. By 394 Jerome had changed his opinion and believed that the two lives could indeed be combined.
Jerome, an individual very much interested in theological affairs, could not accept non-involvement in certain aspects of the secular life. For him the ascetic life had become completely identified with, or absorbed into, the public life of the Church. At one time in his life as a monk, Jerome attempted to reject all pagan learning but failed miserably to do so. He realized the importance of education for Christians so that error could be avoided. The Desert Fathers greatly influenced Jerome's views on asceticism, as they did all Western monks; but Jerome wrote in Latin and always maintained a distinct Western mentality. Jerome's understanding of the monastic life stemmed from the traditions of the desert, and he accepted the combination of the clerical and monastic life, and the need for education.

St. Augustine of Hippo stood out as the greatest of the Church Fathers in the West. He made several contributions to the development of Western monasticism. In Christian Monasticism, David Knowles wrote that after his conversion Augustine "adopted a monastic form of life for himself and his companions as if it were the natural result of a serious conversion, and when bishop he gathered his clergy round him in a quasi-monastic group." Philip Rousseau argued that Augustine's account
of his conversion made two aspects of Western Christianity clear. First, Western monasticism was dominated by the senatorial class, a class used to ruling. Second, the West had begun to develop its own body of religious literature. 51

Augustine, as a bishop, could no longer lead the monastic life of separation from the world. Yet, by establishing a monastery in Hippo, he maintained an alliance between the episcopacy and monasticism. Augustine encouraged his monks at Hippo to learn, as indicated by his Life written by St. Possidius, Bishop of Calama, and disciple of Augustine. 52 Augustine combated heresy with learning. As a bishop, concerned with error in interpretation which he saw around him, he wanted Christians to be educated. Through familiarity with the growing body of Latin religious literature, monks could avoid error.

Augustine's conversion rested largely upon the teachings of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan from 374 to 397, an ascetic though not a monk. Ambrose possessed fairly extensive authority in the spiritual and secular spheres as he advised and stood up to emperors in his position of bishop of an important city. In Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism, Joseph Lienhard discussed the
views of Ambrose upon monasticism, a movement which Ambrose supported. Lienhard based his observations upon some letters written by Ambrose, particularly one written in 396 to the Church at Vercelli. The Bishop Eusebius had brought monasticism to that Church combining the clerical and the monastic lives, a move approved of by Ambrose. Ambrose also encouraged the foundation of a monastery in Milan; and he encouraged reading for monks. The bishop Ambrose supported the alliance of the monastic movement with the organized Church.

John Cassian, the final example of these Western monastic leaders, perhaps best exemplifies the future of Western monasticism. Cassian (c. 360–c. 433) laid much of the groundwork for Benedict of Nursia who ultimately provided the West with its Rule for Monks. It can be viewed as the fruition of the development of Christian monasticism in the West. Born in Dobrudja, modern Romania and Bulgaria, most of Cassian's life before his arrival in Gaul in 415 remains a mystery. As many other young men of his time who contemplated the life of a religious, Cassian went to the Eastern deserts to learn from the Desert Fathers. The events surrounding his move to the West remain unclear, but it involved a controversy regarding certain teachings of Origen which some had found
heretical.

When Cassian arrived in Gaul the Bishop Castor of Apt, forty miles north of Marseilles, asked him to establish a monastery. Cassian expressed his views on the monastic life in two works, the Institutes and the Conferences, written in the West and, more importantly, for the West. Although he did not compose a Rule for monks, these two works served a similar purpose by instructing young monks on how they should live. Cassian appealed to the traditions of the Desert Fathers, but adapted those traditions to fit the circumstances of the West. Cassian stressed the importance of a good education for monks, as he expected his monks to be literate. He continued his theological interests in Church affairs debating with Augustine over the issue of the Free Will of man and Augustine's ideas of predestination. Archdeacon Leo, later pope, asked Cassian to become a champion of orthodoxy against the Nestorian heresy, and he complied. While basing his monastic views upon Eastern traditions, Cassian did not shirk involvement with the organized Church. He believed that monks, as Christians, should possess a thorough knowledge of Scripture in order to avoid error.

While the development of Western monasticism remained
heavily dependent upon Eastern traditions, it also remained quite distinct. From the start the Western monastic movement and the organized Church, led by the bishop, had created an alliance whereas the first monks in the East had fled the Church. The Western senatorial class dominated the Church and the monastic movement infusing its Roman traditions to both. An educated class, and a class used to power and authority, these men caused Western monasticism to develop in its own distinct way. By seeking to control the monastic movement, the Western bishops brought the monk back into society. Located in or near cities, monks had to internalize their flight. In the East, cenobitic monasticism had only gradually evolved. The circumstances in the West, combined, meant that Western monasticism, from the start, would be cenobitic.
IV. THE TENDENCY TOWARD COMMUNITY

Some examples of eremitical asceticism did exist in the Christian West but they were short lived, rare, and generally discouraged. In *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism*, Joseph Lienhard deftly presented Paulinus, a cenobite, as a typical example of the Western ascetic. Lienhard wrote:

If one can speak at all of a transition in the West from the eremite life to the cenobitic, it was both swift and natural. There are no great figures in the West to correspond to Antony and Pachomius in Egypt. When monasticism became known in the West, it became known in all its forms. Martin, and probably Eusebius, began as solitary monks but soon attracted followers. Paulinus, in contrast, lived from the beginning in cenobitic style. 57

Soon after the establishment of the monastic ideal in the West in the second half of the fourth century, the community had become the accepted norm. The reasons behind this were multifarious; at times interrelated, at times not. Westerners adapted the desert traditions to fit the conditions and needs of the West.

Lienhard began his study of Western monasticism with a philological examination of the words "monachus" and "monasterium." These two Latin words stemmed from Greek referring to the eremitical and cenobitical forms of monasticism. Lienhard concluded that when the two words were transcribed into Latin for the first time, c. 370,
they likewise carried both meanings. Lienhard argued that the use of these terms, and hence the understanding and popularity of monasticism, was fairly widespread by the late fourth century in the West.  

In *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, Philip Rousseau attributed the transition in monasticism from primarily eremitical to cenobitical largely upon developing notions of authority in the late antique period. Peter Anson referred to the beginnings of this transition as the semi-solitary life which began soon after Antony had organized a band of hermits at Pispir around 305. A notion of master-disciple developed where a young man, or group of young men, seeking to lead the life of a religious sought out a Desert Father from whom they would learn how to be a monk.

Rousseau identified three stages in the development of the master-disciple relationship. First, questioners would come to the master to simply ask for guidance with no sense of permanence. Next, more detailed questions were asked requiring longer association with a Father. Finally, a young monk would find a mentor with whom he resided for an extended period of time, sometimes until the death of the master. The sayings and advice of the holy men came to be highly revered and consequently
written down either in the form of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (the "Sayings of the Fathers") or in the various Lives of the Saints. This involved a move from an oral to a written culture, made easier by a belief that the old masters of the desert were dead. By the end of the fourth century monastic leaders thought of themselves as disciples, dependent upon the knowledge of the Desert Fathers for their teaching. 60

The Desert Fathers had often been viewed as apostles; now dead, their followers were to carry on their teachings. 61 This notion of needing to learn, if only indirectly, from the Desert Fathers journeyed to the West as part of the general transmittance of the monastic ideals from East to West. Hence the importance of the many Western monastic leaders who had lived and learned in the Eastern deserts. The young, aspiring religious was expected to learn how to become a monk, a task best accomplished in a communal setting. One teacher, familiar with the desert traditions, could watch over, guide, and instruct several novices. This tradition stands as one of the two forms of monastic "education" prevalent in the West.

The monastery of St. Martin and his *Life* written by Sulpicius Severus exemplify this monastic tradition of
education in the West. Joseph Lienhard suggested that when Martin came to the West he first lived as a solitary but soon found himself surrounded by disciples. In Martin's Life Sulpicius made several references to disciples of the great saint, the author including himself in that category. Scholars generally agree that Sulpicius did not intend Martin's Life as an historical account but as a hagiography to establish Martin as a holy man equal to the Desert Fathers, especially Antony. Martin's teachings were transmitted to later generations of ascetics in their education on how to live as a monk through his Life. The Dialogues, in which Sulpicius continued his story of Martin, further this example as a group of monks gathered round to hear stories of the blessed Martin. The education of monks based upon the teachings of a master (this time a specifically Western one) was best accomplished in a communal setting.

Joseph Lienhard placed Paulinus of Nola within the tradition of appeal to authority. Paulinus was part of a group of ascetics caught up in the appeal of the monastic ideal recently transferred from East to West, but when he appealed to authorities they were primarily Western. He took the initiative to establish a correspondence with several of the important churchmen of his day including
Jerome, Augustine, Sulpicius, and Ambrose. Paulinus asked Jerome for advice on how to lead a proper monastic life; true to his temperament, Jerome responded.

Jerome stood out as a leading monastic figure for the West even though he resided in the East. He strongly advocated the monastic vocation. Lienhard wrote that in Jerome's response he admonished Paulinus to seek Christ in solitude, but that Paulinus remained a cenobite. Philip Rousseau showed that although Jerome advocated the solitary life for a while, ultimately he did push for cenobitism in monasticism and became much involved in Church affairs. He later turned to the belief in cenobitism as necessary; as the only guarantee of experienced instruction on the proper way to lead the monastic life. While the Eastern ideal of the eremitical life was transferred to the West, the cenobitic life quickly became dominant.

John Cassian emerged as the best example of the transference of the Eastern notion of authority to the West where he adapted it to meet Western needs as he saw them. Asked by Bishop Castor for advice on how to found a monastery, Cassian responded with two books. He designed the Institutes and the Conferences for beginning monks in the West, based upon his desert experience. The
Institutes described the basic organization of the monastic life; the Conferences detailed the supposed discourses presented by desert monks on how to properly lead the life of a monk. This involved the appeal to the authority of the Desert Fathers which Philip Rousseau stressed so strongly in Ascetics, Authority, and the Church. Owen Chadwick and Philip Rousseau agreed that while Cassian in theory accepted the Eastern view of the superiority of the eremite, in reality he advocated the communal life. Only perfect men, first schooled in the community, should go to the desert, but no Christian could conceive of himself as perfect. The Golden Age of the Desert Fathers was viewed as historical and traditional; with the great hermits gone, no one could achieve their level of piety alone. 64

Cassian viewed the instability of Western monasticism, due to the numerous initiatives, with some anxiety. While the Western tendency was toward cenobitism, it was also marked by great diversity as no single rule dominated there. Cassian believed that Westerners had misinterpreted the Eastern eremitical form of life due to their ignorance on the subject and because they looked to solitude for its own sake, refusing to submit themselves to the judgment of others. He saw a
general lack of spiritual strength in the West requiring a cenobitic setting where monks could be instructed in the arts of Being a monk based upon Eastern traditions, and where they could be carefully watched. Seeing the problems of the West, he linked authority and community. In the preface to the Institutes, Cassian promised to modify the Egyptian customs for the West "because of the harshness of the climate, or because of differing customs and the resulting obstacles, I have judged to be impossible in this part of the world, or at least burdensome and laborious." Cassian wanted Western monks to follow the tenets of the Desert Fathers, but in a manner suitable to Western needs, i.e. in a community. John Cassian's reference to climate points to certain, purely pragmatic, reasons for the Western tendency toward cenobitic monasticism. In the warm Eastern deserts the solitary holy man could survive on a fairly small amount of food and could easily provide himself with a sufficient diet. In the harsher climate of the West, a monk required more food than the desert monk; more food than a solitary could generally provide. In the Dialogues of Sulpicius Severus the character Postumianus recounted details of his recent trip to the Eastern deserts. Several times Postumianus noted how little food
the desert monks consumed, and how gluttonous the Gauls appeared in comparison. Gallus, a listener along with Sulpicius, acknowledged the comparative weakness of the Gauls but pointed out that due to the climate one simply required more food. Group labor to produce sufficient diet was necessary in the West for the survival of the monk.

The Western monks grouped together for survival in response to another Western circumstance -- instability. In the Eastern deserts the solitary ascetic escaped the problems of the moribund Roman Empire, particularly the barbarian migrations. The barbarians began their migrations largely in search of food and so were not drawn to the barren desert. Few people occupied the desert regions for similar reasons so the holy men there had little need for self-defense against things worldly. A rather different situation existed in the West where the barbarians roamed frequently in search of food and land. Growing political instability marked the West as imperial power waned and local means of defense grew. Logic dictated that Western monks band together for reasons of defense. Furthermore, by their very nature humans seek stability and security. The monastery provided one arena of stability for the religious in an increasingly chaotic
world. For practical reasons of survival, Western monasticism developed in the cenobitic manner. Still, religious and spiritual conditions in the West had a greater impact on the development of Western monasticism and its cenobitic tendencies.

The domination of the Western brand of Christianity by the noble class emerged as a crucial element in the religious development of the West. Newly converted Christians, they remained Roman in tradition, custom, and education. Consciously or unconsciously they maintained, or at least tried to maintain, their Roman traditions long after the Empire had ceased to exist as a political entity. In Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, John Matthews demonstrated how association with one's peers remained important to men of the late antique period. Joseph Lienhard related that even though Paulinus of Nola believed that he had severed all ties with his past upon conversion, Paulinus continued his old Roman ways. One example of this was the continued correspondence of Paulinus with his old friends, often through letters. Philip Rousseau noted that Jerome had difficulties following his precepts of flight from this world. He continued to desire the companionship of others, leading Jerome to favor the cenobitic lifestyle for monks. The
importance of friendship to men who maintained the traditions of Rome guided these new converts toward the cenobitic form of monasticism.

The Roman tradition of education helped direct Western monasticism toward community. When the Roman senatorial class became involved in the organization of the Christian Church in the West, they retained their desire for learning. The emphasis on education stood out as an important feature of the Western monastic tradition. Joseph Lienhard argued that Paulinus of Nola replaced with the Bible the pagan literature which he believed he had rejected upon his conversion. He had rejected pagan letters but remained true to his Roman background which stressed education; Paulinus remained a man of letters. Leading figures who forwarded the notion of education in Western monasticism include Jerome, Augustine, and John Cassian. Each became involved in the crucial theological controversies of his time requiring an extensive understanding of Christian philosophy. Philip Rousseau noted that Jerome advocated the cenobitic life partly for purposes of instruction. Augustine emerged from the pages of his Life by Possidius as a bishop very concerned that his flock -- which included his monks -- know the correct interpretation of the Scripture.
John Cassian provides the best example of this Western tendency which led to cenobitism. Cassian insisted that his monks study Scripture and understand it. He also believed that monks should read the authorities on Scripture and on the monastic life so they could avoid error. He held that in order to be a good Christian one had to understand Christianity. The community provided the best means to educate monks, first because a communal setting provided a better setting for education than a solitary life. Books could be copied, shared, and discussed. Second, in a community the master, or abbot, could check error in the monk's interpretation of Scripture and the monastic life — a task impossible when an ascetic lived in solitude.

One example of the impact of Cassian's stress on education can be seen in the work of his disciple Faustus. An abbot of Lerins, and later bishop of Riez, Faustus was the ablest and most highly educated of Cassian's disciples. He continued Cassian's attack on Augustine's notion of predestination. A more lasting example of Cassian's influence emerged in the pages of the Rule of St. Benedict which became the dominant monastic rule for Western monasticism. Benedict advocated the idea of an educated monk through reading. One author he recommended
was John Cassian. The notion of the need for monastic education stemmed largely from Roman tradition. The upper class was an educated one, and it came to dominate the development of Western monasticism. This tradition led to cenobitic monasticism as education was best accomplished in a communal setting.

It should be noted that the stress on educated monks was a general tendency, not a steadfast rule. Here, St. Martin of Tours stands as a good example. Although the Life of St. Martin indicated that Martin did possess some degree of familiarity with the Bible, no evidence emerged to suggest that Martin stood as a strong advocate of learning for his disciples. However, the Life itself did stand as a part of the general trend in Western monasticism toward education. Sulpicius intended that the Life should be read and that Martin stand as an example for Western ascetics, equal to any desert monk. The Life stands as an example of both types of education prevalent in Western monasticism. One, a religious had to learn how to properly live the monastic life. Two, only a schooled, literate person could read the Life and thus spread the wealth of Martin. The community provided the most effective and efficient means to accomplish these two forms of monastic education. The senatorial class, which
dominated the development of Western monasticism, transferred its tradition of education to that development and hence furthered the Western tendency toward cenobitism.

In the West, the ascetic life was adopted by men still tied to former friends and the Roman tradition of education. They were men still in pursuit of influence and power, with strong notions of responsibility. The Western tendency to combine the monastic and the clerical life evidenced this. The bishop became a leading secular as well as religious figure during the late antique-early Medieval period, possessing great secular authority and responsibility. Bishops such as Ambrose, Martin, and Rémi stood as advisors to kings and emperors; people expected their bishop to shelter, feed, and clothe them. Generally, though not exclusively, these bishops came from the upper class, a class use to wielding authority. Recognizing the power of the cult of the saints, these men sought to control the cult which included the control of the monastic movement in the West. Their success was in part demonstrated by the tendency of the Western monastery to be located near a city. The power base of the bishop was the city; if they could keep the monks close to them they could better control the movement. They found it
much easier to control a community of monks than a solitary who could move from place to place. The community provided a sense of stability, a sense considered very important by these bishops in such an unstable time.75

Ofttimes, the bishop led the life of a monk as well as the life of a cleric. Examples include Martin and Honoratus; in fact Lérins became a sort of school for bishops during the course of the fifth century. These monk-bishops could not lead the solitary life due to their priestly duties. Instead they founded communities of monks in their bishoprics. Jerome provided a good example of the transition in the Western mentality from the strict separation of the monastic and the clerical life, to the acceptance of the combining of the two. The Roman aristocrats, use to a life of power, drawn to the episcopal and monastic life, found the cenobitic form of monasticism best suited to fulfill their needs. With the community they could enhance their authority and could lead the monastic life.

Along with these old Roman notions of authority came certain notions of responsibility. Philip Rousseau suggested that the early Desert Fathers developed a sense of social responsibility. Rousseau went on to note how
St. Basil had advocated the cenobite over the eremite because the cenobite was better able to provide charity to the people. Rufinus transmitted this belief to the West in the mid-fourth century. Just how widespread Basil's ideas became in the West, Rousseau did not detail, but they did exist there. The belief in responsibility combined with the Roman tradition of the upper class being much involved in the religion of the Empire. The newly converted Western aristocrats, who dominated Western monasticism, maintained their belief that they had certain religiously oriented responsibilities to the public. The involvement of monks in things temporal was made easier by the internalization of the holy man's flight to the desert.

With the growing popularity of the holy man, the monks found it increasingly difficult to flee society. Monasticism had become an essential aspect of late antique-early Medieval piety. In *Monks and Civilization*, Jean Décarreaux noted a paradox in Christian monasticism: the monastic ideal was flight, yet the renown of the holy man pulled him back into the world. The control of the monastic movement by the Western bishops caused the location of monasteries in or near cities. The growing sense of monastic responsibility led the monk toward
involvement in temporal affairs. Thus, the monastic flight had to be internalized in the West.

The monastery emerged as the principal religious institution in the West. The conditions of that region led to the early development of cenobitic monasticism. The people expected the monks to pray for them, and the monks (generally from the senatorial class) accepted this responsibility. Due to the Eastern roots of the Western monastic movement, and its alliance with the organized Church, most Western monastic leaders stressed education for monks. First, they had to learn how to be monks. Second, they needed to acquire a knowledge of Christian literature in order to avoid error. The Roman aristocracy, which dominated Christianity in the West, brought its traditions into the monastic movement: education, a sense of social responsibility, and the exercise of authority. The cenobitic monastery was better suited to the religious needs of the time.

In his Rule for Monks, St. Benedict incorporated the various trends which resulted in the triumph of cenobitic monasticism in the West. His Rule gradually came to dominate monasticism in the West demonstrating how well it suited the needs and desires there. In Chapter One of the Rule, Benedict wrote that four types of monks existed:
cenobites, anchorites, sarabaites, and the gyratory monks. He held the cenobites up as the best kind of monk. Another interesting point he made was that the anchorite had to be schooled in a monastic community. From this point, Benedict went on to describe how to organize such a monastic community. His monks needed to be aware of and respect the Desert Fathers and saints; they must support themselves and brethren through manual labor. Benedict expected monks to read and to understand Scripture. He showed an awareness of differing climatic conditions which necessitated differing monastic lifestyles. Although he did not believe that the monastic and priestly lifestyles need be combined, he accepted it if necessary. He accepted the authority of the local bishop over the monastery. Benedict also believed that monks had a responsibility to the community as Christians.

Benedict modified some of the Western trends to make them more suitable to Western conditions. The great strength of Benedict's Rule was its flexibility. That Benedict's Rule did not become the rule for the West until the eighth century could be viewed as meaning that the Rule did not fit the needs of Western society in the late antique-early Medieval period; that it triumphed only when certain changes had occurred in the West making the Rule
suitable. Charlemagne, for example, did seek a single monastic rule in his search for stability in his realm. Yet, given the general disruption of the period covered, it would have been remarkable had a single rule spread rapidly throughout the West. Assessing the conditions of the West, Benedict decided that the monastic community was best suited for that region and so wrote a rule for cenobites. Incorporating all the Western monastic trends, Benedict's Rule triumphed precisely because those trends led toward cenobitic monasticism.
ENDNOTES


2. Ibid., pp. 40-54.


4. Ibid., pp. 41-42.


7. The Early Church, pp. 131-151.

8. Ibid., pp. 165-166.


10. Ibid., pp. 213-216.


13. Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, pp. 257-282.


15. Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, pp. 256-257.


18. Ibid., p. 125.


20. The Early Church, p. 29.


25. The World of Late Antiquity, pp. 98-103; The Early Church, p. 174.


27. Ibid., p. 53.


30. Ibid., pp. 15-17, 28.

31. Ibid., p. 30.


38. *The World of Late Antiquity*, pp. 130, 134.


40. *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, p. 189.

41. *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, p. 83.

42. *The Barbarian West*, p. 23.

43. *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, p. 156.

44. *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, pp. 83-86.


48. Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, pp. 103, 111, 122, 126, 127-128.

49. The Early Church, p. 214.


51. Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, p. 93.

52. The Western Fathers, Life of St. Augustine.

53. Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism, pp. 86-93.

54. John Cassian, p. 35.

55. Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, p. 169.


57. Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism, pp. 5, 107.

58. Ibid., pp. 60-66, 81.


60. Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, pp. 35-37, 71.


62. Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism, pp. 101-104.

63. Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, p. 122 and Part Three.

64. John Cassian, pp. 37-42, 51, 53-54; Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, pp. 177-182.

65. Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, pp. 183-187.
66. The Western Fathers, Dialogues, pp. 73, 77-78.

67. Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism, p. 110.

68. Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, p. 256.

69. Ibid., p. 85.

70. Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism, pp. 130-133.

71. Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, p. 122.

72. John Cassian, p. 149.

73. Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, p. 94; The World of Late Antiquity, p. 130.

74. Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism, p. 107.

75. The Barbarian West, p. 29.

76. Ascetics, Authority, and the Church, pp. 41, 82.

77. Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, pp. 362-375.

78. Monks and Civilization, p. 28.

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