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Hermits: The Juridical Implications of Canon 603

by

Helen Louise MACDONALD

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Canon Law, Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Canon Law.



Helen Louise MacDonald, Ottawa, Canada, 1990



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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Helen Louise MacDonald was born in Montreal, Quebec, and was educated by the Congregation of Notre Dame. She followed post-secondary studies at the University of Montreal (B.Sc.) and Concordia University at Montreal (B.A.).

In 1982 she received the M.Div. and the S.T.B. degrees from the University of Toronto (Regis College), and earned the Master's and Licentiate degrees in Canon Law at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, in 1984.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.A.S.	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
Acta synodalia	Acta synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II
Apparando	Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando
CIC	Codex iuris canonici
Comm.	Communicationes
MANSI	Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio
PG	Patrologia graeca (Migne)
PL	Patrologia latina (Migne)

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages Christians have viewed the solitary life with a certain wonder and reverence; as one writer noted, it is "a life so abnormal that those who have watched it from without have not only been interested in its eccentricity, but also strongly attracted by its spiritual mystery."¹ Most Christians tend to associate hermits with the Desert Fathers or medieval recluses. Many believe that the solitary way of life passed from the Christian Church along with pardoners, almoners and the other colorful figures so common in the late Middle Ages. Even Church legislators believed so, for although the eremitical life is the origin and model for the consecrated life of the Church, the 1917 Code implicitly excluded hermits from the religious life by defining it as one lived "in common" (c. 487). Their exclusion from the Code brought about a reaction from the surprised hermits who, while they might have been an endangered species, were not, as had been widely supposed, extinct.

The Eastern Church, on the other hand, has always known hermits and thus has retained the ancient legislation regarding the eremitical life; these hermits base their life-style on the teachings and practices of the Desert Fathers. The Council Fathers at Vatican II, in Lumen gentium, no. 43, Perfectae caritatis, no. 1b, and Ad

¹ R.M. CLAY, The Hermits and Anchorites of England, The Antiquary's Books, London, Methuen, [1914], p. xv.

gentes, no. 18, acknowledged and affirmed this ancient form of consecrated life. In fact, in addressing the formation of Christian communities in mission countries, the Council Fathers emphasized the importance of allowing the contemplative life to take root, not only that of the traditional monastic orders, but also the "more simple forms of early monasticism",² for "the contemplative life belongs to the fullness of the Church's presence."³ Reflecting these views of Vatican II, the 1983 Code includes the eremitical life as a form of consecrated life (c. 603). This is the first time that the eremitical state has been formally defined in a legislative text.

The fact that Canon 603 is a new canon in the Latin Church poses a number of juridical questions. What is the relevance of this canon to the life of the Church? What are its juridical implications, if any, for the local church? What are the duties and obligations of the diocesan bishop to those who express a desire to follow this form of consecrated life? What are their obligations to the bishop? What are the juridical consequences of profession in the

² CONCILIIUM VATICANUM II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, Ad gentes divinitus, 7 December 1965, in Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 58 (1966), pp. 947-990. English translation in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-conciliar Documents, ed. A.M. FLANNERY, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1975, p. 834.

³ FLANNERY, p. 835.

eremitical state? How does one enter or leave the eremitical state? Is there stability in this state? What is the nature of the rule of life? This dissertation will attempt to answer these questions by addressing the canonical aspects of the eremitical state. Since there have been no recent major studies done on the canonical interpretation of this subject, it was decided to do a historical examination of the eremitical life, from the fourth century through the Middle Ages, up until the present promulgation of the new canon on hermits.

Taking the words of the Gospel to heart, and influenced both by the pagan asceticism they saw around them and the heroism of the early martyrs, a small number of early Christians began to follow a more intense life of prayer and penance. We shall begin, in the first chapter, by looking at these first Christian ascetics, the various factors which led them to make a radical break with their immediate society in the fourth century, and, in large numbers, to move out into the desert wastelands. To the hallmarks of the ascetic life, the practice of constant prayer and penance, was added the single-minded search for God in solitude. This movement became known as monasticism with its two forms: the eremitical (hermit) and the cenobitical (community). Both spread to the West where they have been practiced for centuries.

In the West, the solitary life reached a peak in the

late medieval period, and the second chapter will focus on some of the diocesan legislation concerning hermits and recluses in this period. England was chosen as the area of concentration because, unlike the continental solitaries, the English hermits and recluses usually lived alone, directly under the aegis of the diocesan Bishop. As we shall see, the diocesan statutes reveal the problems encountered by the Church in overseeing the solitaries in the diocese, as well as the responsibilities taken on by the bishop in medieval times. This chapter will also study the lifestyles of hermits and anchorites in terms of their separation from the world, financial support and the forms of prayer and penance they practiced.

The third chapter will study the preparation of the new norms. We shall examine the definition of religious life in the 1917 Code with its basic premise that hermits no longer existed in the twentieth century. The results of this assumption in the period following the promulgation of the Code, which drew attention to the continuing existence of the eremitical life in the Church, will be explored. The preparation of the documents of Vatican II, which described the religious life as a charismatic state rather than a purely canonical one, reveals the reasons why the Church could once again praise and affirm this ancient form of religious life. The positive response of the Code Commis-

sion in preparing the new canon to reflect these documents is also documented. Unfortunately, the full discussions, which led to different changes in the proposed canon, have not yet been published in full. Thus, we know what the changes were but not the reasons for making them.

In the fourth chapter we shall examine the canon itself and its practical applications; its description of the eremitical state, and the requirements necessary for entrance, formation, and profession. The obligations and rights of the hermit, as well as the means of separation from the eremitical state, whether voluntary or involuntary, will also be studied. Since each hermit must have a rule of life before profession, we shall also consider the ways and means whereby each hermit lives out a personal response to the eremitical call.

CHAPTER I

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EREMITICAL LIFE IN THE CHURCH

The monastic movement was introduced¹ into the Church at the beginning of the fourth century; by the late sixth century the movement had spread throughout the East and into the West. It is believed that the movement had its roots both in the idea of Christian asceticism, which was a response to the Gospel, and in the idea of the martyr as the personification of the "ideal" Christian. The rise of the movement coincided with the end of the age of martyrs and the commencement of the triumph of the Church, a fact which considerably influenced its development. The hermits (or monks) of the fourth century grew out of an earlier group, the ascetics.

To study the development of the eremitical life in the Church, we shall examine three factors: asceticism as a Christian value, the origins of the monastic movement in the Eastern Church and, finally, the growth of the movement in

¹ For an introduction to the origins of the monastic movement in the East, see the following: D.J. CHITTY, The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire, Oxford, Blackwell, 1966; G.M. COLOMBAS, El monacato primitivo, Biblioteca de autores cristianos, vol. 351, Madrid, Editorial catolica, 1974; K. HEUSSE, Der Ursprung des Mönchtums, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1936; G. TURBESSI, Ascetismo e monachesimo prebenedettino, Universale studium, vol. 78, Rome, Editrice Studium, 1961.

the West. This will enable us to set a base upon which to study the practice of the eremitical life in the West, as well as its values and canonical consequences.

I. ASCETICISM AS A CHRISTIAN VALUE

Christian asceticism consisted of two elements; a negative one of renunciation, and a positive one of the practice of virtue. Renunciation meant living a life of poverty and chastity, while subduing the passions with fasting and bodily mortifications. The most powerful influence on the development of Christian asceticism was that of the persecutions, which produced the understanding of the martyr as the "ideal" Christian.

A. The Effects of Persecution

The word "martyr" originally meant "witness".² In the early Church the word was applied to all those (especially the Apostles) who actually had witnessed the life, death and resurrection of the Lord. From "testifying or giving witness for the Lord" and suffering for giving that witness, it was a short step to associating the two ideas; a "martyr" then became a "suffering witness", and to suffer persecution became a sign of "faithful witness." The Church was persecuted for a short time by the Jewish brethren and,

² See W.H.C. FRIEND, Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church, Oxford, Blackwell, 1965, pp. 87-90.

for a much longer period, by the Romans.

1. Jewish persecution

From the beginning, the Christians were opposed both by Jewish nationalism and by Jewish orthodoxy. Among the Jewish groupings having influence in Palestine at that time were the Sadducees, drawn from the wealthy upper class and representing the Jewish nationalist element within it,³ and the Pharisees, representing "the religious leadership of the mass of the Palestinian people."⁴ Both perceived Christianity to be a serious threat which had to be opposed. The main issue between Jew and Christian concerned the proof from Scripture that Jesus was the Messiah. The Jews could

³ See J. LE MOYNE, Les Sadducéens, Paris, J. Gabalda, 1972, p. 163; S. SANDMEL, Judaism and Christian Beginnings, New York, Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 156-158; E. SCHURER, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135), trans., rev., and ed. by G. Vermes and F. Millar, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, vol. 2, 1979, pp. 404-414; G.F. MOORE, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era; The Age of the Tannaim, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, vol. 1, 1950, p. 66-67. W.H.C. Frend believes that the Sadducees were so interested in maintaining the purity and survival of Judaism that they "were prepared to sacrifice an inconvenient individual if he appeared to endanger what they believed to be its true interests". See W.H.C. FREND, The Rise of Christianity, London, Darton, Longman and Dodd, 1986, p.23.

⁴ FREND, The Rise of Christianity, p. 23. Frend goes on to say the Pharisees believed that observing and understanding of the Law was the object of human existence. See ibid., p. 24. It was Pharisaism which developed into Rabbinic Judaism after the revolt, when authority shifted from the Sanhedrin to the scholars. See SANDMEL, Judaism, pp. 158-162; SCHURER, History of the Jewish People, pp. 388-403; MOORE, Judaism in the First Centuries, pp. 56-71.

accept a suffering Prophet Messiah but never one who had died as a criminal on a cross. Orthodox Judaism responded quickly with persecution to the blasphemous Christian claim that Jesus was God.

The murder of Stephen (Acts 6:8-8:3) caused many Christians to flee Jerusalem and find refuge in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). They took their new ideas with them. In A.D. 49, an agreement at the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15), "gave the missionary movement of the nascent faith a fresh impetus and extended it beyond the territories of its inception and initial growth, beyond Palestine, Syria, Arabia, Cilicia and Asia Minor."⁵ The Council agreed that the Mosaic laws concerning circumcision and the dietary laws were not to be applied to the Gentile converts. As the Christians grew further away from practice of Mosaic Law, they ceased to be considered Jews. By A.D. 100, Christianity "was beginning to emerge as a distinct religion within the general cultural framework of Hellenistic Judaism."⁶ Jewish antagonism continued but Church and Synagogue eventually parted ways.

⁵ S. MARROW, Paul: His Letters and His Theology, New York, Paulist Press, 1986, p. 84.

⁶ FREND, The Rise of Christianity, p. 137.

2. Roman persecution

The Romans believed that the old religions were responsible for the steady expansion of their empire and feared that challenging their gods would court national disaster. The earliest Christians, in keeping with their status as Jews, were exempt from the state religion, and from military service (some duties of which were connected with worship of the state gods). Like the Jews, the Christians held themselves aloof from the pagan festivals and public amusements, as being wicked and immoral, and this seemed anti-social to the pagans. As they gradually began to assume a corporate identity of their own, the Christians came up against civic duties they were loath to perform, such as worship of the pagan gods or of the emperor.⁷ This was perceived as hostility to the state and interpreted as treason. Further, the Romans believed that the Christians practiced unspeakable vices such as cannibalism⁸ and

⁷ To learn how the Roman emperors came to be worshipped as gods, see A. MOMIGLIANO, On Pagans, Jews, and Romans, Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1987, pp. 92-107.

⁸ See K.S. LATOURETTE, A History of Christianity, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953, p. 82. The Christians celebrated Eucharist only in the presence of believers and rumours circulated that they actually sacrificed an infant, ate the body and drank the blood.

incest.⁹ In general the Romans had a poor image of Christians who, for the most part, simply were not interested in public affairs, which meant that they could not be considered good citizens. According to L.H. Canfield, the Romans regarded Christians as a

deplorable, unauthorized, and desperate faction, made up of credulous women and gathered from the very scum of mankind. But still worse, they interfered with the established order of society, with trade interests, with family life, with popular amusements, with the ordinary religious observances, and with the lax but conventional morality of the time. They avoided military service, and were averse to all civic duties and offices. To a people whose first duty was to the state this lack of interest in public affairs rendered the Christians worthy of their utmost contempt.¹⁰

In A.D. 64, the city of Rome was almost totally destroyed by fire, and the despised emperor, Nero, suspected of arson. To divert attention elsewhere he began a persecution of the already unpopular Christians. Although the persecution was confined to Rome itself, and the charge arson, not religion, nevertheless the Christians more and more frequently became the target of local or imperial

⁹ These beliefs apparently persisted well into the second century. In A.D. 177, a terrible persecution broke out in Lyons where the Christians were accused of incest and cannibalism. See EUSEBIUS, The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine, trans. G.A. Williamson, New York, New York University Press, 1966, Book 5, chapt. 1, pp. 195-197.

¹⁰ L.H. CANFIELD, The Early Persecutions of the Christians, Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, vol. 55, no. 2, New York, Columbia University, 1913, p. 22.

persecutions. The Roman persecutions were to continue sporadically for over two hundred years, increasing in intensity and cruelty until the final Diocletian persecution.

The persecutions seem to have been mostly local¹¹ until the middle of the third century, when the Empire's troubles provoked wide reaction.¹² Christianity was now "established" but the state was unstable, and in A.D. 250, the emperor Decius decreed that all citizens of the Empire had to take part in a general sacrifice. Many Christians refused and were martyred.

The next emperor, Valerian, A.D. 253 to 260, intensified the fury of the persecution, particularly against Church leaders, both clerical and lay. It ended with his capture by the Persians. A period of toleration followed until A.D. 303, when the last military dictator, Diocletian, began the final great persecution. An edict was published ordering all citizens of the Empire to sacrifice to the Roman gods under pain of death or deportation to the mines.

¹¹ Trajan (A.D. 53-117) and Hadrian (A.D. 76-138) both discouraged local provincial governors from initiating any persecutions against the Christians. Nevertheless, local ones often took place if there was a crop failure or a flooding river to be explained away.

¹² The third century was a turbulent one for the Roman Empire, besieged as it was by the Goths on the Danube and the Persians in the East.

The persecution was Empire-wide but particularly violent in the East where Christianity had its greatest numerical strength. Persecution ended in the West in A.D. 313 with an edict of Constantine, but continued in the East until A.D. 324 when he defeated his last rival to the throne and became sole emperor. The Roman Empire now officially tolerated Christianity.¹³

3. Ideal of martyrdom

From the beginning, the Church had not lacked Christians who wanted to follow the Lord as closely as possible by imitating his life and death. The martyr, "obedient unto death" (Phil 2:8), perfectly imitated the Passion of Jesus. With their blood, the martyrs defined the line beyond which Christians, attempting to be good citizens, could not go.¹⁴ Their loyalty to Christ took precedence over their loyalty to the emperor, and the martyr was held up as an ideal for all. The courage shown by the martyrs frequently elicited the conversion of pagan onlookers or even, at times, of the

¹³ In the late fourth century, Theodosius I (emperor from 379-395) named Christianity the state religion, and non-Christians were faced with painful legal sanctions. This led to a concomitant rise in the number of converts, as the Church came to be identified with the state and non-Christians could not hope for advancement in the state structure. See A. MIRGELER, Mutations of Western Christianity, trans. E. Quinn, New York, Herder and Herder, 1964, pp. 27-43.

¹⁴ See W.A. CLEBSCH, Christianity in European History, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 56.

torturers themselves. It was Tertullian who rightly said that the blood of the Christians was the seed of new life.¹⁵

Martyrdom came to be seen as a defiance of Satan who was perceived to be the real persecutor; thus the martyr was "the champion of the Christian host in its conflict with the devil."¹⁶ The martyr was viewed as a latter-day Apostle who could seek favors for those still on earth.¹⁷ The Church venerated its martyrs¹⁸ and, in the catacombs, began to celebrate the Eucharist on their tombs.¹⁹ Some believed that someone about to be martyred could forgive sins.²⁰ For those not yet formally received into the

¹⁵ See TERTULLIAN, Apologeticus, trans. A. Souter, Cambridge, University Press, 1917, c. 50, p. 145.

¹⁶ E.E. MALONE, The Monk and the Martyr; The Monk as the Successor of the Martyr, Catholic University of America, Studies in Christian Antiquity, vol. 12, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1950, p. vii.

¹⁷ See CLEBSCH, Christianity, p. 57.

¹⁸ See J. DANIELOU and H. MARROU, The First Six Hundred Years, The Christian Centuries, vol. 1, trans. V. Cronin, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964, p. 124. See also H. DELEHAYE, Les origines du culte des martyrs, Subsidia hagiographica, vol. 20, 2nd ed. rev., Bruxelles, Société des Bollandistes, 1933, pp. 29-49.

¹⁹ See J.P. KIRSCH, The Doctrine of the Community of Saints in the Ancient Church: A Study in the History of Dogma, trans. J.R. M'Kee, Edinburgh, Sands, 1910, pp. 72-120; CLEBSCH, Christianity, p. 58.

²⁰ See The Early Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Clement of Rome to St. Athanasius, ed. and trans. H. BETTENSON, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 155.

Church, martyrdom was considered the equivalent of baptism,²¹ and, in fact, baptism by blood was regarded as superior to baptism by water.²² Martyrs would not be judged with the rest of humankind; but instead would sit in judgment with Christ and the Apostles.²³ They were the "athletes" of Christ²⁴ who "re-enacted his passion and ascension."²⁵ Christ was deemed to be with them when they died,²⁶ immediately receiving them into heaven²⁷ with a martyr's crown.²⁸ Origen taught that martyrdom was the

²¹ See M. VILLER, "Martyre et perfection", in Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, 6 (1925), p. 3. Later, when monastic life came to be equated with martyrdom, it was believed that monastic profession was equivalent to a second baptism. See E.E. MALONE, "Martyrdom and Monastic Profession as a Second Baptism", in Vom christlichen Mysterium, eds. A. MEYER, J. QUAESTEN, and B. NEUNHEUSER, Düsseldorf, Patmos-Verlag, 1951, pp. 115-134.

²² See J. TIXERONT, History of Dogma, trans. H.L.B., from the 5th French ed., St. Louis, MO, B. Herder Book, vol. 1, 3rd ed., 1930, p. 276.

²³ See VILLER, "Martyre et perfection", p. 15.

²⁴ See M. VILLER and M. OLPHE-GALLIARD, "Ascèse: La période patristique", in Dictionnaire de spiritualité, vol. 1, 1937, col. 964.

²⁵ CLEBSCH, Christianity, p. 60.

²⁶ See VILLER, "Martyre et perfection", p. 13; H. CHADWICK, The Early Church, The Pelican History of the Church, no. 1, Harmondsworth, Eng., Penguin Books, 1967, p. 29.

²⁷ See DANIELOU, The First Six Hundred Years, p. 124.

²⁸ See J.E. SHERMAN, The Nature of Martyrdom: A Dogmatic and Moral Analysis According to St. Thomas Aquinas, Paterson, NJ, St. Anthony Guild Press, 1942, p. 44. See also CHADWICK, The Early Church, p. 29.

second "means of forgiveness of sin as contained in the Gospel",²⁹ and an early Church Order, the Didascalia apostolorum (ca. A.D. 280) stated:

If we are called to martyrdom for his name, and go forth from the world confessing (Him), we shall be pardoned all sins and offences, and shall be found pure... Blessed therefore are the martyrs, and clear of all offences; for they have been removed and cleared of all iniquities.³⁰

Martyrdom was believed to be the highest form of Christian sanctity³¹ and some Christians sought it for the wrong reasons. The Church had to caution those who deliberately provoked the civil authorities, that they would be considered suicides and not martyrs. As Henry Chadwick observed:

The conviction that martyrdom granted immediate admission to paradise and conferred a victor's crown, combined with a sober evaluation of the Roman empire as a political institution, led to a tendency toward acts of provocation on the part of over-enthusiastic believers, especially among the Montanists who were especially prone to identify³² reticence with cowardice and moral compromise.

²⁹ See SHERMAN, Nature of Martyrdom, pp. 40-41.

³⁰ This early Church Order dealt with miscellaneous subjects such as penance and behaviour during persecution. See Didascalia apostolorum, The Syriac version, trans. and introduction by R.H. Connolly, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969, p. 178.

³¹ See DANIELOU, The First Six Hundred Years, p. 17.

³² CHADWICK, The Early Church, p. 30.

The persecutions gave Christians the image of the martyr as the "ideal Christian" and this was to profoundly affect the practice of Christian asceticism and, eventually, monasticism.

B. Asceticism in the Early Church

It is not known when the ascetical trend began in the Church,³³ however, the ascetics appear as a recognizable group toward the end of the second century. They embraced a life of "daily" martyrdom as a substitute for physical martyrdom; indeed, through them, the concept of "spiritual martyrdom" was born. The most prominent factor in the development of Christian asceticism was the belief that the martyr was the "perfect" Christian. The monks of the fourth century, practicing "spiritual martyrdom", became the successors of the martyrs.³⁴ As E.E. Malone has observed:

³³ It could only begin when the Church was established in a Gentile milieu. The Jews wore sackcloth and ashes when they wished to do penance, but in general did not practice asceticism as we now understand it. H. Chadwick points out that asceticism was practiced only in some Jewish deviationist groups like the Essenes. See CHADWICK, The Early Church, p. 13.

³⁴ However, T. Fry argues that it is difficult to evaluate "to what extent the idea of monastic life as a replacement for martyrdom served to provide the original impetus for the monastic movement." See RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict, ed. T. FRY, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1981, p. 15, 5.

Spiritual martyrdom became the vocation of the monk, only when the ascetical life became a fixed vocation with the establishment of the monastic institute. Gradually the ascetic, and then the monk came to fill the place that had been left vacant by the martyr.³⁵

1. Pre-Christian asceticism

Christian asceticism was firmly grounded on scripture, but also influenced by the Greek³⁶ asceticism,³⁷ which permeated the Graeco-Roman world³⁸ at the time Christianity began. The word asceticism comes from the Greek verb askeo and its cognates. It was originally applied to the rigorous self-denial of athletes preparing for contests, and later transferred to the self-discipline practiced for religious

³⁵ MALONE, The Monk and the Martyr, p. 1.

³⁶ Jewish asceticism does not seem to have been a factor in the development of Christian asceticism although some of the Essene communities bore a superficial resemblance to later Christian monastic communities.

³⁷ At the time that Christianity began, the great religious-philosophic systems of Greece were combining ethics and religion, and post-Aristotelian philosophy had adopted asceticism as a means of moral reform. See S. ANGUS, The Mystery-religions and Christianity: A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity, University Library of Comparative Religion, New Hyde Park, University Books, 1966, pp. 206-225.

³⁸ For a short history of the ascetic practices popular in the Graeco-Roman empire, see C.H. MOORE, "Greek and Roman Ascetic Tendencies", in Harvard Essays on Classical Subjects, ed. H.W. Smyth, Essay Index Reprint Series, Freeport, NY, Books for Libraries Press, 1968, pp. 99-140.

purposes.³⁹

Asceticism as such did not have a place in early Greek religion⁴⁰ and in fact came to Greece from outside. Early Greek religion, which was pantheistic and anthropomorphic,⁴¹ was given a fatal blow when "Greek thought in its laborious striving for a synthesis of the Many easily grasped the conception of the unity of the Deity."⁴² The Greeks applied this notion to their religions, and rejected them. As well, the early Greek religions appealed only to the aesthetic side of human nature, and could offer no answer to the darker side of life. The Oriental cults, however, seemed to supply a means of dealing with the perplexities and sorrows of ordinary life and became popular.

³⁹ For a treatment of the evolution of the word, see H. DRESSLER, The Usage of "askeo" and its Cognates in Greek Documents to 100 A.D., Catholic University of America Patristic Studies, vol. 78, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1947.

⁴⁰ For a summary of the religion which predated the Greeks, that of the Minoan-Mycenean period, and which shows the influence of other religions, such as those of Asia Minor, see M.P. NILSSON, A History of the Greek Religion, trans. F.J. Fielden, 2nd. ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967, pp. 9-37.

⁴¹ For a description of the various factors which shaped Greek religion after the Minoan-Mycenean period, see F. BURKERT, Greek Religion, trans. J. Raffan, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1985.

⁴² See ANGUS, Mystery-religions, p. 11.

Many cults entered Greece because of Alexander's desire to unite the disparate elements of his empire into a single Greek culture. He broke down the barriers between the conquered nations and the Greeks, by giving equal cultic rights to all. The spread of the common Greek tongue, koine, helped to spread religious influence throughout the Empire. One of the effects of this intermingling of nations was a religious syncretism⁴³ which was intensified under the Roman Empire. Western religion had ceased to be a national or civic institution and became a matter of personal conviction. The Mystery-religions⁴⁴ became popular throughout many parts of the Greek-speaking world.⁴⁵

⁴³ S. Angus observes that this syncretism was abetted by an almost complete absence of intolerance, universal demands for Saviour-gods, and the medium of a common tongue. See ANGUS, Mystery-religions, p. 19.

⁴⁴ For a description of the different stages in the history of the Mysteries, from the earliest naturalistic period to their popularity and imperial recognition in the Roman Empire, see ANGUS, Mystery-religions, p. 44.

⁴⁵ Some scholars believe that these cults eventually (second to fifth century) entered into the Church and transformed simple Biblical Christianity into a mystical sacramentalism that still survives in the Roman church. See H. RAHNER, "The Christian Mystery and Pagan Mysteries", in Pagan and Christian Mysteries. Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, ed. J. CAMPBELL, Harper Torchbooks TB 2013, New York, Harper and Row, 1963, p. 146. For an opposing view, see T.H. GASTER, Introduction to ANGUS, Mystery-religions, pp. xi-xii; The Ancient Mysteries, a Sourcebook: Sacred Texts of the Mystery-religions of the Ancient Mediterranean World, ed. M.W. MEYER, New York, Harper and Row, 1987, p. 226.

The Mystery-Religions had very elaborate purifications, not only for the priests but for the initiates as well, and the Greeks began slowly to move away from the idea of placating the gods by purifications, to union with them by contemplation, for which only the highest degree of purity would suffice.

2. Christian asceticism

Although influenced by Greek asceticism, the ascetic tradition in Christianity was based on the Gospel,⁴⁶ and emphasized virginity and celibacy (Mt 19:12; 1 Cor 7). It was spontaneous, practiced by individuals in the privacy of their own homes and within the framework of the local church. At that time, there were no groups of ascetics⁴⁷ such as existed toward the end of the second century.⁴⁸ All

⁴⁶ See H.F. von CAMPENHAUSEN, Tradition and Life in the Church; Essays and Lectures in Church History, trans. A.V. Littledale, London, Collins, 1968, pp. 90-122.

⁴⁷ Asceticism as an organized life of disciplined austerity, continence, and renunciation of the world, did not exist in the early Church.

⁴⁸ See The Lausiac History of Palladius, ed. E.C. BUTLER, vol. 6/1 of Texts and Studies; Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature, ed. J.A. ROBINSON, Cambridge, University Press, 1898, p. 230. See also F. MARTINEZ, L'Ascétisme chrétien pendant les trois premiers siècles de l'Eglise, Etudes de théologie historique, vol. 6, Paris, G. Beauchesne, 1913, p. 50.

Christians practiced fasting⁴⁹ and some practiced virginity. Indeed, for a long time virginity was the only "ascetical" practice of the early Church.⁵⁰ From very early times virginity had been held in high esteem⁵¹ in the Christian Church, and by the second century was becoming "the act of

⁴⁹ The somewhat scanty records of the Apostolic Age show that fasting was a regular practice among the early Christians. All Jews fasted on Yom Kippur, but the oral law (expounded by the Pharisees) instructed fasting on Monday (traditionally the day that Moses went up on Mount Sinai) and Thursday (the day that he descended). According to the first century Didachè, (an early "Church Order") the Christians apparently substituted Wednesday (the day of the Lord's betrayal) and Friday (the day of the Crucifixion) for the traditional Jewish fastdays. See Doctrina apostolorum, The Oldest Church Manual Called the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Didachè tōn dōdeka apostolōn, trans. P. Schaff, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1885, chapt. VIII, p. 187. For a study of the various themes involved in the practice of fasting in early Christianity, see R. ARBESMANN, "Fasting and Prophecy in Pagan and Christian Antiquity", in Traditio, 7 (1949-1951), pp. 1-71. See also H. MUSURILLO, "The Problem of Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Writers", in ibid., 12 (1956), pp. 1-64. For a study of fasting as an expression of asceticism in late Judaism, see J.A. MCGUCKIN, "Christian Asceticism and the Early School of Alexandria", in Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, Studies in Church History, vol. 22, ed. W.J. SHEILS, Oxford, Blackwell, 1985, pp. 25-30.

⁵⁰ See MARTINEZ, L'ascétisme, p. 65.

⁵¹ See J.O. HANNAY, The Spirit and Origin of Christian Asceticism, London, Methuen, 1903, p. 45. The increasing importance of virginity as an ascetic practice can be found in various Church Fathers such as Ignatius, Clement, Tertullian, Origen and Cyprian. See T. CAMELOT, "Virgines Christi: la virginité aux premiers siècles de l'Eglise", in La vie spirituelle, 70 (1944), pp. 30-43; see also P.R.L. BROWN, The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity, Lectures on the History of Religions, New Series, vol. 13, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, pp. 259-284.

asceticism par excellence, the necessary foundation to the earnest and disciplined life."⁵² These virgins or ascetics were still living in their own families and attending the local church.⁵³ In Smyrna and Corinth, the virgins walked behind the clergy (and in front of the widows) in liturgical processions. The practice of virginity was one of the first things noticed by inquiring pagans who were attracted by the high ideals of the Christians. Eschatology played a large part in Christian asceticism; the predominant mood of the first and second centuries was one of waiting, with the Second Coming being expected soon;⁵⁴ under these conditions, both marriage⁵⁵ and business seemed of secondary importance.

The Gnostics also praised virginity, but for other reasons. Indeed, one of the greatest crises that the Church had to face in the second century was the struggle with the

⁵² Western Asceticism, ed. O. CHADWICK, vol. 12, The Library of Christian Classics, eds., J. BAILLIE, J.T. Mc NEIL, and H.P. Van DUSEN, London, SCM Press, 1958, p. 14.

⁵³ See P. POURRAT, Christian Spirituality, trans. W.H. Mitchell, S.P. Jacques and D. Attwater, vol. 1, London, Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1927, p. 305.

⁵⁴ See HANNAY, The Spirit and Origin, p. 32.

⁵⁵ The eschatological heresies of the Marcionites, Montanists and Encratites placed a very high value on virginity. For instance, the Encratites (late first century), taught that all Christians should abstain from meat, wine and marriage. Paul warned Timothy to be wary of such beliefs in 1 Tim. 4:3. See POURRAT, Christian Spirituality, pp. 66-73; TIXERONT, History, p. 208.

Gnostics.⁵⁶ While there were many different Gnostic groups, they did share some common assumptions, the principal one being that the world could not have been created by a good and loving God because matter was intrinsically evil. Since the world and the flesh were inherently evil, the Christian was obliged to be severely ascetic.⁵⁷ The instinctive renunciation of the Apostolic Age was often replaced in the late second century by an asceticism which owed more to Greek philosophy than to Scripture. In groups which taught that the body was evil, fasting and virginity were naturally held in high esteem. This idea of asceticism had to be repudiated by the Church because, essentially, it denied the Incarnation.⁵⁸

In the third century, the ascetics began moving out of their local communities.⁵⁹ Many of the primitive Church congregations had been small, enthusiastic and puritan.

⁵⁶ See CHADWICK, The Early Church, p. 33-41.

⁵⁷ See H. LIETZMANN, The Era of the Church Fathers, vol. 4, History of the Early Church, trans. B.L. Woolf, London, Lutterworth Press, 1951, p. 130. See also A. VOOBUS, Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church, Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile, no. 22, Stockholm, Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951, p. 130.

⁵⁸ See HANNAY, The Spirit and Origin, p. 59.

⁵⁹ See Western Asceticism, pp. 15-16. See also I.G. SMITH, Christian Monasticism from the Fourth to the Ninth Centuries of the Christian Era, London, A.D. Innes, 1892, p. 22.

After two hundred years, however, Christians began debating "whether the Church could occupy a position of influence in high society without losing something of its moral power and independence."⁶⁰ Furthermore, as the Church attracted more members, morality and worship became somewhat diluted. Gradually the distance between the ordinary congregation and the ascetics widened. These began to organize into groups and, seeking solitude, moved to the outskirts of towns and villages.⁶¹ The ascetics were held in high esteem⁶² by the congregations and their leaving sometimes weakened the local congregation.⁶³ The usual custom was for the neophyte to live with an experienced ascetic for several years (about seven) before setting up on his own. In the late third century a few ascetics in Egypt began to go out into the desert to practice the ascetic life.

⁶⁰ CHADWICK, The Early Church, p. 175.

⁶¹ See W.H. MACKEAN, Christian Monasticism in Egypt to the Close of the Fourth Century, Studies in Church History, London, SPCK, 1920, p. 20.

⁶² See M.G. MURPHY, St. Basil and Monasticism, Catholic University of America Patristic Studies, vol. 25, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1930, p. 8. See also LIETZMANN, History of the Early Church, p. 129.

⁶³ Ascetics were often regarded with misgiving by the bishops who felt that they were too individualist and separatist; that a few tended to be fanatics only justified this belief. When the ascetics began moving into the desert, they also, in many cases, moved out of the local church and this only deepened the mistrust of the bishops.

C. End of the Persecutions

The Edict of Milan in A.D. 313 signaled the end of the persecutions in the West. The Church, no longer having to fear the State authorities, began to accommodate itself to the world around it. Some Christians, for whom the memory of the terrible Diocletian persecution was still vivid, viewed any accommodation as compromise. This was especially true of the ascetics, who believed that the ideal of Christianity was imperiled by the admittance of so many converts so quickly. As T.M. Gannon observes, they thought that "the stalwart Christians whom Diocletian had murdered were replaced by a multitude of time-servers and half-converted pagans."⁶⁴

Christians, tired of being persecuted, were anxious to demonstrate that they were good citizens. The Church acquired status as it changed from a persecuted minority to a religion accepted by the Roman empire. It seemed more practical to go along with the existing political system,⁶⁵ than to oppose established society. Gannon observes that the Church "at the same time recognized and came to terms with the legitimate political structures. Actually it

⁶⁴ See T.M. GANNON and G.W. TRAUB, The Desert and the City: An Interpretation of Christian Spirituality, New York, Macmillan, 1969, p. 21.

⁶⁵ Cf. MIRGELER, Mutations, pp. 27-30.

baptized that authority and joined hands with it."⁶⁶

In an ecclesiastical climate of increasing worldliness, a few ascetics began to flee from the community. T.M. Gannon declares that "Indifference to secular values became transformed into a suspicion of the world expressed in distrust and disparagement of the flesh and in anxiety over, and even fear of, sex."⁶⁷

The end of the persecutions produced many who now sought holiness outside of the community, which they saw as increasingly lax.⁶⁸ In Egypt, the ascetics, following the example of St. Antony, began to throng into the desert. The monastic movement had begun. It was to be duplicated all over the Mediterranean world. Owen Chadwick comments:

⁶⁶ GANNON, The Desert, p. 21. On the other hand, Mirgeler believes that a "continuance of the age of martyrs - naturally, purely imaginary - or even the orientation of Christian practice towards that age, as the Donatists suggested, would sooner or later have reduced Christianity to an insignificant sect so that by our time it would, humanly speaking, have ceased to exist." See MIRGELER, Mutations, p. 29.

⁶⁷ GANNON, The Desert, p. 23.

⁶⁸ The steady growth of the Church in peaceful times led some Christians to question a perceived laxity of discipline in the Church. They were especially angered by the reconciliation of the lapsi after the Decian persecution.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EREMITICAL LIFE IN THE CHURCH 23

To the inhabitants of the Mediterranean world during the later fourth century A.D., the world seemed to be in decline. The frontiers were under threat, the countryside insecure, the taxation system unjust, government not respected. The Roman Empire was falling to pieces and no one could conceive what other kind of world there could be. The circumstances of daily life forced men and women to ask where they could find not only physical safety but hope in circumstances that looked so menacing. And in the East of the empire, in Egypt and Syria, they found a movement that began to draw recruits, and was soon to be one of the main social forces within the eastern provinces of the empire: the monks and nuns and hermits.⁶⁹

II. ORIGINS OF MONASTICISM IN THE CHURCH

A. Eremitical Movement in Egypt

The origin of Christianity in Egypt is obscure; it is accepted that its centre was Alexandria. Just when it spread to the Copts is unknown, although many of the Decian (A.D. 250) martyrs had Coptic names. The Egyptians who became Christian would certainly have been familiar with ascetical practices, for in Alexandria at that time, both Neopythagoreanism and Neoplatonism were marked by strict asceticism.

Both stressed ascetic practices such as abstention from wine, deprecated marriage, followed a vegetarian regime and laid great stress on silence.

⁶⁹ O. CHADWICK, Introduction to John Cassian's Conferences, trans. C. Luibheid, New York, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 1.

Furthermore, in Egypt at that time, much of the Christian literature which claimed to be Apostolic or inspired, was often Gnostic. The Montanists also had been active there.⁷⁰ In fact, one of their best known writings, "The Gospel According to the Egyptians",⁷¹ was written from a purely ascetical viewpoint and was not regarded as heretical until the time of Origen (ca. A.D. 185-254). To what extent the Coptic ascetics in the desert were aware of these trends is difficult to determine. They spoke Aramaic not Greek, and, in fact, disliked the Greeks who were their conquerors. Egypt provided a very good climate, both philosophically and geographically, for asceticism to thrive in. The first monks came from the fellahin (peasants) who already lived on a bare subsistence. Their fasting as an ascetical practice was extremely severe.⁷²

The theological basis for the ascetic movement came from the works of two Alexandrians, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and was based on the ideal of martyrdom.⁷³

⁷⁰ See MACKEAN, Christian Monasticism, pp. 36-37.

⁷¹ See The Apocryphal New Testament, trans. M.R. James, Oxford, Clarendon Press, [1955], pp. 10-12.

⁷² In Egypt, as elsewhere, it was widely believed that the first sin of Adam and Eve had been lust for physical food which led them to disobey God's command. In a famine ridden world, greed and its "blatant social overtones - avarice and dominance - quite overshadowed sexuality". See BROWN, The Body and Society, pp. 220-221.

⁷³ See MALONE, The Monk and the Martyr, pp. 1-26.

Clement was the first to attempt a systematic approach to an ideal of Christian perfection for those not called to physical martyrdom,⁷⁴ saying that these could nevertheless "achieve perfection by becoming gnostic martyrs by the excellence of their daily lives."⁷⁵

In his Stromata, Clement concluded that although martyrdom is the best proof that one loves God, only a few are called to it. Since it was possible for someone to give himself up to death and still be unfaithful to Christ,⁷⁶ Clement did not believe that suffering or pain were good in themselves. He changed the understanding of a Christian life of perfection from dying as a martyr for Christ, to living as a martyr for him.⁷⁷ Clement thus laid the ground-work for a different kind of Christian ideal.

For Origen, whose father had been martyred, Christian perfection meant to become like God by performing acts of asceticism. If the call to physical martyrdom was

⁷⁴ In Clement's lifetime (ca. A.D. 150-215), the Church was peaceful most of the time, and although terrible persecutions were to come, the Christians did not live under the constant threat of martyrdom as they had in the time of Ignatius of Antioch (ca. A.D. 35-107) or Polycarp (ca. A.D. 69-155).

⁷⁵ MALONE, The Monk and the Martyr, p. 9.

⁷⁶ See MALONE, The Monk and the Martyr, p. 9.

⁷⁷ See ibid., p. 10.

extended to only a few favored souls,⁷⁸ the call to a life of strict asceticism or spiritual martyrdom, was proffered to all.⁷⁹ It was his work which was later to provide a theological basis for the transition from martyr to monk. Monasticism⁸⁰ can be distinguished from the ascetic movement which preceded it, by its withdrawal from the ordinary structures of society. The monks withdrew from society in order to do battle in the spiritual arena of the desert. There are two forms of monasticism, both of which evolved at the same time; the eremitic or hermit form, and the cenobitic or community form. Among the outstanding figures of Christian monasticism, at the time it began, were Antony, who pioneered the eremitic form, Pachomius who originated the cenobitic form, and Basil, who founded the type of cenobitism which was destined to endure, both in the East where it originated and, later on, in the West.

B. Development of the Different Forms of Monasticism

1. Terminology

The English word "anchorite" comes from the Greek verb anachorein, "to retire". In the second century B.C., the word was frequently used to describe a politician who

⁷⁸ See ibid., p. 15.

⁷⁹ See ibid., p. 20.

⁸⁰ See HEUSSI, Der Ursprung, p. 53.

found it expedient to "retire" for a period of time to await more favorable circumstances,⁸¹ but gradually the word anachoresis came to have the sense of "withdrawal from the world", usually to pursue the study of philosophy. In Egypt the word was applied to peasants who, oppressed by crushing tax burdens, would "retire" into swamps or even into the desert, there to live like outlaws.⁸² The term was eventually given a Christian connotation, i.e., someone who renounced the world and lived in solitude, so as to be alone with God. In the fourth century, the words "anchorite", "hermit" and "monk" were considered synonyms.⁸³ They all referred to a Christian who went out into the desert to live in solitude.

The word "monk", from the Greek monachos, originated in Egypt in the early fourth century, and was made popular by the Vita Antonii of Athanasius, who used the word to describe a "solitary".⁸⁴ The English word "hermit" derives

⁸¹ See A.M.J. FESTUGIERE, Personal Religion Among the Greeks, Sather Classical Lectures, vol. 26, Berkely and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1954, p. 54.

⁸² See ibid., p. 57.

⁸³ See J. LECLERCQ, "Eremus et eremita: pour l'histoire du vocabulaire de la vie solitaire", in Collectanea cisterciensia, 25 (1963), p. 25.

⁸⁴ See G.M. COLOMBAS, "El concepto de monje y vide monastica hasta fines del siglo V", in Studia monastica, 1 (1959), p. 259. See also L. LORIE, Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translations of the Vita Antonii, with Reference to Fourth and Fifth Century Monastic Literature, Latinitas

from the Greek word for desert, eremos.⁸⁵ In the desert, those monks who lived a communal or koinos life were said to follow the "cenobitic" form of monasticism. The word "cenobite" gradually came to be applied to all monks since the majority lived in community.

2. Eremitic form of monasticism: Antony of Egypt

The first hermit⁸⁶ whose life we know anything about was Antony. His life, chronicled by Athanasius in the Vita Antonii, spread the knowledge of the monastic movement in northern Egypt throughout the East, and eventually to the West as well. He was the first ascetic to break away from societal structures and go alone into the desert. Ascetics

christianorum primaeva, vol. 11, Nijmegen, Dekker and Van de Vegt, 1955, pp. 25-34; HEUSSI, Der Ursprung, pp. 39, 53-54, 58; A. ADAM, "Grundbegriffe des Mönchtums in sprachlicher Sicht", in Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte, 65 (1953), pp. 209-217; cf. F.E. MORARD, "Monachos, moine: histoire du terme grec jusqu'au 4e siècle", in Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie, 20 (1973), pp. 332-411; E.A. JUDGE, "The Earliest Use of Monachos for Monk and the Origins of Monasticism", in Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, 20 (1977), pp. 72-89.

⁸⁵ See LECLERCQ, "Eremitus", pp. 8-30.

⁸⁶ Jerome wrote about a certain Paul of Thebes who went out into the desert during the Decian persecution, and stayed there to become the first Christian hermit. Antony was supposed to have visited Paul according to Jerome, but Athanasius never mentions such a visit. Jerome claimed to have heard about Paul from one of Antony's disciples, and there may have been an oral tradition on which he based this life. See MACKEAN, Christian Monasticism, pp. 657-68; and LIETZMANN, The Era of the Church Fathers, p. 138. However, cf. E.C. BUTLER, The Lausiatic History, pp. 231-232.

before him had always lived within view of the community, albeit at the edge of it.

Athanasius certainly knew Antony, but he had mixed reasons for writing his life. He wanted to spread the ideals of monasticism, but also wanted to wield his pen against the Arians. Athanasius drew on certain features of the classical genre in describing his hero, partly because he hoped that his audience would contain potential pagan converts as well as Christians, but unlike pagan heroes, whatever feats Antony accomplished, whether severe asceticism, miracles or healings, were done through Christ and not through his own strength or skill. Although Athanasius pictures Antony as following an incredibly austere life⁸⁷ with severe fasting, long prayer vigils and constant battles with demons,⁸⁸ he is not a spiritual Superman. Instead, he

⁸⁷ The Egyptians lived under the constant threat of starvation, and Daniélou believed that many of the early Coptic monks were used to so low a standard of living, that their eagerness to suppress concupiscence often led to disconcerting excesses in matters of food, comfort or privation of sleep. See DANIELOU, The First Six Hundred Years, p. 271.

⁸⁸ Demons were believed to dwell in desert places and the monks went out to do battle with them only after long preparation. Since these spirits had the ability to appear as heavenly creatures, discernment of spirits was extremely important. The histories of the Desert Fathers teem with stories of demons, their wiles, and the strategies to be employed against them. See A. GUILLAMONT⁶ and C. GUILLAMONT, "Le démon dans la plus ancienne littérature monastique", in Dictionnaire de spiritualité, vol. 3, ed. M. VILLER, Paris, G. Beauchesne, 1957, cols. 189-212.

relies almost totally on Christ for help. Eventually, without losing his own identity, he becomes another Christ.

Soon after his death Antony became known as the "Father of Monasticism", and his life became the mythological prototype of the Christian monk. How much of that life is from Athanasius and how much is from Antony is difficult to ascertain. If the actual words (especially against the Arians), were not Antony's, there is no reason to believe that the sentiments were not his.

Antony was born in Como, Egypt (ca. A.D. 250) of a wealthy Christian peasant family. At the age of 20 he began to practice the ascetic life by observing and imitating the customs and directions of an older ascetic. This life consisted of prayer vigils, rigorous fasting, celibacy, poverty and manual labour.⁸⁹

He kept a small sum of whatever he made to buy bread

⁸⁹ P. Riley explains that the hermit was supposed to go into the desert without any material possessions, and manual labour was his only means of support if he was not to become a burden on others for the necessities of life. See P. RILEY, Manual Labor in Ancient Monastic Literature; The Semi-eremitical Phase, [Ottawa], University of Ottawa, [1953], p. 172. See also A.T. GEOGHEGAN, The Attitude Towards Labor in Early Christianity and Ancient Culture, Catholic University of America Studies in Christian Antiquity, vol. 6, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1945, p. 168, n. 7.

and spent the rest on almsgiving.⁹⁰ Antony lived this way for several years, and then, seeking greater solitude,⁹¹ he retreated to a cemetery remote from the village where he shut himself up in one of the tombs. Antony may not have invented such solitary self-confinement. It had been practiced (in a somewhat limited way) in pagan Egypt by priests of the god Serapis who were recluses (katechoi) in the temple at Memphis.⁹² According to Athanasius, he was attacked by demons⁹³ but successfully resisted them.

⁹⁰ His labour provided for himself and also for those in need. The manual labour probably consisted of making rope, baskets, mats and sandals, for this allowed almost unceasing prayer, and became the staple industry of the desert monks. See RILEY, Manual Labor, pp. 110-123.

⁹¹ Antony is breaking new ground and the "ascetic" is becoming a "monk". This process is taken in two steps; first to the tombs and then, later on when he has become proficient, further into the desert.

⁹² Papyrus fragments found at the temple of the god Serapis at Memphis indicate that there were people who lived in cells within the temple enclosure. Whether they were temple priests or people seeking refuge is not known. See J. LACARRIERE, The God Possessed, trans. R. Monkcom, London, G. Allen and Unwin, [1963], p. 58. Cf. H. WEINGARTEN, "Der Ursprung des Mönchtums in nachconstantinischen Zeitalter", in Zeitalter für Kirchengeschichte, 1 (1877), pp. 1-35; K. HEUSSI, Der Ursprung, pp. 283-287; B. LOHSE, Askese und Mönchtum in der Antike und in der alten Kirche, vol. 1, Religion und Kultur der alten Mittelmeerwelt in Parallelforschungen, Munich, R. Oldenbourg, 1969, pp. 38-39.

⁹³ The early Egyptians believed that the dead lived in or near the tomb. Hostile spirits abounded in the cemetery and it was necessary to be protected from their malice. Thus Antony was knowingly confronting malignant spirits when he chose to live in a tomb. See J.H. BREASTED, Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912, repr., New York, Harper, [1959], p. 51; see also J. DANIELOU, "Les démons dans l'air dans la Vie

Antony stayed there until he was about 35 years old, when, after arranging with a friend to bring him food periodically, he moved to an abandoned fort on the other side of the Nile, where he lived alone⁹⁴ for about 20 years. In 305 some disciples and friends made him come out and teach others the ascetic way of the desert, for many had been drawn to this way of life. Antony, by healing the sick, casting out demons and reconciling enemies, persuaded many to choose the solitary life. In 312, Antony traveled even deeper into the wilderness and lived in solitude for the rest of his life. He died in 356 and was buried, at his own request, in an unmarked grave. Athanasius, who knew Antony, wrote his biography within a few years of his death.

The hermits, who followed the eremitic model of Antony lived in individual cells, widely separated from each other but meeting together on Saturday and Sunday for worship.⁹⁵

d'Antoine", in *Antonius Magnus Eremita, 356-1956; studia ad antiquum monachismum spectantia*, ed. B. STEIDLE, *Studia Anselmiana*, vol. 38, Rome, Herder, 1956, pp. 136-147.

⁹⁴ According to Athanasius, Antony's ascetic master declined to go with him into the desert because there was as yet no such custom. See ATHANASIUS, *The Life of Saint Antony*, trans. R.T. Meyer, vol. 10, *Ancient Christian Writers; the Works of the Fathers in Translation*, eds. J. QUASTEN and J.C. PLUMPE, Newman Press, 1950, Westminster, MD, c. 11, p. 29.

⁹⁵ These communities (known as *lauras*) had no common rule but were rather monks loosely grouped around a master. The sayings (*apophthegmata*) of these masters were treasured

3. Cenobitic Form of Monasticism

a. Pachomius

Another great innovator in Egyptian monasticism was Pachomius,⁹⁶ a younger contemporary of Antony, who fathered cenobitism.⁹⁷ A convert, Pachomius embraced the ascetic life almost immediately upon his baptism. Like Antony, he lived with an experienced ascetic for seven years. He believed that God was calling him to found a community of monks and, to that end, he established himself in an abandoned village, Tabennisi, where he was joined by his brother, his first disciple. More men joined and the community began to flourish. Unlike the other associations of hermits, who were grouped around a "spiritual father"

and eventually written down. See APOPHTHEGMATA PATRUM, The Desert Christian, trans. B. Ward, The Alphabetical Collection, New York, Macmillan, 1980; The Wisdom of the Desert, trans. T. Merton, London, Sheldon Press, 1974.

⁹⁶ The lives of Pachomius and his successors have survived in Coptic and Greek sources. See PACHOMIUS, Les vies coptes de saint Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs, trans. L.T. Lefort, Bibliothèque du Muséon, vol. 15, Louvain, Bureaux du Muséon, 1943; The Life of Saint Pachomius and his Disciples, trans. A. Veilleux, Cistercian Study Series, vol. 45, Kalamazoo, MI, Cistercian Publications, 1980.

⁹⁷ The precise relationship between the eremitic and cenobitic movements has long been the subject of scholarly discussion. See H. BACHT, "Antonius und Pachomius: Von der Anachorese zum Cönobitentum", in Antonius Magnus Eremita, p. 66-107. See also A. VEILLEUX, La liturgie dans le cénobitisme pachomien au quatrième siècle, Studia Anselmiana, vol. 57, Rome, Herder, 1968, pp. 167-181.

the Pachomian monks lived together under a common Rule, obedient to an abbot, the community being organised like a military unit. Pachomius made the monks into a fellowship (koinonia), for he "developed the notion, already articulated by the author of The Acts of the Apostles, that to save souls you must bring them together."⁹⁸ Unlike other eremitical settlements, there were regular times fixed for prayer, study and manual labor.⁹⁹

When the number of monks grew too many for one monastery, another community would be formed. By 345, the year of Pachomius' death, the koinonia numbered nine monasteries. Knowledge of Pachomius' monasticism came to the West through a translation of his rule by St. Jerome. It influenced a number of pre-Benedictine rules, as well as that of Benedict, but Pachomian monasticism was never tried in the West, and indeed, in the East, only lasted for approximately two hundred years in a diminishing number of monasteries. It was replaced by Basilian monasticism which endures in the East to this day. St. Basil planned his community to be like a family and not a military unit, and

⁹⁸ D. KNOWLES, From Pachomius to Ignatius; A Study in the Constitutional History of the Religious Orders, The Sarum Lectures, 1964-5, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966, p. 8.

⁹⁹ See L. BOUYER, "L'ascèse de l'époque patristique" in L'Ascèse Chrétienne et l'homme contemporain, eds. T. CAMELOT et al., Cahiers de la vie spirituelle, vol. 11, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1951, p. 42. See also RILEY, Manual Labor, p. 86.

this was perhaps the secret of his success.

b. Basil

St. Basil (ca. 330-379), the founder of Byzantine monasticism, was born in Caesarea of a Christian family. The year he went off to studies in Athens (351) his father died, and his mother, brother (Peter) and sister (St. Macrina), retired to their country estate to follow the ascetic life. Basil and his friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, planned to do the same as soon as their studies were completed.¹⁰⁰ After visiting Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia to see monasticism at first hand, he became aware of the dangers of solitude. He became convinced of the need for some kind of rule to temper what, in his eyes, was the great imprudence shown by some of the monks in their austerities.

For the monks of Egypt, asceticism consisted in renouncing the world and living a life of continual prayer and manual labor, as well as severe fasting. In Syria and Mesopotamia, it took on a different form: the monks imposed severe bodily suffering on themselves.¹⁰¹ Some monks lived like animals out in the open, surviving on grass (boskoi). Others lived in hollow trees (dendrites), or on the tops of columns (stylites), while a few existed in cells so

¹⁰⁰ See MURPHY, St. Basil, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ See GANNON, The Desert, p. 55.

small that they could not straighten their limbs. Cleanliness was considered a luxury and three or four hours of sleep a night was deemed sufficient. The monk rarely lay down to sleep but instead sat with his back against a wall. The movement was marked by a strong individualism, which sometimes led the monks to follow almost suicidal practices as they tried to outdo each other in austerity. Asceticism itself became the end rather than the means. Basil took a dim view of this unrestrained asceticism.

In 358, he and some companions retired to the country to lead the ascetical life. Their ideal was a life where a man could love and serve his brother monks and suppress all individualistic tendencies. Basil rejected the strongly individualist eremitic ideal then popular, because he believed it to be divorced from the love and service to one's neighbor demanded by the Gospel. He established penalties for any monk tempted to undergo any fasts which were more austere than those prescribed by the Rule. His Rule also safeguarded the right of the Bishop over the monastic community.¹⁰² Although he loved the monastic life it was not of long duration for him: in 364 he was called

¹⁰² Monasticism was largely a lay movement which was often anti-institutional, anti-clerical, and sometimes anti-episcopal, with the "church of the monks" opposing the "church of the bishops". The monks not only drew talented leaders away from the city, but also threatened two traditional structures of urban society; slavery and private wealth. See BROWN, The Body and Society, pp. 288-289.

out of seclusion by his bishop, Eusebius, who was being strongly opposed by extreme Arians. In 365, Basil was ordained presbyter and thus drawn more and more into the affairs of the Church. In 370 he succeeded Eusebius. Even as a bishop, however, he continued to practice the ascetical life until he died in 379. Basil wanted his communities to remain small¹⁰³ enough so that the recollection of the monks might be protected and the abbot have a personal relationship with each of his "sons". He brought sanity and moderation into Eastern monasticism, although the Antonian model continued to dominate it long after his arrival.

III. EREMITICAL LIFE IN THE WEST

A. Pre-Benedictine Eremitical Life

As in the East, the ascetic life began spontaneously with ascetics and virgins living at home in the cities. By the last quarter of the fourth century, the Eastern Church had hundreds of monasteries and thousands of monks. In the West, however, the situation was quite different. The diffusion of Anastasius' Vita Antonii throughout Christian countries had made the monastic life known; however, social and geographic factors in the West retarded the spread of the eremitical ideal.

¹⁰³ The Pachomian monasteries tended to be large. It is estimated that, at the time of Pachomius' death, there were nearly 5000 monks in the monasteries he had founded.

During the fourth and fifth centuries in the East, the leadership of monasticism lay with the hermits who, by their severe austerities, had won such fame that pilgrims from the West would journey to the monastic settlements of Egypt and Syria, with the same pious spirit as they visited the Holy Land. These pilgrims brought wondrous stories of the desert monks back with them. Circumstances throughout the civilized world in the fourth century, "evoked a similar response from Christians of the most varied regions, cultures and social classes",¹⁰⁴ and monasticism, in both forms, passed to the West. In the West, the ascetic life also proved to be the precursor to the monastic life.

Pre-Benedictine monasticism took many forms. As Kathleen Hughes has observed:

The period of pre-Benedictine monasticism was a great adventure, when the potentialities of monastic life for good or ill were still only half-realized. Monasticism was then varied, fluctuating, dependent on the views of a founder, subject for its fulfillment to the will of the individual monk. Born in a flight from the world, it was not nearly so conditioned, as was the secular church, by the structure of contemporary society. Towns and bureaucratic government were not essential to its origin or development.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ RB 1980, p. 43.

¹⁰⁵ K. HUGHES, The Church in Early Irish Society, London, Methuen, [1966], p. 15.

1. Italian solitaries

Christian hermits were known on the mainland of Italy before the visit of Athanasius,¹⁰⁶ and monasteries soon spread over all of Italy.¹⁰⁷ After the Peace of Constantine, many Christians went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and, hearing there about the monks, would then travel to Egypt and Syria to see for themselves. One of the pilgrims who spoke constantly and wrote eloquently about the monastic life was St. Jerome (340-397).¹⁰⁸ St. Ambrose (340-397), who had given his own property to the Church, followed an ascetic life-style, praised virginity and honored consecrated virgins. A different type of monastic observance was introduced by Eusebius, Bishop of Vercelli (d. 371). He had his clerics live in the cathedral under monastic rule. Although it took several centuries to become established, this was the inception of the practice

¹⁰⁶ There are references to some in the writings of several pagan authors, who seemed to regard them as a danger to the social system. See P.F. ANSON, The Call of the Desert: The Solitary Life in the Church, London, SPCK, 1964, p. 46.

¹⁰⁷ E.C. BUTLER, "Monasticism", chap. in The Christian Empire and the Foundation of the Teutonic Kingdoms, vol. 1, The Cambridge Medieval History, eds. H.M. GWATKIN and J.P. WHITNEY, London, Cambridge University Press, 1936, p. 531.

¹⁰⁸ Jerome preached asceticism in Rome between 382 and 385 and won several aristocratic women over to the ascetic life. When he went to Palestine, several went with him to found convents. See J.N.D. KELLY, Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies, London, Duckworth, [1975], pp. 91-103.

that monks become priests as by ordinary rule.¹⁰⁹ This form of monasticism was later introduced into Africa by Augustine, who had discovered such monasteries in Rome when he visited there in 387.

The eremitical life flourished in Italy in the late fourth century; however, neither cenobitic nor eremitic life were characteristic of fourth and fifth century monastic life in the West. Instead, under the influence of Martin of Tours (315/35-397), Honoratus (ca. 359-429) and John Cassian (ca. 360-435) many semi-eremitic settlements were formed.¹¹⁰

2. First eremitical communities in Gaul

There were three main influences on monasticism in Gaul: Martin of Tours, who was responsible for the monastic movement in western Gaul; Honoratus, who founded the monastery of Lérins in eastern Gaul;¹¹¹ and the most influential of all, John Cassian, whose writings were instrumental in adapting Egyptian monasticism to the West.

¹⁰⁹ See BUTLER, "Monasticism", p. 5.2.

¹¹⁰ See GANNON, The Desert, p. 55.

¹¹¹ See F. PRINZ, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich, Munich, Oldenbourg, 1965, pp. 19-117. It was long believed that Gallic monasticism originated with Martin, but the author shows that the Lérins tradition was spread by bishops who had been in contact with that monastery, rather than by those who had been influenced by Aquitaine.

a. Martin of Tours

Martin was born in Sabaria (Hungary) and became a soldier like his father, a Roman legionary. During his military service he was converted to Christianity and, on finishing his military service, he immediately began to lead an ascetic life-style. He travelled for a while and then spent several years living as a hermit off the coast of Liguria (NW Italy) before attaching himself to Hilary, the bishop of Poitiers who was then in exile. In 360, he followed Hilary back to Poitiers and began to live a solitary life at Ligugé, five miles from Poitiers.

He soon attracted disciples and eventually formed a semi-eremitical community, where "each of his monks had his own hut or cell where he worked, ate, and slept, and from which he came out only for religious exercises in a common oratory."¹¹² There was no Rule; Martin preferred to teach by example rather than by law. Ten years later, when he was named Bishop of Tours, he founded another community at Marmoutier¹¹³ two miles from Tours. The community consisted of approximately 80 monks who lived singly in huts and caves. They fasted vigorously and prayed long hours, leav-

¹¹² GANNON, The Desert, p. 55.

¹¹³ See E.C. BUTLER, Benedictine Monachism: Studies in Benedictine Life and Rule, London, Longmans, Green, 1919, p. 18. The place was so hidden that, in effect, Martin could live like a hermit when he was there.

ing their cells only to assemble for prayer or the common meal. Martin continued to live a life of poverty and renunciation and whenever his duties permitted, he withdrew to Marmoutier. He used his travels to propagate monasticism wherever he could.¹¹⁴

b. Hermit-monks of Lérins

Another monastic tradition dominated the eastern part of Gaul, that of the monastery of Lérins.¹¹⁵ It was founded by Honoratus (ca. 410), who began living as a hermit on an island just off the coast of Cannes, Lérins, but soon was joined by other would-be ascetics who sought spiritual direction from him. Each monk had his own cell where he lived in solitude, but all came together for common worship. It is presumed that there was some form of a rule; however, none of Honoratus' writings have survived. Many of these monks became bishops and spread the monastic ideal throughout the Rhone valley.

After the conquest of Gaul by the Franks, the monastic movement continued to spread throughout France. The eremitical life there, as in Egypt, tended to be extreme. As E.C. Butler has noted, "Gregory of Tours gives numerous

¹¹⁴ As bishop, Martin travelled unceasingly to evangelize the pagans in the surrounding areas.

¹¹⁵ See ANSON, The Call, p. 50, n. 2.

examples of hermits, especially in Auvergne, who in their fantastic austerities equalled those of Syria; and his evidence is corroborated by other documents."¹¹⁶

c. John Cassian

Not many years after the foundation of Lérins, John Cassian arrived at Marseilles. One of the architects of Western monasticism, he was responsible for transmitting the various monastic practices of the East to the West, thus profoundly influencing Western monasticism. John Cassian was to "transform the exotic fanaticism of Egypt into a constructive movement which might find a place as part of medieval social life instead of standing outside it."¹¹⁷

John Cassian (ca. 365-435), came from a Latin speaking community (which was probably equally at home in Greek) in what is now Roumania. When still a young man (17 or 18 years of age), he and a friend, Germanus, following the custom of the time, travelled to Palestine to visit the Holy Places and to study monasticism at first hand. They entered a monastery at Bethlehem but two years later were on their way to Egypt, attracted by anchoritism. Over a period of twenty years, they visited the main desert centres

¹¹⁶ See BUTLER, "Monasticism", p. 535.

¹¹⁷ See O. CHADWICK, John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism, Cambridge, Eng., University Press, 1950, p. 4.

talking with many of the Desert Fathers. In Constantinople Germanus was ordained a priest by John Chrysostom and Cassian made a deacon. When, in the midst of the Origenist controversy, Chrysostom was deposed,¹¹⁸ Cassian and Germanus were elected to bring to Rome the protests of the priests loyal to their archbishop. They arrived in Rome in 405 and likely it was there that Cassian was ordained to the priesthood.¹¹⁹

In 415 Cassian erected two monasteries near Marseilles. His intention was to introduce into Europe the solitary life that he had studied in the East. Although many monasteries had been founded since the days of Martin, there was no system or rule to regulate the life. Cassian brought with him an Origenist spirituality for, by the end of the fourth century, the leadership of the monastic movement clearly was held by the Greeks. In his Institutes,¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Chrysostom had put John Cassian and Germanus in charge of the cathedral treasury, a lucrative post which, in the eyes of the local clergy, should not have been given to foreigners. This, plus his criticism of the Empress and his favoring of the Origenists, earned exile for Chrysostom.

¹¹⁹ See L. BOUYER, The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers, vol. 1, History of Christian Spirituality, trans. M.P. Ryan, London, Burns and Oates, 1963, p. 501.

¹²⁰ His Institutes was written for beginners in the monastic life. See The Works of John Cassian, trans. C.S. Gibson, vol. 11, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, eds. H. WACE and P. SCHAFF, Oxford, Parker, 1894, pp. 201-290. A second work, the Conferences, was a study of the Egyptian ideal of

Cassian transcribed the ordinary customs regarding prayer and psalmody, dress, food, obedience, poverty and discipline as lived by the Eastern monks.¹²¹ All the later monastic rules in the West were heavily dependent on Cassian. Copies of the Institutes and the Conferences found their way to monasteries all over Christian Europe.

At that time in the East, the monks had clearly opted for the eremitical ideal, believing that isolation and severe austerities were the essence of the ascetic life. The same thing might have happened in the West but for Cassian, who, although he believed in the eremitical ideal, knew there were few who could withstand the rigors of that life without a long and arduous training. Having been trained in the East, he could point out the dangers of solitude to any but those well trained in the cenobitic life.¹²²

a monk. See J. CASSIAN, Conferences, The Classics of Western Spirituality, trans. and preface by C. Luibheid, introduction by O. Chadwick, New York, Paulist Press, 1985.

¹²¹ Cassian adapted the rules to the situation in Gaul. See P. ROUSSEAU, Ascetics, Authority, and the Church; In the Age of John Cassian, Oxford Historical Monographs, [Oxford], Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 183-188.

¹²² Cassian also condemned those who lived in such isolation that they could not receive the sacraments on the feast days of the Church, those who did not have a rule of life, and those who made up a rule which was not derived from the generally accepted rules. See O. CHADWICK, Introduction to Conferences, p. 5.

3. Celtic eremitical communities

It is not known how the solitary life came to the Churches in Brittany, Ireland, Wales and Scotland but it is commonly assumed it came through Gaul, whether by way of Patrick or not is unknown.¹²³ It is certain that both cenobitical and eremitical life existed side by side.¹²⁴ Dom Butler considered that "in spite of all difficulties of climate, the Irish hermits successfully rivaled in their extraordinary penances and austerities and vigils, the hermits of Egypt, and even those of Syria."¹²⁵

Celtic cenobitism was equally austere.¹²⁶ The Rule of St. Columbanus, the only one which has come down to us from early Irish monasticism, was rather harsh and, although it was not composed in Ireland, it undoubtedly "embodies

¹²³ See N.K. CHADWICK, The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church, The Riddell Memorial Lectures, Thirty-second Series, London, Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. 20-24.

¹²⁴ For a description of Irish monasticism, see K. HUGHES and A. HAMLIN, Celtic Monasticism: The Modern Traveller to the Early Irish Church, New York, Seabury Press, [1981], pp. 1-18.

¹²⁵ BUTLER, "Monasticism", p. 534.

¹²⁶ See GANNON, The Desert, p. 57: "Exhaustive catalogues of sins were drawn up and condign punishments specified. Failure to make the sign of the cross over one's spoon at table, for instance, merited six strokes with the lash; failure to kneel for a blessing when leaving the monastery merited twelve strokes; and speaking alone to a woman without someone else present merited two hundred."

the Irish tradition of monasticism and ascetical discipline."¹²⁷ One unique feature of Celtic monasticism was the wandering of the Irish monks who became missionaries in spite of themselves. The Celtic monks spread their brand of monasticism across much of western Europe. They did little preaching; instead they drew like-minded men around them and founded monastic communities.¹²⁸

B. St. Benedict and the Solitary Life

By the sixth century, monasticism was widespread throughout western Europe. Attempts to rival the Eastern monks in austerities often ended up in anarchy and abuses.

Although in practice monasticism tended to become more and more cenobitical, the theory still was that of the Antonian monachism of Egypt; the dominant feeling was that the more nearly the life could be made to approximate to that of the Egyptian hermits the more perfectly was the monastic ideal being carried out; and the great object of European monks was to emulate those of Egypt.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ BUTLER, "Monasticism", p. 534.

¹²⁸ The Celtic monks, as an act of renunciation, left their homes and people. They brought the Gospel with them but that was not their primary intention. They "would go on a journey, symbolizing their pilgrim state in the world, making their way without fixed abode toward their heavenly home. Finally, when they did settle down, it would be in exile, in a foreign land with foreign people and foreign tongue." See GANNON, The Desert, p. 58. See also J. RYAN, Irish Monasticism: Origins and Early Developments, London, Longmans, 1931, p. 407.

¹²⁹ BUTLER, Benedictine Monachism, p. 21.

Benedict (ca. 480-547) was the genius who "adapted monasticism to Western ideas and Western needs."¹³⁰ His Rule, which was both practical and moderate, is perhaps the most influential document in the history of Western monasticism. By the time of Benedict's birth, Rome had been sacked twice and was ruled by barbarian leaders from 476-535, when the wars began again.

The ecclesiastical scene was equally troubled. The fourth century had been dominated by the Arian heresy and, although it was settled in the East, it remained a problem in the West throughout the fifth and sixth centuries because most of the barbarian invaders had come into contact with Arian missionaries at the time that Arianism had triumphed in the Eastern empire. The problem of Pelagianism and the subsequent controversies about grace were also to trouble the West during the fifth and sixth centuries. Monophysitism was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, but many in the East refused to accept the judgment and went into schism.

All of these factors had an effect on the growth of both cenobitism and eremitism in the West. During this time of great upheaval, there were hermits in abundance but both civil and ecclesiastical authorities soon began attempts to

¹³⁰ BUTLER, "Monasticism", p. 535.

regulate the monastic movement. The existing monasteries followed different rules, but due to the fact that they all drew on the same sources, there were more similarities than divergences among them. Jerome, Ambrose, Cassian, the Lérins school and Augustine had become known everywhere. Much of the Eastern literature was now translated into Latin and the monastic practices of the Eastern monks were taken as a foundation for the West. Benedict composed a rule¹³¹ which was to be the foundational rule for all subsequent Western monasticism.

Sent to Rome to study, Benedict soon realized that the Christians there were still half-pagan. Despairing of being able to lead a Christian life in Rome, he withdrew to a desert region 40 miles from Rome, Subiaco, where he lived as a hermit for three years. Disciples gathered around his hermitage and he eventually formed a community. Benedict turned his back on those elements of the eremitic life which the East considered essential to monasticism: the extreme physical austerities, the individualistic piety, and the desire for a life of pure contemplation.¹³²

¹³¹ Benedict drew upon the monastic rules of life which had preceded him, particularly the Regula Magistri. For a discussion of this document and its contribution to the Rule of Benedict, see RB 1980, pp. 73.

¹³² Benedict did not reject the eremitical life for all, but he believed that for most it was better to confront their own weakness in a community. At the heart of both eremitism and cenobitism is the Christian ideal, the single-

Prayer, even private prayer, was to come out of the Bible. The corporate worship of the Church, the liturgy, was to be the highest form of prayer. Nothing was to interfere with the daily chanting of the divine office in choir which Benedict called the Work of God (opus Dei). The monks spent part of each day in meditative reading of Scripture and the Fathers (lectio divina). Six hours a day were to be spent in some sort of manual work, as "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers would have specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading."¹³³ The Benedictine attitude to work was similar to that of Pachomius, rather than to that of the monks of Southern Egypt where work was sedentary and could be done in the cell.

Like Cassian before him, Benedict believed that the cenobitic life was a necessary preparation for the eremitic

hearted pursuit of God. As had happened in the East, the lives of the desert saints "inspired not only holiness but also ambition, competition, envy, criteria for judging others, and desire to rule others." See M. ROSS, The Fountain and the Furnace: The Way of Tears and Fire, New York, Paulist Press, 1987, p. 108.

¹³³ See RB 1980, 48.1, p. 249. See also GANNON, The Desert, p. 65. For a discussion of the kind of manual labour envisaged by Benedict, see T.F. LINDSAY, Saint Benedict: His Life and Work, London, Burns and Oates, [1949], pp. 127-132. His attitude changed the attitude of Western man to work. Even the lowliest task was consecrated if it was done for God. See H.B. WORKMAN, The Evolution of the Monastic Ideal, London, C.H. Kelly, [1913], pp. 154-155.

one,¹³⁴ and he insisted that a monk be spiritually mature before being allowed to follow the eremitical path. The rule states:

Second there are the anchorites or hermits, who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervour of monastic life. Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they are now trained to fight against the devil. They have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple¹³⁵ single-handed with the vices of body and mind.

C. Monks and Hermits in the Middle Ages

From the sixth to the eleventh centuries, the views of Benedict and Cassian on the eremitical ideal¹³⁶ were

¹³⁴ A. Hastings believes that Benedict not only recognized the superiority of the eremitical life but made provision at Monte Cassino for experienced monks to become hermits there. See A. HASTINGS, "St. Benedict and the Eremitical Life", in Downside Review, 68 (1950), pp. 191-211.

¹³⁵ RB 1980, p.168: "Deinde, secundum genus est anachoritarum, id est eremitarum, horum qui non conversationis fervore novicio, sed monasterii probatione diuturna, qui didicerunt contra diabolum multorum solacio iam docti pugnare, et bene exstructi fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam eremi, securi iam sine consolatione alterius, sola manu vel brachio contra vitia carnis vel cogitationum, Deo auxiliante, pugnare sufficiunt." English translation, ibid., p. 169.

¹³⁶ Benedict believed that the eremitical life was the "perfection of the monastic life", but it was outside the scope of his rule. For those seeking such perfection, there were "the teachings of the holy Fathers, the observance of which will lead him to the very heights of perfection." See

accepted in theory but not always in practice. Thanks to Charlemagne's desire for order in his empire,¹³⁷ by the ninth century most of the monasteries of Europe were Benedictine but, although vast numbers espoused the cenobitic form of monasticism, the eremitic form also persisted. All over Europe monks wrote the stories of secular hermits who were attached to their monasteries or living nearby. Archeological sites have yielded up their cells, and church rolls their names, although frequently they were simply listed as "hermit". The turmoil of the next century brought about a revival of the eremitical life in the Church.

The Church in the tenth century had to struggle with a great deal of corruption, from the highest to the lowest levels. "Men bought and murdered their way to the papacy, maintained their position with terror, and then handed it like a fief to an illegitimate son. Bishops and priests fought over each other's concubines."¹³⁸ The monasteries were not immune to corruption either. Most of them had become wealthy and many were ruled by lay abbots who were barely interested in monastic discipline or, indeed, in any other kind. In 909, William of Aquitaine established a new monastery at Cluny and put it outside all secular control

RB 1980, chapter 73,2, p. 295.

¹³⁷ See RB 1980, p. 105, 124.

¹³⁸ GANNON, The Desert, p.69.

by entrusting it to the Holy See. Cluny led the reform of Western monasticism for the next two hundred years.

Amid the corruption of the times many longed to return to the simpler Eastern ideal and there was a new eremitic revival in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. While many of these hermits followed the traditional path, there were some who, unlike the conventional solitaries, "both expected and welcomed companions; solitude did not mean to be without the company of fellow religious but to be apart from secular society."¹³⁹ These "new hermits" sought a reform of monastic life (i.e., more ascetic and austere lives) rather than the solitary life itself.¹⁴⁰

The traditional eremitic life also thrived in the late Medieval period. In most of Europe and in England,

¹³⁹ H. LEYSER, Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe, 1000-1050, New Studies in Medieval History, London, Macmillan Press, [1984], p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ At Camaldoli in Italy, Romuald (ca. 940-1027) established the first Western community of hermits to live under a rule. The Camaldolese monks lived in separate cells coming out only for prayer in common, meals or chapter. They kept perpetual silence, ate no meat and, in Lent (except for Sunday), fasted on bread and water. Romuald did not write any rule and the constitutions were only drawn up thirty years after his death. In 1084 Bruno of Rheims began a similar hermit community in the mountains of the Grande Chartreuse. The Carthusians of today live essentially the same austere rule they began with in the eleventh century. There were many other such semi-eremitical communities founded, but most either became cenobitic or disappeared altogether.

hermits and recluses flourished until the sixteenth century. The Black Plague, the Hundred Years war, and the Wars of Religion tended more or less to extinguish the eremitical life in every country but France. There, a new eremitic revival¹⁴¹ began soon after the end of the Wars of Religion and endured until the French Revolution.

CONCLUSION

The Gospel calls all Christians to prayer, fasting, penance and, at certain times in their lives, celibacy. However, from the earliest times, some Christians responded to the call of Christ by leading a life of virginity with continuous fasting and prayer. The early ascetics practiced renunciation within the privacy of their families and within the context of the local church and it was not until the end of the second century that they began to distance themselves from the community by moving to the outskirts of towns and villages. In the fourth century, another factor was added to the existing elements of prayer, fasting and celibacy: that of solitude.

The earliest Christians sought to follow Christ by imitating his life but, as the persecutions increased, the ideal of martyrdom was seen as the ultimate expression of

¹⁴¹ See S. BONNET and B. GOULEY, Les ermites, Paris, Fayard, 1980, p. 175, where the revival is described as "l'apogée des ermites français."

discipleship. In times of peace, the model of physical martyrdom was replaced by one of "spiritual" martyrdom.

After the Peace of Milan, the Church gradually changed from a persecuted minority to the established church of the state. This brought many problems which were not always handled wisely. The ascetics, in particular, believed that the highest ideals of the Church were being compromised. This increased their desire to put even more distance between themselves and the secular world and, in order to do so, they began to move out into the desert, there to lead extremely austere lives in solitude. This radical separation from society was the hallmark of the monastic movement.

With the visit of Athanasius to Rome, the subsequent diffusion of a Latin translation of the Vita Antonii, as well as the wondrous stories brought back by pilgrims, the movement spread to the West where many Christians were already leading ascetic lives. These then began to live as solitaries and to inspire others to do the same. Geographic and climatic factors influenced the Western form to some extent, but the asceticism, poverty and solitude which marked the Eastern solitaries were equally present in the West.

Solitary life was common until the end of the Middle Ages when it disappeared from everywhere except France. How

did the lives of the medieval solitaries in the West reflect the ideal of the Desert Fathers? What was the solitary life like in the late medieval period when it was so widespread? What were the common elements that were found in the lives of the early monks and the medieval solitaries? Which of these would apply to our century? What was the relationship, if any, between the solitary and the bishop of the diocese? What rules did they follow? We shall attempt to answer these questions in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II

MEDIEVAL EREMITICAL LIFE IN ENGLAND

In the West, the eremitical life developed slowly from the sixth to the tenth century, and flourished in certain areas until the sixteenth century when the Reformation radically changed the situation. In this chapter we shall consider its development in the West as reflected in the conciliar legislation concerning solitaries, the responsibilities of the bishop toward solitaries, their profession and enclosure, and the various rules of life that they followed. This is well documented in the statutes of various synods that took place between the sixth and the sixteenth centuries. England was chosen as the focus of the study, since the solitaries on the continent usually lived in groups for mutual support, while those in England tended to live alone or, rarely, in twos and threes.

Between 550 and 1150, hermits for the most part were monks,¹ but, that there were also lay hermits is attested by the chronicles of monastic houses. These annals testify to the presence of both monks and laity living the solitary life adjacent to monasteries. The hermits lived alone, or

¹ In the fourth century the terms hermit, anchorite and monk were synonymous. In the medieval period, the terms came to have different meanings. A hermit (usually male) was free to leave the hermitage at any time. An anchorite (male recluse) or anchoress (female recluse) entered a cell or a small house and never again left it. A monk was a member of a monastic community.

with one or two companions, and led more austere and more contemplative lives than the cenobites.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, although the traditional hermits and recluses continued to exist in continental Europe, a new kind of hermit appeared.² Like the traditional hermit these "new" hermits sought solitude, but, unlike their predecessors, they expected and welcomed companions.³ Many were monks who wanted to reform monasticism, but others were lay people who wanted to follow the solitary life. Like the earliest monks in the East, they wanted to relive the life of the apostles (vita apostolica), and revive the model of the early Church (vita primitiva). These solitaries grouped together and formed religious communities such as the Camaldolese (ca. 1012 by St. Romuald), the Carthusians (1084 by St Bruno) and the Cistercians (1098 by St. Robert of Molesme).

In Europe, the movement reached its height between 1075 and 1125, flourishing in France and Italy, but to a

² For a comprehensive account of this eremitical movement, see H. LEYSER, Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe, 1000-1150, New Studies in Medieval History, London, Macmillan Press, 1984. See also L'Eremitismo in occidente nei secoli XI e XII: atti della seconda Settimana internazionale di studio, Mendola, 30 agosto - 6 settembre 1962 (=Eremitismo), Miscellanea del Centro di studi medioevali, vol. 4, Milano, Societ editrice Vita e pensiero, 1965.

³ See LEYSER, Hermits and the New Monasticism, pp. 18-20.

lesser extent in other countries.⁴ In England, the movement never really took root although, with the exception of Italy, no other country had as many hermits and recluses (anchorites) during that period.⁵ We will consider some of the synodal statutes directed to these solitaries, as well as some of the early conciliar legislation which concerned problems relating to ecclesiastical control of the solitary life.

I. MEDIEVAL LEGISLATION

A. Some Early Councils

These early councils produced a series of canons which ratified the authority of the bishop over the solitaries in his diocese, sometimes, an authority shared with an abbot. In 465, c. 7 of a Synod held in Vannes, Brittany, forbade a monk to separate from his community and inhabit an individual cell, until he had been strongly tested in eremitic labors. The permission of the abbot was also

⁴ See ibid., p. 35.

⁵ See H. DAUPHIN, "L'érémisme en Angleterre aux XI^e et XII^e siècles", in Eremitismo, p. 303. See also O. DOERR, Das Institut der Inklusen in Süddeutschland, Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinerordens, vol. 18, ed. I. HERWEGEN, Münster, Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934, pp. 30, 36 and passim. See also L. GOUGAUD, Ermîtes et reclus: études sur d'anciennes formes de vie religieuse, Moines et monastères, vol. 5, Liège, Abbaye Saint-Martin, 1928, pp. 119-127.

required.⁶ In 506, the same canon was included in synodal legislation issued in the diocese of Agde in southern Gaul.⁷ The First Synod of Orleans, in 511, decreed that no monk could leave his monastery to live in a separate cell, without the permission of either the abbot or the bishop.⁸ The same council also declared that all abbots were under the authority of the diocesan bishop.⁹

In 646, the seventh national Synod of Toledo decreed that no one was to be admitted to the highest form of asceticism (reclusi), unless he had spent a probationary period in a monastery beforehand, to learn about and practice the

⁶ See Concilium Veneticum, c. 7, in Concilia Galliae: A. 314 - A. 506, ed. C. MUNIER, Corpus Christianorum, Series latina, vol. 148, Turnholti, Typographi Brepols, 1963, p. 153: "Seruandum quoque de monachis, ne eis ad solitarias cellulas liceat a congregatione discedere, nisi forte probatis post emeritos labores aut propter infirmitatis necessitatem asperior ab abbatibus regula remittatur. Quod ita demum fiet, ut intra monasterii septa manentes, tamen sub abbatis potestate separatas habere cellulas permittantur."

⁷ See Concilium Agathense, c. 38, in ibid., p. 208.

⁸ See Concilium Aurelianense, c. 22, in Concilia Galliae: A. 511 - A. 695, ed. C. de CLERCQ, Corpus Christianorum, Series latina, vol. 148A, Turnholti, Typographi Brepols, 1963, p. 11: "Nullus monachus congregatione monasterii derelicta ambitionis et uanitatis impulso cella construere sene episcopi permissione uel abbatis sui uoluntate praesumat."

⁹ See ibid., c. 19, p. 10: "Abbates pro humilitate religionis in episcoporum potestate consistant et, si quid extra regulam fecerint, ab episcopis conrigantur; qui semel in anno, in loco ubi episcopus elegerit, accepta uocatione conueniant."

monastic life.¹⁰ A council held at Frankfurt in 794, decreed that (unlike the statute of Orleans), the approval of both the bishop and the abbot was necessary for a monk who wished to enter into reclusion.¹¹

In addition to these western councils, reference could also be made to the eastern Trullan Synod, called in 692, to pass the disciplinary canons of the fifth (553) and sixth (680) general Councils of Constantinople. C. 41 decreed that

Those wishing to depart from cities or villages where they are living in cloisters, and to look after themselves alone by themselves, must first enter a Monastery, and become duly accustomed to anchoretic conduct, and to submit for three years straight to the Prior of the Monastery in fear of God, and to fulfill obedience fittingly in all respects; and thus while confessing a predilection for such a life, they may embrace this with all their heart, and the fact must appear and be verified by test of trial by the local president [the bishop]. It is wishable, though, that they may spend another year staying outside by waiting with fortitude in the cloister so that their aim may come to light more clearly. For they shall afford clear

¹⁰ See c. 5 in G. MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio...*, (=MANSI), Paris, H. Welter, 1903-1907, vol. 10, col. 769: "Deinceps autem, quicumque ad hoc sanctum propositum venire disposuerint, non aliter illis id dabitur assequi, neque hoc antea potuerunt adipisci, nisi prius in monasteriis constituti, et secundum sanctas monasteriorum regulas plenius eruditi, et dignitatem honestae vitae, et notitiam potuerunt sanctae promereri doctrinae."

¹¹ See c. 10 in MANSI, vol. 17B, col. 266: "Ut reclusi non fiant nisi quos ante Episcopus provinciae atque Abbas comprobaverint, et secundum eorum dispositionem in reclusionis loco ingrediantur."

evidence that they are not hunting empty glory, i.e. are not in pursuit of vainglory, but are striving after this quietude for the sake of what is really good itself. When such a long time has been completed, those who persist in the same preference shall be shut up and it shall no longer be possible for them to leave this solitary confinement when they want to, except and unless it is for the common advantage and benefit, or some other necessity forcing them towards death, and they are being drawn towards this alternative, and thus, with the blessing of the local Bishop. But apart from the said pretexts, in case they should attempt to make an exit from their resorts (or dungeons), the first formality is that they must be duly imprisoned in the said cloister against their will, and must be forced to fast again and again, and to submit to other hardships, so as to be made well aware of the fact that "No one who, after putting his hand to the plow, looks back, is fit for the Kingdom of Heaven."¹²

¹² See c. 41 in MANSI, vol. 11, col. 963: "Eos qui in urbibus vel vicis in clausuras volunt secedere, et sibi ipsis separatim attendere, prius quidem in monasterium ingredi oportet et anachoreticam, hoc est, ab aliis separatam ac semotam, vivendi rationem exercere, et spatio triennii ei, qui mansioni praeest, in Dei timore parere; et obedientiam in omnibus, ut aequum est, implere; et ita hujus vitae eligendae institutum profitentes; et quod eam ex toto corde sua sponte amplectuntur, ab ejus loci praesule examinari: deinde sic alio anno extra clausuram fortiter se gerere: ut scopus eorum evadat manifestior. Tum enim plene ac perfecte significabunt, quod non inanem gloriam captantes, sed propter ipsum revera pulcrum ac honestum hoc otium persequuntur. Post tanti autem temporis complementum, si in eodem eligendae vitae instituto permaneant, includi ipsos, et eis non amplius licere, quando voluerint, ex tali mansione egredi, praeterquam si propter communem utilitatem, vel aliam necessitatem ad mortem urgentem, ad id trahantur; et ita cum benedictionem ejus loci episcopi. Qui autem sine his jam dictis causis ex suis habitaculis exire aggrediuntur, primo quidem vel invitos dicta clausura coerceri, deinde jejuniis et aliis afflictionibus ipsos curare scientes, quemadmodum scriptum est, quod nemo qui manum aratro immisit, et retro conversus est, aptus regno coelorum." English translation in *The Rudder*, trans. D. Cummings, Chicago, Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957, p. 338.

This canon was directed to those who wanted to live the eremitical life without sufficient training. The very next canon addressed those who wanted to use the name of "hermit" without living the eremitical life, the so-called "false hermit".

As touching so-called hermits, who dressed in black and with a growth of hair on their head go about the cities and associate with laymen and women, and insult their own profession, we decree, if they choose to tonsure their hair and adopt the habit (or garb) of other Monks, that they be installed in a Monastery and be enrolled with their brethren there. But if they do not prefer to do so, they must be driven out of the cities altogether and be forced to dwell in deserts, from which they¹³ formed the name they have applied to themselves.

These "false hermits" had been the bane of the genuine hermits from the beginning, and contributed in no

Cummings, Chicago, Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957, p. 338.

¹³ See c. 42 in MANSI, vol. 11, col. 963: "Eos qui dicuntur eremitae, qui quidem nigris vestibus induti, et capite comati urbes obeunt, et cum viris saecularibus ac mulieribus versantur, et propriae professioni faciunt injuriam, statuimus, si elegerint quidem tonsis comis reliquorum monachorum amictum suscipere, eos in monasterio constitui, et inter fratres referri. Quod si hoc non elegerint, ex urbibus expelli, et solitudines habitare, ex quibus sibi etiam denominationes confinxere." English translation in The Rudder, p. 340.

little way to the eventual demise of eremitical life in the late Medieval period in the West.¹⁴

B. Late Medieval English Synods

The early Western councils envisaged a certain degree of collaboration between the bishop and the abbot. In the East, the monks had been under the jurisdiction of the bishop since the time of Basil, but there is little evidence of such episcopal-monastic interaction in England during the early Middle Ages.¹⁵ In the early Church the metropolitan summoned councils twice a year but by the eighth century an annual council had become the rule.

One of the purposes of the diocesan synod in the early centuries was to communicate the decisions of the councils of the Church to the priests and laity. In the

¹⁴ See D. CHADWICK, Social Life in the Days of Piers Plowman, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Cambridge, University Press, 1922, pp. 36-37. "Piers Plowman" was the title of a long poem written by William Langland in the fourteenth century. Describing the miserable homes of the poor and the beggar-haunted highways, he exposed the plight of the poorer classes, as well as the corruption and indifference of bishops, pardoners etc. The hermit in the thirteenth century had usually been considered a holy man, but by the fourteenth century, holy hermits "were as rare as holy friars" because so many scoundrels, dressed in the garb of hermits, begged in the streets and then spent the money in taverns, to the scandal of the rest of the population.

¹⁵ It should be noted that many of the stories of the hermits and anchorites were written by monks who might not remark on episcopal supervision. If any bishops did take part in these enclosures, there is no mention of it.

early Middle Ages, there is some evidence that synods were still being held regularly¹⁶ for this purpose, but by the twelfth century this was no longer true. However, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215),¹⁷ decreed that the bishops had to meet annually in provincial councils.¹⁸

The diocesan synod was less a statute-making body than a method of pastoral instruction,¹⁹ and since the bishop was concerned in any litigation involving church property, this also had to be dealt with at the diocesan synod. The statutes were binding on the subjects of the

¹⁶ The early regulations for provincial councils decreed that two councils were to be held annually; one in the autumn and one in the summer. We don't know whether this custom was generally followed or not. See C.R. CHENEY, English Synodalia of the Thirteenth Century, London, Oxford University Press, 1941, p. 15.

¹⁷ This council was called by Pope Innocent III to prepare for a new crusade and to plan reform measures for the universal Church. Its chief significance lay in the seventy decrees promulgated: pronouncements on doctrine, discipline, and procedure which changed the face of ecclesiastical government.

¹⁸ These councils legislated for the whole province and published both general and provincial canons. For a more comprehensive discussion of the effects of the diocesan synod in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see CHENEY, English Synodalia, pp. 34-50; see also C.R. CHENEY, "Legislation of the Medieval English Church", in English Historical Review, 50 (1935), pp. 193-224; 385-417.

¹⁹ One of the gravest problems in the medieval Church was the ignorance of the diocesan clergy. Sometimes illiterate, they often knew little of the faith, and the bishops often used the synods to teach such subjects as sacraments or morals. The priests were expected to keep copies of the statutes, and be familiar with their content.

particular bishop who had called the synod (unless they came from Rome), but they were often copied by other dioceses.

In 1125, a priest, Wulfric of Haselbury,²⁰ became an anchorite "without any appointment of the bishop, with no solemnity of benediction, but by the authority of the Holy Spirit who dwelt within, he buried himself with Christ in a cell close to the church."²¹ Although Wulfric apparently did not seek the blessing of the bishop, he did have the consent of the local patron, one William Fitzwalter. The approval of the patron,²² and the incumbent of the church to which the anchorite wished to be attached, were obligatory, and it is likely these permissions had been sought. No reason is given as to why he did not visit the bishop as well; nevertheless, during the thirty-year period that

²⁰ An anchorite (or recluse) stayed within a cell or small house and never left. A hermit was free to leave the hermitage at any time. Wulfric was well-known in England for his prophecies and miracles of healing. See H. MAYR-HARTIG, "Function of a Twelfth-Century Recluse", in History, 60 (1975), pp. 337-352.

²¹ R.M. CLAY, The Hermits and Anchorites of England, The Antiquary's Books, London, Methuen, 1914, p. 90.

²² See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 91, where the author recounts the story of an anchoress in Bristol who, aided by the townspeople, took up abode in a cell without having obtained the permission of the patron. In this case, the patron was the local abbey, and both anchoress and townspeople "confessed that they had acted presumptuously and contrary to justice, and sought forgiveness from Robert the Lord Abbot." Since every town wanted to have its own anchorite, possibly the death of the previous occupant of the cell had driven the townspeople to such "presumption".

Wulfric spent in the cell, he and the bishop maintained close relations,²³ despite the absence of episcopal permission at the time of enclosure. It would seem that in England in the twelfth century, "the mechanisms of episcopal control existed and were known at this time. Compliance, however, was only occasional and noncompliance still acceptable."²⁴ By the thirteenth century, such noncompliance was no longer acceptable and statutes were being drawn up to regulate the external lives of anchorites and hermits. The problems attendant on the solitary life, as well as its lifestyle, are reflected in these statutes.

There seem to have been more problems with anchorites, whose needs had to be met by others, than with hermits who were free to meet their own. According to one of the earliest extant sets of English diocesan statutes, those of Archbishop Stephen Langton of Canterbury,²⁵ the parish priest had to warn any anchorites he had in the parish, not

²³ See A.K. WARREN, Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p. 56.

²⁴ WARREN, Anchorites, p. 56.

²⁵ These statutes, written in 1213, preceded the Fourth Lateran Council, and they were copied by other English dioceses in the following decades. See "Statutes of Archbishop Stephen Langton for the Diocese of Canterbury", in Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205-1313, eds. F.M. POWICKE and C.R. CHENEY, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964, vol. 2, part 1, p.23.

to receive a woman into his household at night.²⁶ In 1219, Richard Poore,²⁷ then Bishop of Salisbury (1217-1228), borrowed Langton's canon, made it applicable to anchoresses as well, added that no valuables were to be left for safekeeping with either anchorites or anchoresses,²⁸ and issued it as a diocesan statute for his diocese.²⁹

Sometime between 1222 and 1225, an unidentified³⁰ diocese issued a statute forbidding anchorites and hermits

²⁶ See c. 57 in Councils and Synods, p. 35: "Moneat quoque quilibet sacerdos inclusum, si habeat in parochia sua, ne mulierculam aliquam recipiat in hospitio de nocte."

²⁷ Richard Poore was bishop successively of Chichester, Salisbury, and Durham. His statutes were among the most influential of the medieval diocesan statutes. Widely published, and widely borrowed, they drew upon the decrees of the Third and Fourth Lateran Council, the synodal statutes of Paris attributed to Bishop Odo de Sully (1196-1208), and the first statutes of Stephen Langton written for Canterbury (1213).

²⁸ At a time when no banks as such existed, it may have been customary to leave valuables in an anchorage. See WARREN, Anchorites, pp. 111-112.

²⁹ See c. 80 in Councils and Synods, p. 86: "Moneat quilibet sacerdos viros inclusos, si habeat in parochia sua, ne mulierculam recipiat de nocte in domo sua, similiter nec mulier masculum, nec deposita sine testimonio sacerdotis et virorum fide dignorum."

³⁰ These statutes were issued for an unidentified English diocese sometime after Richard Poore issued his statutes for Salisbury (1219) and after the Council of Oxford (1222) but the name of the diocese is unknown. The Bodleian Library has a manuscript of these statutes, written in the first half of the thirteenth century but without title or origin. See Councils and Synods, p. 139.

from acting as confessors.³¹ This may have been because many of the people visiting anchorites or hermits left alms and tithes there, rather than in their own parish churches, thus upsetting the parochial system.³²

Between 1228 and 1234, the then Bishop of Salisbury, Robert Bingham, affirmed that Poore's statutes were still in force, but restricted the erection of any new anchorholds and ordered that old ones were to be demolished when the anchorites died. The only anchorholds to be retained were those which were sufficiently endowed to sustain a recluse.³³ Sometime between 1244 and 1252, Richard Wych, Bishop of Chichester, ordered anchorites not to receive any questionable persons in their cells, nor to speak to any but

³¹ See c. 34 in Councils and Synods, p. 146: "...prohibentes firmiter ne religiosi, monachi, videlicet, canonici, anachorite, vel heremete, subditum alicuius audeant ad penitentiam admittere." Some manuscripts add "sine sui licentia prelati, salva in omnibus apostolice sedis auctoritate."

³² See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 90, where the author reports on such a case. The final agreement between the vicar, wardens, parishioners and William Popeley, hermit of Whytford bridge, fixed that "tithes and dues were commuted for fixed obligations at the principal feasts, when the Bridge-chaplain must, like all other parishioners, make his oblations. The vicar was to say mass yearly at St. Anne's chapel, and in return for his labour, should receive 4d. and a good dinner from the hermit."

³³ See c. 32 in Councils and Synods, p. 379: "Nova inclusoria fieri prohibemus, vetera decedentibus inclusis dirui precipientes, illis exceptis que auctoritate pontificum ab antiquo sunt constructa, certos et sufficientes redditus habentia ad sustentationem inclusorum."

those whose characters were above suspicion. He added that custody of church vestments was not to be given to anchoresses, unless absolutely necessary, and even then, the recluse was not to be seen when receiving them.³⁴

The problem of possible misbehaviour between parochial chaplains and anchoresses was addressed by a Norwich statute which enjoined such chaplains not to speak to recluses within the enclosure of their cells, but only at the window in full sight of any passing by, to speak only of spiritual matters, and to make the conversation brief. Only in the case of illness could other arrangements be made.³⁵

³⁴ See c. 69 in Councils and Synods, p. 465: "Inclusa etiam precipimus ne quam personam in domibus suis recipiant vel habeant, de qua sinistra suspicio oriatur. Fenestras quoque arctas habeant et honestas. Eisdem etiam cum hiis tantummodo personis secretum tractatum habere permittimus, quarum gravitas et honestas suspensionem non admittit. Inclusis vero mulieribus custodia vestimentorum ecclesie non tradatur; quod si necessitas hoc exegerit, ita caute tradi mandamus ut non inspiciantur incluse a tradente." Custody of church vestments was often forced on the anchoress by a parish priest who, if she refused, would threaten to withdraw his service of confession and communion. It may have been this element of duress that the Bishop addressed. See P.J.F. ROSOF, Anchoresses in Twelfth Century Society, Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1978, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI, 1985, p. 95.

³⁵ See c. 62 in ibid., p. 359: "Dolentes referimus quod, dum nostri subditi statuta nostra synodalia non observant, seipsos illaqueant nosque contempnere non formidant. Cum igitur, refragante nostra constitutione, capellani parochiales cum anachoritis in domibus suis colore quesito cum ancillis earundem extra reclusorium transmissis fabulenter frequenter, in ecclesie dei scandalum et animarum dispendium non modicum, singulis decanis nostris in virtute obedientie iniungimus ut omnes capellanos, ecclesiis ubi degunt anachorite deservientes, sacramento astringant quod

II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEDIEVAL BISHOP

A. Suitability of the Candidate

The medieval bishops took their duties toward solitaries seriously. If someone was approved too easily and then caused a scandal in the diocese, it would reflect on the bishop. Hermits, once they had received their license, posed less of a financial problem than did anchorites. The problems the bishops encountered in the eremitical life came not from genuine hermits, but from "false" hermits. These men begged in the streets and then spent the money in taverns. They were mostly idlers who were too lazy to work for a living. By the fifteenth century the word "hermit" was beginning to be a joke. There was little the civil authorities could do about them, other than demand to see their episcopal licenses.

Bishops were especially concerned that recluses not become dependent on the diocese for financial assistance, and were wary of enclosing anyone who could not prove to be sufficiently endowed. The bishops were concerned, not only that they might find out too late that a recluse was in des-

infra septa domorum earundem cum ipsis non loquantur, set tantummodo ad fenestras earundem versus ecclesias requisiti, honestum impendant colloquium, nisi infirmitas earundem aliud requirat manifeste. Precipimus etiam quod brevius se expediant, et precipue de hiis que ad salutem animarum pertinent tractantes cum eisdem."

perate need of food or fuel, but also, a large number of impoverished anchorites might well stretch the slender resources of the diocese. Perhaps the best example of the charge of the bishop toward solitaries is summed up in a canon attributed to Edmund Rich,³⁶ but of unknown origin. That canon, articulated in the late fourteenth century, is a good example of the cautious attitude of bishops toward anchorites. The canon states:

We straitly command that neither men, neither women, be shut up in any place without special license of the Diocesan, the place, the manners, the₃₇ quality of the persons diligently considered...

³⁶ "St. Edmund's canon", as recent scholarship has shown, was not written by Edmund Rich when he was Archbishop of Canterbury (1234-1240), nor by any other metropolitan legislating for a province. It was unknown before the late fourteenth century and its provenance remains unknown. It is important because it is a summary of good episcopal procedure rather than a reply to an abuse. See WARREN, *Anchorites*, pp. 88-89; see also C.R. CHENEY, "The Earliest English Diocesan Statutes", in *English Historical Review*, 75 (1960), pp. 18-23.

³⁷ See W. LYNDWOOD, *Provinciale... cui adjiciuntur Constitutiones Legatine d. Othonis et d. Othoboni... cum ... profundissimis annotationibus Johannis de Athona*, Oxford, 1679, reprint, Farnborough, Hants, Eng., Gregg International Publishers, 1968, p. 214: "Ad haec districtius inhibemus, ne inclusi vel inclusae constituantur alicubi sine licentia loci Dioecesani speciali, pensatis loci moribus..." English translation in *Lyndwood's Provinciale; the Text of the Canons Therein Contained, Reprinted from the Translation Made in 1534*, eds. J.V. BULLARD and H. CHALMER BELL, London, Faith Press, 1929, title 20, p. 87.

Lyndwood,³⁸ writing a gloss on this canon in the fifteenth century, emphasized the continuity of the bishop-anchorite relationship, and underlined the financial responsibility of the bishop in these matters.

The Diocesan should consider whether the spot desired for an enclosure is near to, or far from, a church; whether it is in town or in the country -- as a Recluse's necessities are more quickly supplied in a town than in the country; whether it be near to or far from, a monastery-- by whose alms the Recluse can receive sustenance. [The Diocesan should also consider] whether he be a Religious or a Secular Cleric or a layman, a man or a woman, one with or without previous experience of the rigour of the life, a young man or an old man -- or other [points] of this description. If they have not private property affording a sufficient livelihood they ought not lightly to be enclosed... To have some regard for those subordinate to episcopal jurisdiction, and to see that they be not driven to seek their means of subsistence under [uncertain] conditions is assuredly a Bishop's duty... A Bishop should take care therefore not to enclose any but those mentioned already in this chapter, and to be certain of their future subsistence: otherwise, as I reasonably judge, he will be bound to provide from his own table for those enclosed by him.³⁹

³⁸ William Lyndwood, (ca. 1375-1446), the chancellor of Canterbury, published a digest of the synodal constitutions of the province of Canterbury from 1222-1416) with a commentary. It remains a standard authority on English ecclesiastical law. See C.R. CHENEY, "William Lyndwood's Provinciale", in The Jurist, 21 (1961), pp. 405-434.

³⁹ See F.D.S. DARWIN, The English Medieval Recluse, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944, p. 53.

It can be seen that the bishop really had a fivefold responsibility in regard to recluses. He had to make certain that the person was fit for the life, approve a suitable site for the anchorage, ensure that the recluse was suitably endowed financially, perform the rite of enclosure and generally supervise the life of the recluse over an extended period of time. Furthermore, confessors had to be appointed, alms distributed, legislation promulgated to correct any abuses, and responsibility taken to ensure that the recluses remained true to their vocation. All of these were the legal obligations of the diocesan bishop, although they were usually delegated to a commission of priests, archdeacons or monks. The relationship between bishop and anchorite was a much closer one than that of bishop and hermit, for the bishop, in effect, became the spiritual father of the recluse, and knowingly accepted that responsibility when he authorized the act of reclusion.⁴⁰ A monk could become a hermit with the permission of his abbot, but he could become an anchorite only with the combined consent of his abbot and of the diocesan bishop.⁴¹ A layman needed the bishop's permission before taking either step. In the

⁴⁰ By virtue of his office, the bishop was responsible for all the solitaries in his diocese and only he could authorise reclusion. The rite of enclosure was usually performed by the suffragan or auxiliary bishop.

⁴¹ See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 85.

last resort, the bishop was responsible for both hermits and anchorites, unless they were within a monastery.

B. Solitary Dwellings

1. Hermits

Hermits were not bound to stay in their cells as anchorites were, and thus could, and did, build their dwellings anywhere. Among the most popular areas, especially for the early hermits, were the islands in and around England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Many an inland fen had islands cut off from the mainland by marshes and rivers where hermits were wont to retire.⁴² Forests and caves also had their share of hermits seeking solitude. Since the king was lord of the forests, it was usually he who endowed any hermitages there.⁴³

The forest and island hermits yearned primarily for solitude; but there were, however, other hermits who sought reclusion in places where they could also be of service to others. In medieval times, the Church was responsible for the maintenance and building of lighthouses, bridges, roads

⁴² See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, pp. 1-16 for stories of the island and fen hermits.

⁴³ See ibid., pp. 17-48, for cave and forest hermits.

and harbours, as this was considered a work of mercy.⁴⁴ Hermits often acted as lighthouse keepers⁴⁵ or maintained roads and bridges.⁴⁶ Sometimes they even constructed the road or bridge itself.⁴⁷ In lonely forests, maintaining the road meant removing fallen trees or filling in the deep ruts left after heavy rains. Usually a chapel was built by the side of the road or at one end of the bridge, and this was maintained by the hermit. Hermits occasionally built their hermitages close to rivers and became responsible for ferrying travellers across. In the fens flooding was frequent and travelers often left in great peril. The repair of

⁴⁴ In 1530, legislation was passed which put the repair of bridges and roads on those who used them. Shortly afterwards, the suppression of religious houses brought new owners of church property who cared little about maintaining charities of this kind.

⁴⁵ It was considered a work of mercy to keep lighthouses and thus aid Christians exposed to the perils of the sea. Indeed, many of the medieval lighthouses still standing in England were first maintained by hermits. See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, pp. 49-56.

⁴⁶ See J.J. JUSSERAND, English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages; XIVth Century, trans. L.T. Smith, 8th ed., London, T.F. Unwin, 1891, p.p. 117-175; see also CLAY, Anchorites and Hermits, pp. 57-65.

⁴⁷ In the twelfth century a confraternity was founded in France to build bridges or, if that was not possible, to aid people crossing the river. It was the Bridge Friars (the Pontifes) who built the celebrated Pont d'Avignon. See JUSSERAND, English Wayfaring Life, p. 38; P. Péano, "Pontieri", in Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione, vol. 7, Roma, Ed. Paoline, 1983, cols 85-92.

bridges and highways did not become a matter of government legislation until 1530-1531.⁴⁸

2. Anchorites

The anchorite's cell frequently abutted a parish church, a monastery, a chapel or a hospital. Sometimes the anchorite lived in a small house in the churchyard or in the cemetery. In England, the cell customarily held one occupant (sometimes two)⁴⁹ and a servant. Anchorages were found in small villages or in cities⁵⁰ such as London, Lincoln or York. Usually the anchorage was close to a church to satisfy the spiritual needs of the recluse and, at the same time, to bestow spiritual benefits on the parishioners.

If the cell abutted the church, it commonly had a small window which communicated with the church, and through

⁴⁸ A Justice of the Peace would make inquiries regarding the conditions of the bridges and nearby highways. If nobody was repairing them, he then levied taxes. These taxes were often resented by the people, who apparently preferred to be almsgivers rather than ratepayers. See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 64.

⁴⁹ See WARREN, Anchorites, p. 30, for a comprehensive view of the situation on the continent.

⁵⁰ See J. HUBERT, "L'Erémisme de l'archéologie. Appendice: Les recluseries urbaines au Moyen Age", in Eremitismo, pp. 485-487. The author reports that urban cells were most common in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

which the occupant could see the altar and participate in the Mass. Through the same window the anchorite received communion and went to confession, or heard confessions if he were a priest. Another window, covered for the most part by a curtain of double thickness with a big cross on it, was used to receive food and other necessities, as well as to talk with people who came seeking counsel or advice. A third window, covered with glass or horn, let in light. The anchorage often contained an oratory, where a priest could celebrate Mass. Most of the extant services of reclusion provide for the bishop's blessing the altar of the recluse.

There was no rule concerning the size of the anchorage, the size of the rooms, or even the number of rooms. The cell might have two or three rooms, and frequently there was a garden. Normally the dwelling was built for one recluse, however, there are documents to suggest that occasionally two or three recluses did live together. Then the hermitage would be modified so that each had separate cells, sharing perhaps a common room. Sometimes recluses had to live together simply because there was a lack of anchorages for those who wished to be enclosed.⁵¹

⁵¹ For example, in Yorkshire in 1321, a nun was enclosed with another anchoress already in residence, and in 1402, one Margaret Lakenby was to be enclosed with Emmota Sherman, providing Emmota consented. Two-cell anchorages were acceptable in England but certainly not typical. The three-cell anchorage used by the three sisters for whom the Ancrene Riwe was written, seems to have been the only one

C. Modes of Subsistence

Support for hermits and anchorites came from the highest level of royalty to the lowest cottager in the realm. Most patrons believed that they were assuring their future salvation by being charitable to hermits, anchorites, or even to monasteries. The hermit or anchorite in medieval England was considered quite commonplace, merely one among many individuals or groups believed worthy of medieval charity. Until the Reformation, the English kings maintained many hermits and anchorites for life, by offering pension grants or grants of royal alms.⁵² These were established by writ and continued yearly until the death of the recipient, when the money would be designated for another individual who wished to become a hermit or an anchorite. The aristocracy and gentry also supported hermits and anchorites, although on a less generous scale than the royal response.⁵³ It was common for medieval guilds to support a hermit or anchorite, and many merchants left money to hermits and anchorites in their wills. Generally, the money appears to have been left to solitaries known to the deceased, and was given in the expectation that the hermit or

of its kind. See WARREN, Anchorites, pp. 33-36.

⁵² See WARREN, Anchorites, pp. 127-185 for a full description of royal patronage toward anchorites.

⁵³ See ibid., pp. 186-221 for a discussion of aristocratic and gentry support of recluses.

recluse would continue to pray for the repose of that person's soul.⁵⁴

1. Self-support

Hermits were free to move about and thus were largely responsible for their own support. Unlike recluses, the hermit was not dependent on society for his upkeep and, unlike recluses, had a wide choice of financial possibilities:

He [the hermit] taught and preached, celebrated divine offices in his chapel for the benefit of wayfarers, or acted as guardian of some shrine; he gathered alms for the relief of the poor at home, or for the freeing of those in captivity amongst the heathen; he helped to cultivate the waste places of the land and clear the forest; he made roads and bridges and kept them in repair; he erected sea-marks and lighthouses for the guidance of mariners. In fact, the hermits were pioneers of philanthropic works which in these days⁵⁵ are undertaken and carried out by public bodies.

Likewise, unlike recluses, the hermit took a vow of poverty. Hermits also acted as chaplains to leper-houses.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See ibid., pp. 222-264 for an examination of merchant and other lay support of anchorites.

⁵⁵ CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. xvii.

⁵⁶ Leprosy had been known in England before the Crusades, but it became much worse after them. Leprosy cut the sufferer off from all ordinary life. Once diagnosed, a leper could not enter church, assembly, bake-house or the market ever again; instead, the patient had to withdraw to a leper-house (usually after some sort of religious ceremony). By 1250, nearly every town and village in England had its

Two unused Norfolk churches employed hermits as resident caretakers.⁵⁷ The hermit in the busy seaport of Sandwich was supposed to pray for the townspeople, and also act as a special chaplain to visitors and to the poor.⁵⁸

Kings and the wealthy of the aristocratic class often made gifts of money to hermits. These gratuities were differentiated from those given anonymously or through an almoner. It remains unclear how often these grants were given.⁵⁹ The wills of kings and commoners alike often contained bequests for hermits.⁶⁰ Sometimes hermits received bequests to help in their work of maintaining roads and bridges.⁶¹ In Norwich between 1370 and 1532, approximately 18 per cent of all lay wills probated (mostly merchants),

leper-house, each of which had a chapel and a chaplain, who was frequently a hermit. See M. DEANESLY, A History of the Medieval Church, 590-1500, 6th ed., London, Methuen, 1950, p. 215-216. See also CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 71.

⁵⁷ See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 71.

⁵⁸ See ibid., p. 72.

⁵⁹ See WARREN, Anchorites, p. 218.

⁶⁰ Henry II remembered many hermits in his will, leaving money not only to hermits in England but also to hermits in Jerusalem and Normandy. See ibid., p. 148.

⁶¹ For example, John of Gaunt (1340-1399), left such a stipend to "hermits living solitary lives in the manner of anchorites but without formal permanent enclosure, for hermits who were serving isolated chapels", and for working hermits. He also willed twenty shillings to every hermit living within five leagues of London. See ibid., p. 175. See also DARWIN, The English Medieval Recluse, p. 60.

left varying sums to anchorites and hermits.⁶² Perhaps because of their closer relationship with them, bishops tended to leave bequests to anchorites rather than to hermits.⁶³

Financial support for anchorites was of crucial importance, and their financial support had to be ensured before the bishop would allow them to be enclosed. The secular recluse in England was allowed to own property and receive rental income, although in other countries this was either severely restricted or forbidden.⁶⁴ According to Lyndwood: "Recluses, if not bound [already] by profession to any of the approved Orders, can have property like hermits."⁶⁵ In England they apparently could receive fees from their consultants⁶⁶ as well as gifts.

It was difficult, but not impossible, for recluses to

⁶² See WARREN, Anchorites, p. 223. It is interesting to note that many merchants showed a sense of obligation to solitaries. While only 8 per cent of such wills made bequests to hermits and anchorites between 1370 and 1439, 25 per cent did so between 1518 and 1532. See also pp. 195-200; 225; 232; 246; 253; 258; and 278.

⁶³ For an account of the usual recipients of fifteenth century episcopal wills, see J.T. ROSENTHAL, "The Fifteenth-Century Episcopate: Careers and Bequests", in Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World, ed. D. BAKER, Studies in Church History, vol. 10, Oxford, B. Blackwell, 1973, pp. 117-227.

⁶⁴ See DARWIN, The English Medieval Recluse, p. 37.

⁶⁵ See ibid., p. 38.

⁶⁶ See ibid., p. 39.

make enough money by their handwork to support themselves as long as they remained healthy. Church embroidery was popular with some recluses.⁶⁷ Anchoresses made clothes for the poor, and made and mended church vestments.⁶⁸ Sometimes this work was imposed on the recluse; it was a function that served a public purpose, although it might be destructive to the seclusion of the anchoress. Apparently some anchoresses were schoolmistresses, as both Aelred⁶⁹ and the Ancrene Riwe⁷⁰ inveigh against the custom.

Priest-anchors could, like hermits, work as copyists or continue their priestly functions by acting as

⁶⁷ Christina of Markyate, a twelfth century recluse once embroidered three miters and a pair of sandals for Pope Adrian IV. See The Life of Christina of Markyate; a Twelfth Century Recluse, ed. and trans. C.H. TALBOT, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 9.

⁶⁸ See F.M. STEELE, Anchoresses of the West, St. Louis, MO, B. Herder, p. 37.

⁶⁹ See AELRED, A Rule of Life for a Recluse, trans. M.P. Macpherson, in The Works of Aelred of Rivaux, vol. I, Treatises. The Pastoral Prayer, with an introduction by D. Knowles, Cistercian Fathers Series, no. 2, Spencer, MA, Cistercian Publications, 1971, p. 49: "Never allow children access to your cell. It is not unknown for a recluse to take up teaching and turn her cell into a school. She sits at her window, the girls settle themselves in the porch; and so she keeps them all under observation... There before her very eyes, even though she may not yield to them, the recluse has worldly and sensual temptations, and amid them all what becomes of her continual remembrance of God?"

⁷⁰ See The Ancrene Riwe, trans. M.B. SALU, with an introduction by G. Sitwell, and a preface by J.R.R. Tolkien, London, Burns and Oates, 1955, p. 188: "An anchoress must not turn into a school-mistress, nor turn an anchor-house into a school for children."

confessors either for their own patrons or for the general public (or both),⁷¹ and some anchorites were scholars who translated continental writings.⁷²

Wealthy recluses might endow their own anchorages, but for those without such means, the best arrangement was to be appointed to an endowed cell; this gave them a home and a guarantee that their material needs would be met. The endowment of the patron (lay or ecclesiastical) consisted either of money⁷³ or a guarantee of yearly provisions.⁷⁴

⁷¹ The anchorites at Westminster Abbey acted as confessors to the king. See also WARREN, Anchorites, pp. 170, 177 and 180.

⁷² For a detailed discussion of literary recluses, see CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, pp. 167-182. One well-known hermit, Richard Rolle (1300-1349), wrote several works of devotion, the most popular of which was a series of discourses concerned with the life of solitaries. See The Incendium amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole, ed. M. DEANESLY, University of Manchester Publications, no. 97, Manchester, University Press, 1915. For an English trans., see The Fire of Love, trans. G.C. Haseltine, London, Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1935. He composed another popular work for an anchoress. See The Form of Living, in English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole, ed. H.E. ALLEN, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1931, reprint, St. Claire Shores, MI, Scholarly Press, 1971. Another well-known book of devotion was written by an anchoress, Julian of Norwich. See A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich, eds. E. COLLEDGE and J. WALSH, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts, vol. 35, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978.

⁷³ For example, a thirteenth-century bishop in Exeter endowed a cell for a recluse from rents of diocesan lands and, by his charter, bound his episcopal successors to perpetual maintenance. See WARREN, Anchorites, p. 46. When such an endowment came from private persons, and the lands changed hands through death or marriage, the recluse was often left destitute and forced to go to court to obtain the

The endowed cell differed from other pensions or grants in that a legal commitment was made to support a recluse in a particular place in perpetuity. If the promised support was not forthcoming, judicial action could be taken by the recluse who could appeal to a civil court for redress.

Another means of support for the recluse was a corrody, which provided for a fixed share in the common goods of a religious community. Some were granted as alms of the religious house itself; others were bought by the patrons of the recluse, who was thus guaranteed a regular source of income. Occasionally, grants of lands or rents were given in perpetuity to the community with the proviso that a certain portion be given to the anchorite each year. The corrody lapsed on the death of the recluse. This arrangement was very common in the thirteenth century.⁷⁵

money. See ibid., p. 72.

⁷⁴ In 1240, the occupant of an endowed cell established by the Lacy family, received 9 quarters of corn plus a half-mark (6s. 8d.). By 1320, the recluse was receiving 10 quarters of corn and three bushels of grain, as well as the half-mark. See WARREN, Anchorites, p. 46.

⁷⁵ Sometimes the corrody would be purchased by the recluse and sometimes by a friend, family member or patron. A recluse in Blyth, Nottingham, received a conventual loaf and an allowance of food from Blyth Priory at the request of Queen Eleanor, wife of Henry III, and their son, the future Edward I. See ibid., p. 46.

2. Alms

Hermits begged alms⁷⁶ for others, however, they were not allowed to do so for themselves. Because it was far too easy for false hermits to gather alms and, by their life styles, give a bad name to all hermits, the true hermits carried testimonial letters from their bishops. The vagrancy statute of 1308 exempted "approved hermits having letters testimonial of their ordinaries."⁷⁷ Hermits were not allowed to beg for food either; nevertheless one Rule for hermits, quoted by Clay, provides for the distribution of the food he has received during the day:

If a hermit dwells in a borough, town, or city, or nigh thereto, where each day he can well beg his daily food, let him before sunset distribute to Christ's poor that which remains of his food. But if he abides afar, as in a country village or a desert spot one or two miles from the abode of men, let him make provision strictly from Sunday to Sunday, or he may begin on another day of the week; and if aught remains over, let it be given to the poor forthwith, unless on some ground he can excuse himself in the sight of God, as that he is sick or weak, or that he is tending a sick man, or is busy at home with works bodily or spiritual which are well pleasing to God.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ For example, one of the chief duties of a bridge or road hermit was to collect sufficient alms for materials and wages. This money was called "pavage" or "pontage", and was sometimes given for a number of years.

⁷⁷ See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 86.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 103. To allow town hermits to beg gave false hermits encouragement to do the same, and thus was mischievous.

One of the commonest means of financial assistance to a poor recluse was the alms box; if an anchorage was attached to a church, an alms box hung in the vestibule, with the understanding that any alms left over were to be distributed discreetly to the poor.⁷⁹ More frequently, however, the recluse might be found lacking even the bare necessities of food and fuel. In 1281, the Archbishop of York wrote to the vicar of Blyth, committing into his care a certain Lady Joan,⁸⁰ a recluse whose health had failed, and was languishing "miserably" in her cell, because she had lost "the lawful occupations in which at times she used to engage for the sake of her livelihood."⁸¹ There is no mention of any alms being given to her by caring neighbors or the parish priest, although someone must have brought her plight to the notice of the bishop.

These alms were considered "occasional"; however,

⁷⁹ An anchorite believed to be a holy person, might very well receive sufficient alms to be able to give gifts. The Ancrene Riwle, p. 183, emphasizes that an anchoress ought not to play Lady Bountiful: "It is not proper for an anchoress to be liberal with other people's alms. Would not a beggar be loudly laughed to scorn if he invited people to a feast?"

⁸⁰ Anchoresses were given the title "Lady", "Dame" or "Mother", and hermits, the title "Sir".

⁸¹ See DARWIN, The English Medieval Recluse, p. 56.

many recluses also received regular alms.⁸² Many, who had supported a recluse with alms in their lifetime, used their wills to continue the support by making provision for the anchorite over an extended period.⁸³ Bishops who gave pensions and grants to anchorites assumed that their successors would continue the support. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, anchorages were supported by the dioceses of London, Salisbury, York, Exeter and Canterbury.

3. Ecclesiastical support

Indulgences for hermits were common enough, particularly for those who maintained roads, bridges and various chapels.⁸⁴ In 1458, the Bishop of Ely gave an indulgence to all who would help "William Grene, hermit, who, at our command and with consent of our church at Ely, has undertaken

⁸² Alms lists of kings, bishops, abbey, gentlefolk and guilds contain names of anchorites who regularly received alms; these were a stable source of income. See WARREN, Anchorites, p. 44.

⁸³ Generally most bequests were a one-time grant, but a few wills did provide for recluses over a longer period of time. In the same century, the will of a Lincolnshire woman gave an annual grant of two measures of wheat to the anchorites of Wickamborough for the remainder of their lives. See ibid., p. 45.

⁸⁴ Indulgences were quite often given for hermits, less often for anchorites. Most indulgences were given to alleviate an immediate need or to provide financial security. They were rarely given to anchorites, although A.K. Warren reports that in 1396, a recluse received monies "accruing from a sale of indulgences offered for his aid by the Bishop of Salisbury." See WARREN, Anchorites, pp. 51, 81, 81n. and 276.

the repair of the causeys [causeways] and bridges of Stuntneys and Some."⁸⁵ There were many similar grants in other episcopal registers. An indulgence of 40 days was granted to the benefactors of a hermit in Cumberland who maintained a chapel there. Those who contributed food to the hermit were considered benefactors of the chapel.⁸⁶

Indulgences for anchorites were fairly rare (which testifies to the success of the financial screening program for recluses) and, when used, were normally for anchorites who were not receiving sufficient public alms to meet their needs. In London in 1368, and again in 1370, public alms were solicited by a bishop who gave an indulgence of 40 days to all those who would "contribute give bequeath or otherwise assign for the support"⁸⁷ of two poor anchorites, a presbyter and his lay associate, who had no means of sustenance other than the alms of the faithful, which, seemingly, were not forthcoming.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 60.

⁸⁶ See WARREN, Anchorites, p. 81n.

⁸⁷ Indulgences could also be used to proclaim that a recluse was in good standing with the bishop. In 1389, an anchoress at Leicester was accused of heresy, and questioned by William Courtenay, then Archbishop of Canterbury. Being satisfied with her answers, he issued a mandate for the anchorite "returned to the true way", and offered 40 days indulgence to anyone who would assist her. See WARREN, Anchorites, pp. 79-80.

⁸⁸ See DARWIN, The English Medieval Recluse, p. 56.

D. Profession and Enclosure

In general, medieval hermits were male but anchorites could be of either sex.⁸⁹ R.M. Clay, in her book on the hermits and anchorites of England, offers an appendix of known recluses from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries, of which nearly 70 per cent are women.⁹⁰ By the late eleventh and twelfth centuries female recluses vastly outnumbered male recluses. This was due to many factors; the peace and security England was enjoying brought about new growth of towns and cities, the fact that women outnumbered men in the twelfth century, and the new eremitic spirit. The nuns of the late medieval period came from aristocratic backgrounds⁹¹ and convents, where they even existed, did not accept other classes. The new religious orders, which embraced the eremitical ideal, did not want any women at that point in time.⁹² Thus, there were few outlets for

⁸⁹ Statistically, female anchorites predominated from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, but to different degrees in each century. See WARREN, Anchorites, p. 20.

⁹⁰ See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, Appendix C, pp. 203-263.

⁹¹ See E.E. POWER, Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Cambridge, University Press, 1922, pp. 4-5.

⁹² In 1134, the Cistercian abbots formally announced that they would not accept women although they eventually did so. See M. de FONTETTE, Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon: recherches sur les structures juridiques des branches féminines des ordres, préface par G. Le Bras, Bibliothèque de la Société d'histoire ecclésiast-

middle-class women who wished to follow the new, ascetic, solitary way of life. Many chose to become recluses; these came from a wide social and economic background and the number of endowed cells in England reflects this.⁹³

1. Profession of hermits

In the late Middle Ages, a layman who wished to become a hermit had to be licensed by the diocesan bishop. By the late fourteenth century, a ceremony of reception of the habit was also taking place. W.H. Frere has pointed out that the "blessing of his habit formed a considerable part of the service and was a more developed rite than the blessing of the monastic habit, which it followed in the main."⁹⁴ A hermit wore a distinctive habit which identified his profession; false hermits identified themselves as hermits by wearing the habit.⁹⁵ The reception of the habit

tique de la France, Paris, J. Vrin, 1967, p. 29.

⁹³ See WARREN, Anchorites, pp. 18-29. The petitioner for an endowed cell had to have friends and patrons, but the lack of personal finances did not deter one from becoming an anchorite.

⁹⁴ See W.H. FRERE, ed., Pontifical Services: Illustrated from Miniatures, vol. II, Alcuin Club Collections, vol. 4, plate VI, fig. 18, London, Longmans Green, 1901.

⁹⁵ It is not certain exactly what constituted the habit of a hermit, but it seems to have consisted of loose garments of a dark colour tied at the waist with a cord. The hermit went barefoot and in winter wore plain shoes without hose. It was the bishop who decided what the hermits were to wear in his diocese. See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 106.

and the profession of a vow of poverty were the focal points of the ceremony, which was called "the Office of Benediction of a Hermit".

During the service the hermit stood before the bishop, bare-headed and barefoot, a scapular⁹⁶ over his arm, and carrying his new habit. With appropriate prayers, the new garments were blessed and put on. The hermit signed a deed of profession, made a vow of poverty, and received "a charge as to his future manner of living."⁹⁷

Some English hermits were professed according to the so-called "Rule of St. Paul the first Hermit". One such hermit, Richard Spechysley, took the following vow in 1431:

Y Rychard Spechysley sengleman not wedded
promytte and solempne a wowe make to god, to hys
blessed moder Marie, and all the seyntes of
heuene yn presence of your reuerent Fadyr yn
cryst Thomas by the grace of god busshopp of
Worcester fulle and hole purpose of chastity
perpetually to be kept by me after the Rule of
seynt poule yn name of the fadyr and sone and
holy gost, amen et faciat heremita cruce super
cedulam.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ A scapular was a piece of material worn over the shoulders and hanging down in front and behind. It was originally a protective garment worn by monks when they were working in the fields, but eventually became part of the monastic habit.

⁹⁷ CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 86.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 86.

The hermit had to make a vow of poverty but chastity, although customary, was not obligatory. In 1405, a certain Adam Cressevill took a hermit's vow and then married. The judgment of Archbishop Arundel was:

The reception of such a habit did not de jure bring upon anyone a tacit or express profession of religion, nor include in itself holy orders, so as to preclude a subsequent contract of marriage which was instituted in paradise."⁹⁹

Obedience in the monastic sense was not required of a hermit; by contrast, the following is a vow taken by an anchoress in 1521:

I sister Margerie Clyute offereth and giueth myselfe to the mercie of Godd in the order of an ancesse and here in the presence of you worthy father in Godd Thomas Bishop of Lydene I make myne Obedience to the worshipful father in Godd lord Ric. fittz James Byshop of London and to his successours.¹⁰⁰

Hermits could of course promise both celibacy and obedience if they so desired. A 1521 service for the Office of Benediction of a hermit, according to the "Rule of St. Paul, the first Hermit", contains a vow of celibacy.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 88.

¹⁰⁰ See ibid., p. 96.

¹⁰¹ "Ego N. non coniungatus promitto et voueo deo beate marie et omnibus sanctis in presencia reuerendi in christo patris et domini. N.N. episcopi propositum castitatis perpetue iuxta regulam beati pauli. In nomine patris et c[etera]." See CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, p. 199.

The pontificals of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter (1420-1455), and Christopher Bainbridge, Archbishop of York (1508-1514), contain an Office of Benediction service for hermits which assumes chastity.¹⁰²

2. Profession and enclosure of anchorites

The profession and enclosure ceremony for anchorites was far more elaborate than that for the profession of a hermit. The services of reclusion were of varying length and elaboration, and the most interesting aspect is the emphasis on "dying to the world" which was symbolized in various ways, ranging from reciting the prayers for the dead to a complete funeral service. The following is a typical service for the enclosure of a recluse. It is taken from the earliest extant pontifical containing a service of reclusion, the twelfth century pontifical of Magdalen College, Cambridge.¹⁰³

The service began with the bishop (or his delegate) and clergy standing at the altar, and barefoot candidate lying prostrate in mid-choir (if a cleric), at the entrance

¹⁰² See Liber pontificalis of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter, ed. R. BARNES, Exeter, Eng., W. Roberts, 1847, p. 130, and Liber pontificalis Christopher Bainbridge, archiepiscopi, Eboracensis, Durham, Publications of the Surtees Society, vol. 61, Andrews and Co., 1875, p. 140.

¹⁰³ See The Pontifical of Magdalen College, ed. H.A. WILSON, London, Henry Bradshaw Society Publications, vol. 39, Harrison and Sons, 1910, pp. 243-244.

to the choir (if a layman), or if a woman, in the back of the church where women were wont to worship.¹⁰⁴ The candidate was blessed with holy water and incensed by the bishop while several psalms and litanies were sung. At the end of the prayers two lighted tapers, representing the love of God and the love of one's neighbor, were given to the postulant. Lessons were read from scripture, the anchorite made the solemn profession, and the tapers were placed on the altar. The Mass of the Holy Spirit was then celebrated. If the candidate was a priest, he was the celebrant.

At the end of the Mass, antiphons and psalms from the Office of the Dead were chanted as the recluse was led to the anchorage, which was then blessed with holy water and incensed. The officiant then gave the sacrament of Extreme Unction to the postulant, and recited the prayers for the dying. The recluse entered the cell and was sprinkled with dust to the continual accompaniment of antiphons and psalms. This done, the order was given to block up the door,¹⁰⁵ two final prayers were said and all departed in peace (omnes in

¹⁰⁴ In the Middle Ages, following the traditional orientation of churches to the East, the congregation prayed facing the East; that women sat in the western part of the church meant that they sat behind the men. See Pontifical of Magdalen College, p. 243: "Si est femina: primum iaceat in occidentali parte ecclesiae ubi mos est femina habitare."

¹⁰⁵ As can be seen from the legislation above, the blocking of the door was, in most cases, symbolic. The door offered entry to the servant, chaplain, etc.

pace discedant). A service of reclusion, dating from the thirteenth century, found in the Bainbridge Pontifical, has the same opening ceremonies but is followed by a Requiem Mass.¹⁰⁶

III MEDIEVAL RULES

Solitaires had to depend on their own inner strength, and from Basil to Benedict to Bernard, had always been warned of the pitfalls of the eremitical life, both spiritual and psychological. The cenobitic life was considered the norm and the eremitic life regarded as a "delusion prompted by a spirit of independence and instability."¹⁰⁷ Free of obedience to a superior, and facing the possibility of hypocrisy and anarchy, the solitary had to have some sort of rule of life to follow. This might be a modification of an existing monastic rule or a well known rule that had been composed for another recluse, such as that of Ailred. Such rules dealt with both the spiritual realm and with very practical material matters as well. The rules for solitaires were not rules in the strict sense of the word, rather they were works of guidance. They ranged from brief epistles to major ascetic treatises.

¹⁰⁶ See Liber pontificalis Christopher Bainbridge, pp. 81-85.

¹⁰⁷ T. MERTON, "For a Renewal of Eremitism in the Monastic State", in Collectanea cisterciensia, 2 (1965), p. 130.

A. Rules for Hermits

There are several extant rules for hermits which have been published. These include the Regula eremitarum Cantabrigiensis (Cambridge MS.),¹⁰⁸ the De paupertate, statu, et vita eremitarum (Bodleian MS., fourteenth century),¹⁰⁹ and the Episcopal Charge, or form of living (Lydence Pontifical, sixteenth century).¹¹⁰ A short rule called "of Pope Linus" (Lambeth MS., fifteenth century) exemplifies the rules written for solitaries.

This rule, presenting a daily schedule which followed the canonical hours, gave the number of pater nosters, aves and creeds to be said at each canonical hour. Each day the solitary was to hear Mass and meditate on the passion of Our Lord or some other holy subject. After his noon meal, he was enjoined to pray for all his benefactors and then to recite Our Lady's Psalter. No reading, scriptural or otherwise, was asked although some anchorite rules did strongly suggest reading of devotional works.

¹⁰⁸ See "Regulae tres reclusarum et eremitarum Angliae saec. XIII-XIV", ed. L. OLIGER, in Antonianum, 3 (1928), pp. 299-312.

¹⁰⁹ See ibid., pp. 312-320.

¹¹⁰ See "The Office for the Benediction of Hermits", in CLAY, Hermits and Anchorites, Appendix B, pp. 202-202.

Linus, our Holy Father (pope) of Rome ordained this rule for all solitary men that take the degree of a hermit; he binds him thus to spend the night and the day in loving God. Midnight is the beginning of the day and a hermit shall rise at midnight from Holy Cross day [September 14] until Easter; and at dawn from Easter until Holy Cross day... He shall fast every day in Lent, in Advent and the Apostles fast, that is to say from Holy Thursday to Whitsunday. He shall make a confession and receive communion three times a year; at Christmas, Easter and Whitsunday. He shall fast on Friday and Saturday throughout the year. The Friday [he shall take] bread, ale and broth. He shall eat no meat, except at Christmas, Epiphany, [the feast of] St. Paul the first hermit, St. Antony, all the feasts of Our Lady, Ascension, Whitsunday, the feast of the Trinity, Corpus Christi, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist and Peter and Paul, the feast of the Angels, the feast of All Saints, the feast of the saint of the cell, and the dedication of the cell. He shall sleep in his tunic with a belt or a cord. He shall wear a hairshirt unless he is weak and not able to, he shall wear shoes without hose; and when he is dead, be dressed in his habit as he goes. The sum of the Our Fathers is 187, and as many Hail Marys and 14 Creeds besides Our Lady's psalter. This is the charge of an hermit's life.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ See "Regula Recluserum Angliae et Quaestiones tres de Vita solitaria", ed. L. OLIGER, in *Antonianum*, 9 (1934), pp. 263-265: "Lyne owre holy fadyr (pope) of Rome he ordeyned thys rewle to all solytary men that takys the degree of an heremygte; he byndis hym thus to spende the nyght and the day to the lovyng of God. The begynnyng of the day is at mydnyght and an heremyte schall ryse at mydnyght fro holy rode day vn to Ester day; and fro Ester vn to holy Rode day in the dayeng of the day... He shall faste euery day in lenton, ye Advent and the postylls faste, that is to sey fro holy thursday vn to whitsunday. He schall be schrewyn and hoseld III tymes in the yere: at Crystmesse, Ester and witsunday. He schall faste the ffryday and Satyrday thoro ye yere. The fryday to brede and alle and potage. He schalle ete no fflesche, but cristmesday, ye Epiphanie, Saynt Poule ye first heremyte, Saynt Antonye, all the festes of ower lady, the Ascencion, whytsonday, the festes of the trinyte, Corpus crysty, the Natyuyte of Saynt John Baptyst and Peter and Powle, the fest of the Angelis, the fest of

B. Rules for Anchorites

There were three major rules which were well-known on the continent and in England; the Regula solitariorum of Grimlaic, the De institutis inclusarum of Aelred, and the anonymous Ancrene Riwe. Grimlaic's rule is much more exacting and rigorous than the two English rules but that may be due to the fact that the recluse in question was already a monk who wanted a more austere life.

1. Grimlaic: Regula solitariorum¹¹²

The earliest rule extant is that of a late ninth century Benedictine monk, Grimlaic of Metz, written for another Benedictine who had become a recluse. This rule was well-known and its influence widespread. Eventually it was used as a basis for the observance of reclusion in the

all halowys, the fest of the seynt of the Cell and the dedycacyon of Cell. Allso he schall lye in hys kyrtell gyrded wyth a gyrdyll or with a corde. He schall wer the heyr; but yf he be weyke and may not suffer yt, he schall wer schoen with owtyn hoese; and he schall graued in hys habyte as he gothe. The sum of the pater nosters on the day is IX^x and VII, and als many Aue Maria and XIII Crides besyde owr ladys sawter. This is the charge of an hermygtis lyffe."

¹¹² See GRIMLAICUS, Regula solitariorum, in L. HOLSTENIUS, Codex regularum: monasticarum et canonicarum, Graz, Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1957, vol. 1, pp. 291-344.

Camaldolese hermitages.¹¹³ Grimlaic's insistence that recluses should always be in groups of two or three,¹¹⁴ was probably the basis for the continental model of reclusage, in which recluses grouped together for mutual support, and occupied single but connected cells, usually near a monastery. This is not to say that all continental recluses lived in groups, for there were some single recluses.¹¹⁵

2. Aelred of Rievaulx: De institutis inclusarum ¹¹⁶

The Institutis inclusarum was written (ca. 1162) by a Cistercian abbot, Aelred of Rievaulx, for his sister who had

¹¹³ See J. CACCIAMAMI "La réclusion dans l'ordre Camaldule", in Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, 149 (1962), pp. 142-151.

¹¹⁴ See GRIMLAICUS, Regula solitariorum, p. 304: "Praecipue vero hos Solitariis satagendum est, ut, si fieri potest, nunquam minus quam duo vel tres simul sint." For the statutes of a multiple reclusory in Cologne, see L. GOUGAUD, Ermites et reclus, Ligugé, Abbaye Saint-Martin, 1928, pp. 119-127.

¹¹⁵ For example, among the dioceses which had single recluses were Bordeaux and Liège. See F.F. LEMOING, Ermites et reclus du diocèse de Bordeaux, Bordeaux, Clédes et Fils, 1953; and E. van WINTERSHOVEN, "Recluseries et ermitages dans l'ancien diocèse de Liège", in Bulletin de la société scientifique et littéraire du Limbourg, 23 (1906), pp. 96-158.

¹¹⁶ See "The 'De institutis inclusarum' of Aelred of Rievaulx", ed. C.H. TALBOT, Analecta sacri ordinis Cisterciensis, 7 (1951), pp. 177-217. For an English translation see AELRED, A Rule of Life, in The Works of Aelred of Rievaulx I: Treatises; The Pastoral Prayer, Cistercian Fathers Series, vol. 2, Spencer, MA, Cistercian Publications, 1971, pp. 41-102.

become a recluse and who had asked him for some form of written guidance. It was the most consistently quoted and imitated of all the rules. Most of the other extant rules draw on Aelred. The external discipline of the recluse's life came from the Rule of St. Benedict; the ascetical doctrine from the letters of St. Jerome, the writings of Cassian, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory; but the final meditation was Aelred's alone.

3. Ancrene Riwe ¹¹⁷

The Ancrene Riwe was written (ca. 1215-1221) by an anonymous author who was familiar with the Rule of Aelred. It is the best known piece of prose from the Middle English period (1100-1500). It was written for three sister recluses, probably by their confessor or spiritual director. It was soon translated into Latin and French and became well-known on the continent. The rule covered both the spiritual and the external activities of the recluse.

4. Other rules

Other extant rules (not well-known and of limited

¹¹⁷ See The English Text of Ancrene Riwe, ed. E.J. DOBSON, Early English Text Society Publications (Original Series), no. 267, London, Oxford University Press, 1972. For a modern English translation, see The Ancrene Riwe (The Corpus Ms: Ancrene Wisse), trans. M.B. Salu, with an introduction by G. Sitwell, Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1955.

circulation), include: the Liber confortatorius (ca. 1082-1083), written by a Benedictine monk, Goscelin, for a recluse, Eve;¹¹⁸ Letters, written by St. Anselm for the instruction of anchoresses,¹¹⁹ the Ordo inclusorum (twelfth century), anonymous;¹²⁰ the Dublin Rule (thirteenth century), an anonymous treatise for male anchorites;¹²¹ Walter's Rule (ca. 1280);¹²² the Speculum inclusorum (mid fourteenth century), anonymous;¹²³ The Form of Living (ca.

¹¹⁸ See The Liber confortatorius of Goscelin of St. Bertin, ed. C.H. TALBOT, in Analecta monastica, eds. J. LECLERCQ, M.M. LEBRETON and C.H. TALBOT, vol. 37, Studia Anselmiana, fasc. 37, Vatican City, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1955, pp. 26-117.

¹¹⁹ See ANSELM, Opera omnia, ed. F.S. SCHMITT, vol. 4, pp. 134-135; vol. 5, pp. 358-362.

¹²⁰ See Monasticarum disquisitionum libri XII: Quibus S. P. Benedicti regula et religiosorum rituum antiquitates varie dilucidantur, ed. B. Haeften, Antwerp, 1644, vol. 1, chap. viii, p. 83.

¹²¹ Called the Dublin Rule because the manuscript came from Trinity College, Dublin, it was written for male and female anchorites. The author draws on Benedict, Grimlaic, Aelred and the Ancrene Riwe. See "Regulae tres reclusorum et eremitarum", in Antonianum, 3 (1928), pp. 170-183.

¹²² This rule is attributed to a recluse named Walter, a former Augustinian canon, who became a solitary after thirty years in community. Drawing on both Grimlaic and Aelred, it could be used by either male or female recluses. See "Regula reclusorum", ed. L. OLIGER, in Antonianum, 9 (1934), pp. 53-84.

¹²³ The author was an unknown English priest, probably a Carthusian monk. Speculum inclusorum: auctore anonymo anglico saeculi XIV, ed. L. OLIGER, Lateranum, Nova series, an. IV, no. 1, Rome, Facultas theologica Pontificii Athenaei Lateranensis, 1938. It was written for male recluses; however, a Middle English translation, called Advice to Recluses, included women as well. See WARREN, Anchorites,

1348), Richard Rolle;¹²⁴ and The Scale of Perfection, Walter Hilton.¹²⁵

IV. MODERN EREMITICAL LIFE: 15TH-20TH CENTURY

In sixteenth century England, there were a few anchorites and hermits still to be found. The Dissolution of Monasteries (1536-1540) left most solitaries without support, either materially or spiritually. Some anchoresses, especially if old or feeble, were dependent on the alms of those who had known them in the "old days", but many received an annuity from the crown similar to that given to nuns who had been ousted from their convents or monasteries. By the seventeenth century, the eremitical life had disappeared from England. This was true of Germany as well; however, it persisted in the Catholic countries of France,

Appendix 2, p. 197.

¹²⁴ Rolle wrote this for an anchoress who was a disciple of his. It is considered to be the finest of his Middle English writings. See The Form of Living, in English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole, ed. H.E. ALLEN, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1931, reprint, St. Clair Shores, MI, Scholarly Press, 1971, pp. 85-119. For a modern English version, see The Form of Perfect Living and other Prose Treatises by Richard Rolle, trans. G.E. Hodgson, London, T. Baker, 1910, pp. 1-79.

¹²⁵ One of the major literary works of Middle English, this was written by an Augustinian canon, who was also a canon lawyer. See W. HILTON, The Scale of Perfection, with an introduction by E. Underhill, London, J.M. Watkins, 1948. See also J. RUSSEL-SMITH, "Walter Hilton and a Tract in Defence of the Veneration of Images", in Dominican Studies, 7 (1954), p. 199.

Italy and Spain for some time.

In France, the Black Death, the Hundred Years war, and the wars of religion nearly put an end to solitary life. However, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, France saw a revival of the solitary life, which was stronger than in any previous century and remained so until a decline began in 1750 and finished in the revolution. For all practical purposes, the hermit disappeared into the distant past along with those other figures of medieval life which, today, are found only in medieval tapestries or literature.

CONCLUSION

The solitary life in the West differed little from that of the East. The climate and geography of the West necessitated some changes, and the history of the Eastern monks allowed the Western ones to avoid some of the more obvious errors made earlier in the East, but overall, the essential singleminded search for God in solitude and silence was the same. The Western solitaires of the late medieval period practiced asceticism through fasting and vigils, lived in poverty and sought solitude as their Eastern counterparts had done earlier.

Both in the East and the West there was another common denominator: a society and church which praised, encouraged and supported solitaires, whether hermits or

recluses. The average medieval man or woman probably passed the cell of a recluse every time he or she entered a church, and most certainly encountered hermits frequently. They were daily reminders of the rightful focus of the Christian life. The community asked for their prayers and their counsel, and in return supported them. Solitaries were male and female, cleric and lay, and required a variety of rules, lay support, ecclesiastical laws and enclosure liturgy, all of which was provided in abundance. Their lives were made possible only because society accepted their form of living.

The medieval bishop had a responsibility to the solitaries which included deciding their suitability for the life, their financial stability and an overall responsibility for their spiritual life.

In spite of the famous example of Charles de Foucauld, there were few in the early twentieth century who practiced the eremitical life. And yet, there were some who lived the life, and seemingly there were more who wanted to live in solitude. Who evinced such an interest in the eremitical life-style? If the Church, in its monumental codification of its laws in 1917, never mentioned the eremitical life, how did it come to be in the 1983 Code? Who wanted such legislation and why? In the next chapter we shall attempt to answer some of these questions.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATION OF NEW NORMS

The eremitical movement had considerably diminished by the beginning of the twentieth century. True, there were solitaries scattered here and there, but not of sufficient number to draw the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome. Thus, when the Code of Canon Law was promulgated in 1917, not only was there no mention of the eremitical life, but religious were defined as living a "common life": since hermits did not live a common life, they were effectively excluded as such from the official religious life of the Church.

However, the revised Code of Canon Law, promulgated in 1983, does contain a canon which pertains to the eremitical life (c. 603). What happened in the interim to bring about this change? In this chapter we shall examine certain elements found in the Code of 1917, as well as some of the factors which brought about a new awareness of the continuing presence of the eremitical life in the Church, a presence which was strong enough to merit mention in the documents of Vatican II, and thus eventually find a place in the legislation of the contemporary Church in the Code of 1983.

I. PRE-VATICAN II PERIOD

A. Pre-1917 Code Documentary Sources¹

The disciplinary laws and dogmatic decrees of the Council of Trent were promulgated in the decree of Pius IV, Benedictus Deus, in 1564.² These decrees constituted the principal source of canonical legislation, but no authentic collection was ever authorized, although one private collection, that of 1564, is considered quasi-official.³

After Trent, numerous acts of the popes as well as decrees of the various Roman Congregations had been promulgated. Many laws had fallen into disuse; the existing legislation was difficult to locate because it was widely dispersed in different collections. There was no one place

¹ See Traité de droit canonique, ed. R. NAZ, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1947-1949, vol. 1, pp. 21-55, for a more comprehensive overview of the various sources which have produced the canon law of the Church. For an extensive history of these sources, see A.G. CICOGNANI, Canon Law, 2nd rev. ed., Philadelphia, Dolphin Press, 1935, pp. 131-413.

² See PIUS IV, Decree, "Benedictus Deus", 26 January, 1564, in Magnum bullarium Romanum, Graz, Akademische Druck-u, Verlaganstalt, 1964-1966, vol. 4, part 2, pp. 168-169.

³ For a comprehensive history of the acts and decrees of this council, see CONCILIUM TRIDENTIUM, Diariorum, actorum, epistularum, tractatum nova collectio, ed. Society of Goerres, Fribourg, Herder, 1901. A good synopsis can be found in, Sacrosancti et oecumenici Tridentini Concilii, ed. P. LABBE, Paris, Impensis Societatis Typographicae, 1667; English translation in Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, trans. H.J. Schroeder, St. Louis, MO, Herder, 1941.

to consult if one had questions about a particular law (or lack of same). A new authorised compilation of the laws of the Church was badly needed. Thus, when the first Vatican Council was convened in 1869 by Pius IX, one of the principal items on the agenda was a proposed new collection of laws. Due to the premature end of the Council this was not even debated.

B. Code of 1917

It was Pius X (1903-1914) who finally began the codification of the law by issuing the motu proprio, Arduum sane munus, March 19, 1904. The final work was completed and officially promulgated by Pope Benedict XV, May 17, 1917, in the Apostolic constitution, Providentissima mater ecclesia, which went into effect on May 19, 1918. For the first time in its history the Church had codified its laws.

1. Definition of religious⁴

The first canon on religious life, c. 487, defined the religious state of life:

The religious state, that is, the firmly established manner of living in community, by

⁴ Codex iuris canonici, Pii X Pontificis Maximi iussu digestus, Benedicti Papae XV auctoritate promulgatus (=CIC), Rome, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1933. An English translation of canons 487-681 can be found in Canonical Legislation Concerning Religious: Authorised English Translation, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1949.

which the faithful undertake to observe, not only the ordinary precepts, but also the evangelical counsels, by means of the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, must be held in honour by all.⁵

Thus, the religious was first of all defined as one who participated in a permanent mode of community life, which would normally take place in a common dwelling, under a common roof, with all following a common rule of life.⁶

2. Eremitical life

Essential to the concept of the religious state was the profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. The Church, however, further specified a fourth element as essential: community of life. Not only was common life a necessary element, but the canon law of 1917 in effect, placed the "essence of the religious state in living in common and observing the three evangelical counsels under obligation of the public vows of obedience,

⁵ See CIC, canon 487: "Status religiosus seu stabilis in communi vivendi modus, quo fideles, praeter communia praecepta, evangelica quoque consilia servanda per vota obedientiae, castitatis et paupertatis suscipiunt, ab omnibus in honore habendus est." English translation in Canonical Legislation, p. 1.

⁶ See J.A. ABBO and J.D. HANNAN, The Sacred Canons, St. Louis, MO, Herder, 1952, p. 481. See also P. BASTIEN, Directoire canonique à l'usage des congrégations à vœux simples d'après les plus récents documents du Saint-Siège, 4th ed., Bruges, Abbaye de Maredsous, 1933, p. 7, n. 16; A. LARRAONA, "Commentarium codicis", in Commentarium pro religiosis, 2 (1921), pp. 135-139; 168-171.

chastity and poverty."⁷

Saving exceptions, the rights of religious were recognized only for persons grouped in community under a superior. The term "religious state" had a legal connotation and solitaries did not fit into that definition. Outside of the semi-eremitical orders (Camaldolese or Carthusians), hermits (however closely grouped), did not follow a common rule of life, live under the same roof, or come under the authority of a religious superior. They were, as such, excluded from the canonical concept of religious.

Hermits, then, who were among the earliest practitioners of the religious life, were no longer considered an integral part of the religious life of the Latin Church. If a lay person wished to live an eremitical style of life, there was nothing preventing the making of private vows but such a person could not be considered to be in the "religious state". One commentator even noted that anyone who led an eremitical life and claimed to be in the religious state, was, in actual fact, in a state of rebellion.⁸

⁷ See S. WOYWOD, A Practical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law, rev. ed., New York, J.F. Wagner, 1948, p. 203. On p. 204 the author notes that the observance of the common life in a community is essential only by legislation, but due to this legislation, the eremitical life is not recognized.

⁸ See L. CHOUPIN, Nature et obligations de l'état religieux: discipline actuelle, vol. III, 4th rev. ed., Paris, G. Beauchesne, 1923, p. 45.

It must not be thought that the emphasis on common life was specifically directed to hermits. Indeed, commentaries which even mention hermits seem to be under the impression that the eremitical form of life had, for the most part, died out in the Middle Ages or earlier. One writer admitted that the religious state did exist among the "ancient" hermits, but the Church was now obliged to limit the state to those who lived the common life, as the solitary life was "full of dangers and illusions."⁹ On the other hand, P. Doy re claimed that there was no canon on the eremitical life in the Code of 1917, because one could not legislate for "heroism".¹⁰

C. Eremitical Life: 1917 to Vatican II

The report of the death of eremitical life in the West¹¹ was greatly exaggerated. One has only to look at the

⁹ See C.A. BACHOFEN, A Commentary on the New Code of Canon Law, vol. 3, 4th ed., St. Louis, MO, Herder, 1929, p. 45.

¹⁰ See P. DOYERE, "Ermîtes", in Dictionnaire de droit canonique, ed. R. NAZ, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1951, vol. 5, col. 428.

¹¹ The eremitical tradition was still alive in the East and, as the Eastern Church has always regarded the eremitical life as a form of monasticism, it could describe a hermit as a religious who, "according to the norms of the constitutions, leads an eremitical life, without prejudice to his dependence from his superiors of the religious institute." See Pius XII, Motu proprio, Postquam apostolicis, 30 December, 1952, in Acta Apostolicae Sedis (=AAS), 44 (1952), Canon 313, 4, p. 147: "Eremita est religiosus qui, ad normam statutorum, vitam anachoreticam ducit, firma

number of books and articles on the subject, which were written prior to Vatican II, in the standard dictionaries of the spiritual life.¹² The renewal of interest in the eremitical life after World War I was the result of many factors: the aftermath of the war, the rediscovery of Eastern monasticism and, perhaps most importantly, the publication of the life of a modern hermit, Charles de Foucauld,¹³ who died in 1916, one year before the Code was promulgated.

The life of Charles de Foucauld, with its emphasis on the contemplative "desert" experience, not only inspired the

dependentia a suae Religionis Superioribus." English translation in V. POSPISHIL, The Law on Persons, Ford City, PA, St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, 1960, p. 245.

¹² See DOYERE, "Ermites", in Dictionnaire de droit canonique, ed. R. NAZ, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, vol. 5, cols. 412-129; J. SAINSAULIEU, "Ermites", in Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques, eds. R. AUBERT and E. Van CAUWANBERGH, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1963, vol. 15, cols. 785-787; P. DOYERE, "Erémisme en Occident", in Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire, ed. M. VILLER, Paris, G. Beauchesne, 1961, vol. 4.2, cols. 981-982; C. LIALINE, "Erémisme en Orient", in ibid., cols. 951-953; H. RAHNER, "Einsiedler", in Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, eds. J. HOFER and K. RAHNER, Freiburg, Herder, 1959, vol. 3, col. 769.

¹³ See R. BAZIN, Charles de Foucauld, explorateur du Maroc, ermite au Sahara, Paris, Plon, 1921. This was the first biography of Charles de Foucauld and attracted much interest. For a more nuanced treatment of his life, see C. LEPETIT, Plus loin sur la piste... Charles de Foucauld, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1981. The English translation is entitled Two Dancers in the Desert: The Life of Charles de Foucauld, trans. J. Griffiths, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, Burns and Oates, 1983.

foundation of several religious communities¹⁴ but was probably one of the principal influences¹⁵ in the twentieth century renewal of interest in the eremitic life in general. At the same time, monastic communities, interested in returning to the sources of monasticism, also began exploring the subject. By the beginning¹⁶ of the 1950s there was sufficient interest in the eremitical life to merit a special issue of La vie spirituelle entirely devoted to the subject.¹⁷

Benedict had made provision in his rule for mature monks who wished to become hermits:

¹⁴ Charles de Foucauld had composed rules for possible future communities of "Little Brothers" and "Little Sisters" but no one joined him. In 1933, four diocesan priests led by Ren Voillaume, formed the first community on the edge of the Sahara desert, and began to follow one of de Foucauld's rules. Their growth has been phenomenal and today the Little Brothers and Little Sisters can be found in the poorest communities all over the world. See R. VOILLAUME, Les fraternités du Père Foucauld: mission et esprit, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1946.

¹⁵ See J. WINANDY, "Pour un statut canonique des ermites", in Supplément de la vie spirituelle, 12 (1959), n. 1, p. 343; see also P. DOYERE, "L'érémisme", in Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, 32 (1956), p. 357; R. GAZEAU, "Renouveau de l'érémisme", in Lettre de Ligugé, 121 (1967), p. 4.

¹⁶ See J. LECLERCQ, Vie religieuse et vie contemplative, Gembloux, Editions J. Duculot, 1969, p. 75, where the author distinguishes three periods of authentic eremitic life. He dates the third or modern period as beginning about 1940-1945.

¹⁷ La vie spirituelle, 87 (1952), pp. 227-308.

Second, there are the anchorites or hermits, who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life. Thanks to the guidance and help of many, they are now trained to fight against the devil. They have built up their strength and go from the battle-line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind.¹⁸

Although the rule of Benedict permitted advancing from the ranks of cenobites to that of hermits,¹⁹ and this was often included in monastic constitutions, in practice the necessary permission was difficult to obtain.²⁰ Most of

¹⁸ See RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes, ed. T. FRY, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1981, p. 168: "Deinde, secundum genus est anchoritarum, id est eremitarum, horum qui non conversationis fervore novicio, sed monasterii probatione diuturna, qui didicerunt contra diabolum multorum solacio iam docti pugnare, et bene exstructi fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam eremi, securi iam sine consolatione alterius, sola manu vel brachio contra vita carnis vel cogitationum, Deo auxiliante, pugnare sufficiunt." English translation on p. 169.

¹⁹ In the East, many believed that the cenobium was merely a preparation for the eremitical life, but this was never the case in Western monasticism. For a contemporary view of hermit-monks, see A. de VOGUE, "A propos d'un canon du nouveau Code: la vie solitaire en symbiose avec une communauté", in Collectanea cisterciensia, 50 (1988), pp. 279-287.

²⁰ See J. LECLERCQ, "L'érémisme en Occident jusqu'à l'an mil", in Le millénaire du Mont Athos, 963-1963: études et mélanges, Chevetogne, Belgium, Editions de Chevetogne, 1963-1964, vol. 1, p. 179, where the author states: "Enfin, par rapport à l'Eglise universelle, la vocation érémitique apparaît comme la plus paradoxale de toutes: une vocation à pratiquer l'obéissance sans supérieur, la charité sans

the superiors were dubious about the eremitical form of life, believing that the would-be hermit was at best deluded, and at worst avoiding the daily dying-to-self of community life. The East had always viewed the hermit and the cenobite as different facets of the same monastic state, but the West considered the eremitical life to be the summit of monasticism, a height which the monk could never attain and therefore the solitary question was purely theoretical.²¹ Sometimes, the superiors were not as hostile to the eremitical life for one monk, as they were afraid that others (less ready) would also want to become hermits.²² Thus, many of those writing about the eremitical life before

frères, et l'apostolat sans action." It is easy to see why so many superiors refused the permission, although not all were hostile to the eremitical life. See also T. MERTON, "For a Renewal of Eremitism in the Monastic State", in Collectanea cistercensia, 27 (1965), p. 144.

²¹ See DOYERE, "Ermites", col. 980, where the author states: "Celui-ci [le cenobite], ne voit trop souvent dans l'ermitte qu'un irrégulier et tend à le rejeter hors de l'état de religion. Cette tendance a bien été en Occident celle de l'autorité hiérarchique, acquise à la discipline et à l'organisation cénobitique, dont elle finit par faire le principe même du statut religieux."

²² See WINANDY, "Pour un statut", p.349: "Tout d'abord, il ne sera pas facile de trouver un abbé et une communauté monastique qui accueillent favorablement pareille idée et admettent volontiers qu'un ou plusieurs moines, sortis ou non de leur rangs, s'établissent dans le voisinage du monastère. A tort ou à raison, on craindra de créer un précédent, et de faire naître par là chez certains membres de la communauté la tentation d'échapper par une porte de sortie honorable aux renoncements et aux servitudes de la vie commune, ou simplement de mettre en question leur valeur sanctificatrice."

Vatican II were monks²³ eager to have a way in which any monk who believed he had a call to the eremitic life, could live out such a call within the monastic community.²⁴

Although many argued for a new statute for hermits, there were differing opinions about how it should be accomplished. Jacques Winandy, a Belgian Benedictine, who had written eloquently and often about the eremitical life,²⁵ believed that given the state of suspicion and prejudice toward eremitism in monastic circles at that time, the monk who wanted to be a hermit was better off seeking exclaustation or even departure from the religious state. He might ask for a special form of exclaustation, ad nutum Sanctae

²³ One distinguished exception to these monastic writers is a diocesan priest, Jean Sainsaulieu, who is an expert on the eremitical life of France. See J. SAINSAULIEU, Etudes sur la vie érémitique en France: de la contre-réforme à la restauration, Lille, France, Service de reproduction des thèses, Université de Lille, 1974.

²⁴ By 1969 J. Leclercq could write: "Enfin, depuis une vingtaine d'années, la question érémitique est peu à peu redevenue actuelle. L'idée érémitique, d'abord suspecte, a été lentement acceptée. Et c'est maintenant un fait que plusieurs monastères ont des ermitages et des ermites." See LECLERCQ, Vie religieuse, p. 82. See also M. LADURIE, Femmes au désert: témoignages sur la vie érémitique, Paris, Editions Saint-Paul, 1971, p. 11, where the author points out that many women also were becoming hermits.

²⁵ Dom Winandy had been abbot of Clairvaux for ten years before founding an eremitical colony, "The Hermit Order of St. John the Baptist" (now disbanded), in British Columbia in 1965. The group consisted of monks (Benedictines, Trappists) and laymen. See J. WINANDY, "Une colonie d'ermites au Canada", in Lettre de Ligugé, 121 (1967), pp. 40-46; see also B. MCKINLEY, "The Hermits of Vancouver Island", in The Catholic Digest, May, 1967, pp. 88-93.

Sedis (at the pleasure of the Holy See), which had one advantage: the hermit could not be recalled to the monastery without the consent of the Holy See. Winandy believed, however, that there should be a new form of exclaustation specifically directed to hermits, which would give approval to the eremitic ideal.²⁶

Another opinion, which was more in line with monastic tradition, was that of P. Doyère, who thought that the existing legislation concerning enclosure (c. 606) provided the best context for a statute on hermit-monks. In the monastic tradition, the hermit had always been dependent on the abbot, and Doyère believed that simply adding a section to the existing canon, and introducing a similar addition to the particular monastic constitution (if one did not already exist), would be sufficient.²⁷

Doyère was convinced that the eremitical "problem" did not lie with the canon but rather with the abbot. An abbot might conceivably demand that the monk be a "perfect" cenobite before being allowed to be a hermit, which meant that the eremitic life might be seen as a reward for merit, rather than a response to a divine call. If the abbot's

²⁶ See WINANDY, "Pour un statut", pp. 343-351.

²⁷ See P. DOYERE, "Sur le statut des ermites monastiques: perspectives actuelles", in Supplément de la vie spirituelle, 14 (1961), pp. 394-403.

successor did not believe in the eremitic life, he might want the hermit either returned to the community or excommunicated. Unfortunately, the relationship between the cenobitic and eremitic life involves structures as well as ideas.²⁸

Dom André Louf suggested, rather tentatively, that if one viewed all the different monastic families as members of a single ordo monasticus, then perhaps the monk who wished to experience more solitude than was offered in his own community, could try out his call in one of the quasi-eremitical congregations (Camaldolese or Carthusians), and if that was successful, he could then transfer to that community.²⁹

Perhaps the real problem lay in considering the eremitic life an entity outside the monastic life, although ancient monastic tradition had always regarded eremitism as one form of monasticism. By the nineteenth century the terms "monasticism" and "cenobitism" were considered to be equivalent. Vatican II, in affirming that religious life was a charism that could not be defined solely in juridical terms, opened the door to the acceptance of special charisms, such as the solitary life. As long as religious life

²⁸ See LECLERCQ, Vie religieuse, p. 82.

²⁹ See MERTON, "For a Renewal", pp. 142-143. Just how these congregations were to cope with transient monks "trying out" an eremitical call was not explained.

was defined solely in juridical terms, there was no possibility for the eremitical life to be recognized as such. When John XXIII, in addressing both contemplative and active communities, placed a high priority on a general call for renewal of all religious life, he also began the process which would ultimately renew the eremitical life in the Church.

II. THE VATICAN II DOCUMENTS

A. Preparation of the Council³⁰

It was in late 1958 that Pope John XXIII, by his own testimony, conceived the idea for a Council of the Universal Church; on May 27, 1959, the "Ante-preparatory" Commission, which was to consult all the bishops of the world, was appointed. A Central Preparatory Commission, with the Pope as president, was appointed to serve as the coordinating agency for all the various groups involved. By the eve of the Council, some seventy-five schemas (drafts) had been prepared. Many could be accepted without change, some had to be combined with others, and still others were referred

³⁰ The primary sources for the preparation of Vatican II are to be found in Acta et documenta Oecumenico Concilio Vaticano II apparando (=Apparando), Vatican City, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1960-1961. For a good English outline (at the popular level) of the background and preparations leading up to the Vatican II Council, see X. RYNNE, Letters from Vatican City; Vatican Council II (first session), Background and Debates, New York, Farrar and Strauss, 1963, pp. 1-93.

to the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law.³¹

Vatican II³² began on October 11, 1962, and the Pope's opening speech revealed his desire for a pastoral council, rather than one which would proclaim any new dogmas. The Pope stated that he had not called the Council to debate "one article or another of the fundamental doctrine of the Church... which is presumed to be well known and familiar to all; for this, a council was not necessary."³³ He had no intention of changing the substance of any doctrine, rather he wanted the Church to find new ways of expressing these doctrines in a modern world. In the carefully worded opening statement, he called for reform and renewal in the Church.³⁴

One unexpected result of the pastoral orientation of the Council was eventually seen in a new awareness of the eremitic life in the Church. Two Vatican II documents reflect this awareness: the Dogmatic Constitution on the

³¹ The members of the Commission for the revision of the Code of Canon Law were not appointed until March, 1963.

³² For the primary sources of the daily discussions in the Council, see: Acta synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II (=Acta synodalia), Vatican City, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970-1978.

³³ See RYNNE, Letters, p. 72.

³⁴ See Acta synodalia, 1-1-1, pp. 166-175.

Church (Lumen gentium),³⁵ and the Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life (Perfectae caritatis).³⁶ Following the course of these two documents through the different sessions of Vatican II to their final promulgation, we can watch the gradual change from a strictly juridical emphasis to a more pastoral one. This change was crucial to a new understanding of the eremitic life in the contemporary Church.

B. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium)³⁷

The Constitution on the Church prepared for Vatican I

³⁵ See SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen gentium, 21 November, 1964, in AAS, 57 (1965), p. 44, n. 40. English translation in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, ed. A. FLANNERY, (=FLANNERY), Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1975, p. 396.

³⁶ See SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life, Perfectae caritatis, 28 October, 1965, in AAS, 58 (1966), pp. 707-712. English translation in FLANNERY, pp. 611-623.

³⁷ For the Council discussions of Lumen gentium, see RYNNE, Letters, pp. 214-239; idem, The Second Session: the Debates and Decrees of Vatican Council II, Sept. 29 to Dec. 4, 1963, London, Faber and Faber, 1964, pp. 38-134. See also G. PHILIPS, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Constitution", in Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, ed. H. VORGRIMLER, (=VORGRIMLER), New York, Herder and Herder, 1967, vol. 1, pp. 105-137; U. BETTI, "Histoire chronologique de la constitution", in L'Eglise de Vatican II: Etudes autour de la Constitution conciliaire sur l'Eglise, ed. G. BARAUNA, Unam sanctam, vol. 51b, 2, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1967, pp. 57-83; G. PHILIPS, L'Eglise et son mystère au IIe Concile du Vatican: histoire, texte et commentaire de la constitution Lumen gentium, Paris, Desclée, 1968, vol. 1, pp. 5-68.

had viewed the Church "primarily as a juridical institution: of the Church as a true and perfect society independent of all earthly powers; of ecclesiastical office; of the legitimate exercise of temporal power (in the Papal States); of Church and State."³⁸ The first draft of the Constitution on the Church (then called De Ecclesia), contained eleven chapters written very much in the style of the documents of Vatican I. One of these chapters (chapter V) concerned the states of perfection, and had been prepared by the Theological Commission. A sub-commission had also produced a doctrinal chapter on the evangelical counsels, entitled "The states for acquiring evangelical perfection." The Central Preparatory Commission had approved the entire schema in June, 1962, and the document was then distributed to the Council Fathers on November 23, 1962, well after the Council had begun. A few weeks later (December 1, 1962) the Council began debate on the whole schema.³⁹

From the beginning of the first debate, the Council Fathers made it clear that the nature of the Church as community should be stressed more than the nature of the Church as society. Some felt that the present draft lacked

³⁸ F. WULF, "The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness", in VORGRIMLER, vol. I, p. 261.

³⁹ Early in the debate, Cardinal P.-E. Léger of Montreal, rightly claimed that this schema would be the hinge on which the whole Council turned, but that was not evident as the discussions began.

sufficient biblical and patristic elements. Bishop A. De Smedt summed up the feelings of many when he attacked the "triumphalism", "clericalism" and "legalism" of the document.⁴⁰ Cardinal L.J. Suenens proposed it be redrafted on a totally new basis. If Vatican I had been the Council of the Primacy, then Vatican II should be the Council of the Church of Christ, the light of nations. The doctrine of the Church should be presented under two aspects: ad intra, or the nature of the Church as Mystical Body; and ad extra, with respect to the Church's mission to preach to all nations.⁴¹ This approach was to have a direct effect on the chapter concerning the place of religious in the life of the Church, which, like all the other prepared documents, was very juridical.⁴²

⁴⁰ See Acta synodalia, 1-1-4, pp. 142-144.

⁴¹ See Acta synodalia, 1-1-44, pp. 222-227.

⁴² The original drafts reflected the way the Church viewed itself in the early 1960s. For an idea of how religious perceived the chapter on religious in the document, see: R.M. WILTGEN, The Rhine Flows into the Tiber, Devon, Eng., Augustine Pub. Co., 1979, pp. 103-109. For a history of the various drafts of the chapter on religious, see: M.J. SCHOENMAECKERS, Genèse du chapitre VI "De Religiosis" de la constitution dogmatique sur l'Eglise "Lumen gentium", Rome, Gregorian University Press, 1983. See also N. HAUSMAN, Vie religieuse apostolique et communion de l'Eglise: l'enseignement du concile Vatican II, with a preface by Mgr. A. Houssiau, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 1987, pp. 39-67; F. WULF, "Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI", in VORGRIMLER, vol. I, pp. 253-260.

1. First Draft (November 23, 1962)⁴³
"De statibus evangelicae acquirendae perfectionis"

The first⁴⁴ draft of the chapter on religious was prepared by the members of the doctrinal commission, at the request of the Preparatory Commission for Religious, who had asked for a doctrinal chapter on the states of perfection. This draft comprised three sections:

17. The evangelical counsels
18. The importance of the evangelical counsels in the Church
19. The ecclesial aspects of the states of perfection

This chapter was not debated on the floor at the first session of the Council and, when Pope John asked that all the schemas be abbreviated, it was sent to the newly appointed Coordinating Commission to be shortened. There was of course no mention of eremitical life.

2. Second draft (July 19, 1963)⁴⁵
"De vocatione ad sanctitatem in Ecclesia"

The expression "state of perfection" was a juridical term used as a general description of all the different

⁴³ See Acta synodalia, 1-1-4, pp. 34-37.

⁴⁴ The first schema was sent to the Central Preparatory Commission and approved by the entire commission. See Apparando, 2-2-3, pp. 1105-1115.

⁴⁵ See Acta synodalia, 2-2-1, pp. 269-281.

canonical forms of religious life. Many, however, believed it to be misleading and the Commission on Religious, which was responsible for abbreviating the chapter on religious, decided to drop it from the title, which now read "Of those who bind themselves (before the Church) to the evangelical counsels." The newly abbreviated document, little different from the first version, was finished and ready for the Council by late March 1963. However, the Theological Commission, meeting in May 1963, rejected this draft on theological grounds.

The main objection was that it seemed to treat religious as members of a privileged state, who formed a sort of spiritual aristocracy, thus obscuring the basic doctrine that all Christians were called to holiness. For centuries it had been customary in the Church to speak of two standards of holiness in the Church: the following of the evangelical counsels in religious life for those who aimed at perfection, and the following of the commandments in secular life for those whose only aim was salvation. It was believed that those who chose the counsels as a way to perfection, were called to a higher degree of love, and therefore to a closer intimacy with God.

Behind this belief was an assumption that the world contaminated man, and therefore man had to separate from the world in order to find God. As we have seen above, this was

the belief of the early monastic Fathers, and was even affirmed by St. Thomas. It was thought that earthly goods and earthly concerns were so enticing, that it was almost impossible for anyone living in the "world" to desire spiritual things unless the world was totally renounced. Pope John in his encyclical, Mater et magistra, had made it clear that this was not the case:

Let no one imagine that there is any opposition between these two things so that they cannot be properly reconciled: namely, the perfection of one's own soul and the business of this life, as if one had no chance but to abandon the activities of this world in order to strive for Christian perfection.⁴⁶

Many theologians now maintained that the Church could no longer set the "secular" and "spiritual" in opposition to each other, and the religious state had to be seen in its proper context in the mystery of the Church as a whole, and not in isolation. The schema on the Church should treat of sanctity in the entire Church, but the draft as presented gave the impression that it was a monopoly of religious.

⁴⁶ See JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter, Mater et magistra, 16 May, 1961, in AAS, 53 (1961), p. 460: "Nemo igitur perperam sibi cogitatione fingat haec duo inter se pugnare, quae contra componi apte possunt: scilicet sui cuiusque animi perfectionem et praesentis huius vitae negotia, quasi quis a mortalis vitae operibus se remove necessario debeat, ut ad christianam suam perfectionem contendat." English translation in Mater et magistra, Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope John XXIII: Christianity and Social Progress, trans. W.H. Gibbons, New York, Paulist Press, 1961, p. 77.

It was decided to delete the chapter on religious from the schema, and write a new chapter which would include the religious life in the context of the universal call to holiness. In May 1963, a group of bishops and theologians from the Theological Commission revised the chapter and entitled it "The Vocation to Sanctity in the Church."⁴⁷ A joint meeting with the Commission for Religious was scheduled but never took place due to the death of Pope John. Pope Paul decided that the revised chapters on religious and laity should be printed "as is" in July 1963, in order to have them ready for the opening of the Council.

The second session of the Council began with an appraisal of the new version of De Ecclesia, which had been reduced from eleven chapters to four:

1. The Mystery of the Church
2. The hierarchy
3. The people of God and the laity in particular
4. The vocation to sanctity in the Church.

The chapter on religious had now become a part of chapter 4. On October 25, 1963, the Council turned its attention to Chapter IV, which consisted of a little over

⁴⁷ See HAUSMAN, Vie religieuse, n. 14, p. 46, for the authors of this draft. See also G. PHILIPS, "History of the Constitution", in VORGRIMLER, vol. I, p. 121-123; F. WULF, "Introductory Remarks", in VORGRIMLER, vol. I, pp. 253-260.

five pages divided into nine paragraphs:

28. Introduction
29. Universal vocation to sanctity
30. Different ways of pursuing sanctity
31. Means to sanctity and the evangelical counsels
32. Observance of the counsels in a way of life approved by the Church
33. Profession of the States of Perfection in the Church
34. Under the authority of the Church
35. Consecration to the evangelical counsels to be honored
36. Conclusion

Two thirds of the text was devoted to religious institutes, thus anticipating the special schema elsewhere devoted to that subject. Some bishops objected that the concept of holiness itself was not sufficiently developed. Others, that the text dealt with the perfection of the individual and not with that of the whole Church as such. The holiness of the individual could only be seen as a participation in the holiness of the Church as a whole.⁴⁸

Cardinal Paul-Emile Léger welcomed the stress on the

⁴⁸ Some of the Council Fathers felt that the text lacked a good scriptural basis for the religious life. Among these were: Bishop Antonius Vuccino, Acta synodalia, 2-2-3, pp. 617-620; Bishop Ferdinandus Quiroga y Palacios, ibid., pp. 600-603; and Cardinal Augustin Bea, ibid., pp. 638-646. Cardinal Bea also wanted a very careful use of the word "perfection".

holiness of the laity, since for far too long monastic sanctity had been held up as the only authentic form of sanctity in the Church, an ideal which overlooked secular clergy and laity alike.⁴⁹ Many of the bishops approved the insistence on summoning all Christians to holiness rather than certain classes or groups. One bishop, Sebastiao Soares de Resende, criticized linking "perfection" and the religious life,⁵⁰ and the German Benedictine abbot, Benedikt Reetz, wanted to abandon the term "states of perfection" altogether because it seemed equivocal.⁵¹ Many maintained that the vocation to the counsels was not sufficiently shown to be a special grace. In fact, the significance of religious life to the whole Church was not very clear.

There was strong support, especially from religious, for dividing the chapter into two, one part to be devoted to the holiness of all Christians, and the second to the pursuit of this holiness in the religious state. The Theological Commission itself was divided on the issue. One group

⁴⁹ See ibid., pp. 632-635.

⁵⁰ See ibid., pp. 661-663.

⁵¹ See Acta synodalia, 2-2-3, pp. 666-669. The term was used by Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologica, II, II, q. 184) to describe the religious and episcopal states, but the 1917 Code did not use the term. It was re-introduced into canonical usage by Pius XII. See PIUS XII, Apostolic constitution, Provida Mater, 2 February 1947, in AAS, 39 (1947), p. 116.

on the Commission believed that the chapter on holiness should be with "The People of God", and the chapter on religious should have its own place since the religious state was as much a special state as that of the laity or the hierarchy. The other group, however, basing its arguments on pastoral and ecumenical grounds, wanted only one chapter. The Commission itself was unable to agree, and decided to leave the decision to the Council.

This draft was important in the development of an awareness of the existing eremitical life in the Church. For the first time a document spoke of individual vocations to the evangelical counsels. In the discussion on the practice of the evangelical counsels (n. 31, "The Means to Sanctity and the Evangelical Counsels"), there was a brief allusion to those who had first practiced them, namely the anchorites, virgins and widows, whom the Church had always "praised and kept under its protection."⁵² A footnote was given which cited various historical works, as well as two allocutions by Pius XI and Pius XII,⁵³ all of which praised

⁵² See Acta synodalia, 2-2-1, p. 271: "Gaudet autem Ecclesia plures in sinu suo inde ab antiquitate exstitisse ab ea laudatos anachoretas, continentes, virgines ac viduas."

⁵³ See ibid., n. 14, p. 278: PIUS XII, Allocution, "Nous sommes heureux", 11 April, 1958, in AAS, 50 (1958), p. 283: "Même avant la paix constantinienne, des chrétiens fervents fuyaient déjà le monde et se livraient dans la vie privée aux pratiques de l'ascèse, tandis que d'autres recherchaient au désert le renoncement total aux délices

the primitive practice of the counsels.

3. Third draft (July 1964)⁵⁴
"De religiosis (caput VI sive caput V sectio B)"

By November 1963, the Commission on Religious had received nearly 700 signatures asking for a separate chapter on religious. On January 27, 1964, a sub-commission of the Theological Commission began the revision of Chapter IV of the second draft. They decided to break it into two sections: text A, dealing with holiness in the Church; and text B, with religious. The revised schema was sent to the Council in July.

In this draft, paragraph 32 (considerably expanded), had become paragraph 43, and bore a new sub-title, "The Profession of the Evangelical Counsels in the Church." Although the practice of the counsels was commended to all Christians, the profession of them was typical only of the religious state. The idea of a "state of perfection", to which so many had objected, had disappeared. It was made clear that the counsels were a gift of the Lord to the

d'une civilisation corrompue. L'exemple surnaturel de quelques grandes figures, comme saint Paul ermite et saint Antoine, entraîna dans les solitudes de la Thébaïde, ou dans les Laures de la Palestine et de la Syrie, des troupes toujours plus nombreuses d'imitateurs, qui devinrent les fils spirituels de ces premiers Pères du désert". See also PIUS XI, Apostolic constitution, Umbratilem, 8 July, 1924, in AAS, 16 (1924), pp. 386-387.

⁵⁴ See Acta synodalia, 3-3-1, pp. 310-315.

Church, one which it maintains by his grace. The Church has the right to interpret the counsels, regulate their practice and institute stable forms of life where they can be experienced. Paragraph 43 also contained the notion, previously expressed in n. 31 of the second draft, that some forms of religious life had started with hermits. No. 43 read:

The evangelical counsels of chastity dedicated to the Lord, poverty and obedience are based on the word and example of the Lord, and which have been commended by the Apostles, the Fathers, and the doctors and pastors of the Church, are a divine gift, received from the Lord and protected through his grace. The Church has the right to interpret them, regulate their practice and establish stable forms of life embodying the counsels. From this divinely given seed, a wonderful and widely spreading tree has developed in the field of the Lord, which has branched out into various forms of religious life, **lived in solitude** or in community, and various families which contribute to the advancement of their members and indeed to the entire Body of Christ.⁵⁵

The footnote given in the draft for this paragraph was the same footnote (somewhat simplified) cited for the

⁵⁵ See Acta synodalia, 3-3-1, p. 310, n. 43 (new material in bold): "**Consilia evangelica castitatis Deo dicatae, paupertatis et obedientiae, utpote in verbis et exemplis Domini fundata et ab Apostolis et Patribus Ecclesiaeque doctoribus et pastoribus commendata, sunt donum divinum, quod Ecclesia a Domino suo accepit et gratia Eius semper conservat. Ad ipsam quoque pertinet illa interpretari, eorum praxim moderari et etiam stabiles inde vivendi formas constituere. Quo factum est ut, quasi in arbore ex germine divinitus dato mirabiliter et multipliciter in agro Domini ramificata, variae formae vitae solitariae vel communis, variae familiae creverint, quae tum ad profectum sodalium, tum ad bonum totius Corporis Christi opes augent.**"

mention of eremitical life in n. 31 of the previous draft.⁵⁶

4. Fourth draft (September 30, 1964)⁵⁷
"De religiosis"

In the spring of 1964, the chapter underwent a final revision by a mixed commission and was presented to the Council Fathers for approval on September 30, 1964. Several changes proposed for n. 43 were accepted by the Commission and incorporated into the fourth and final draft. One change specified that the Church authorities, who had the right to interpret, regulate and set up the forms of life embodied in the counsels, were guided by the Holy Spirit (duce Spiritu Sancto) in doing so.⁵⁸

The Council voted (1505/598) to divide the chapter in two and then approved the following: Chapter V, "The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness" (1856/17), and Chapter VI, "Religious" (1736/12). The text was promulgated on the final day of the third session of Vatican II.

5. The promulgated text (November 21, 1964)
"De religiosis"

This chapter discusses the state of the evangelical counsels, and the place of that state in the nature and

⁵⁶ See ibid., p. 316, (B).

⁵⁷ See Acta synodalia, 3-3-8, pp. 821-824.

⁵⁸ See ibid., p. 821.

organization of the Church. The counsels are a gift of the Lord to the Church, and only in the Church is an individual called to that state. The Church thus has the right to explain the counsels, regulate their practice and set up stable forms of life in conformity with them; it is thus an ecclesiastical state of life regulated by canon law. Although the canonical approach prevails in n. 43, nevertheless, the different forms of eremitical and cenobitical life which have flourished in the Church are acknowledged.

It is not the particular form of religious life which is important, but rather the fact that it is an inalienable part of the plenitude of the life of the Church and its charismatic structure. If it is within the charismatic structure that the eremitical life flourishes, it is the juridic structure that permits this to happen. The footnote to this section of n. 43, was similar to the footnote first cited for n. 32 of the second draft.⁵⁹ The final text reads:

The teaching and example of Christ provide the foundation for the evangelical counsels of chaste self-dedication to God, of poverty and of obedience. The Apostles and Fathers of the Church commend them as an ideal of life, and so do her doctors and pastors. They therefore constitute a gift of God which the Church has received from her Lord and which by his grace she always safeguards.

⁵⁹ See AAS, 57 (1965), n. 137, p. 49.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Church authority has been at pains to give the right interpretation of the counsels, to regulate their practice, and also to set up stable forms of living embodying them. From the God-given seed of the counsels a wonderful and wide-spreading tree has grown up in the field of the Lord, branching out into various forms of religious life lived in solitude or in community. Different religious families have come into existence in which spiritual resources are multiplied for the progress in holiness of their members⁶⁰ and for the good of the entire Body of Christ.

C. Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life
"De accomodata vitae religiosae"

Gathering together all the suggestions⁶¹ from the Pope,⁶² the bishops, major religious superiors and the Sacred Congregation for Religious, the Ante-Preparatory Commission for Religious prepared an analyticus conspectus, entitled De religiosis.⁶³ In June 1960, using this document as a basis for their work, the Preparatory Commission divided all the suggestions into three main areas: the religious state, the religious institution and the governance of religious. One suggestion in the section on the religious state proposed that the eremitical life be given

⁶⁰ See FLANNERY, p. 402.

⁶¹ The document was the work of the Congregation for Religious.

⁶² This included renewal of religious life, exemption, union of religious institutes and the religious habit.

⁶³ See Apparando, 1-2, Appendix II, pp. 671-751.

canonical status.⁶⁴

The Central Preparatory Commission finished its draft by June 1962. The Commission for Religious finished the revision by July 1962. The final draft was entitled "The States that Aim at Perfection"; it consisted of about one hundred pages containing two hundred articles.

1. First draft (November 23, 1962)⁶⁵
"De statibus perfectionis acquirendae"

The basis of the pre-conciliar draft was very much in line with the 1917 Code of Canon Law, with an emphasis on the canonical state of perfection in which members bind themselves to the evangelical counsels in a common life. The first part, entitled Doctrina de statibus perfectionis acquirendae, contained the doctrine underlying the states which aim at perfection; the second part, Disciplina de renovatione vitae et operae in institutis status perfectionis acquirendae, comprised practical questions concerning religious life. In neither was there any mention of the eremitical life. This text was not debated by the Commission for Religious nor in the first session of the Council, which finished December 8, 1962.

⁶⁴ See ibid., 1-2, De statu religioso, p. 682: "Datur vitae eremiticae status canonicus."

⁶⁵ See Acta synodalia, 2-3-1, pp. 433-495.

2. Second draft (May 22, 1963)⁶⁶
"De statibus perfectionis acquirendae"

On January 30, 1963, the Commission on Religious received instructions from the Central Coordinating Commission to abbreviate the schema.⁶⁷ The abbreviating was done by the Secretary of the Commission and a few experts. The shortened version was slightly more pastoral but essentially unchanged. The whole Commission examined the text February 20 to March 1, 1963, and a sub-commission was given the task of doing the final editing. On March 9, 1963, the abbreviated text, now entitled De religiosi, was presented to the Coordinating Commission for approval. On March 27, 1963, that Commission examined the text, commended the work done in the abbreviation, but criticized it for several reasons:

1. The title, De religiosi, did not apply to secular institutes.
2. The traditional term status perfectionis was used too frequently and might cause misunderstanding.
3. There seemed to be no Christological, ecclesiological or biblical concept of the state associated with the evangelical counsels.
4. The attitude of renunciation of the world did not suit an active apostolate.

⁶⁶ See Acta synodalia, 3-3-7, pp. 751-780.

⁶⁷ Pope John had asked that many of the schemas produced by the Preparatory Commissions be shortened, among them was the one on Religious.

5. The distinction between contemplative orders and active congregations was not made clear.

A small sub-commission of the Commission on Religious then made a few corrections and on May 22, 1963, sent the revised text, retitled De statibus perfectionis acquirendae, to the Council Fathers for their comments. The text had been shortened from 62 to 29 pages, but the content was essentially that of the pre-conciliar draft. It was solely concerned with institutional religious life and made no allusion to the eremitical life.

The written comments from the Council Fathers were laudatory but were balanced by severe criticism.⁶⁸ The contentious factors were similar to those already voiced earlier in the debate on the chapter on religious in De Ecclesia. The critics believed that the text:

1. Did not confront the problems in contemporary religious life;
2. Was simply a series of pious statements;
3. Was juridical rather than pastoral;
4. Did not clearly distinguish between contemplative and active religious life.

Unfortunately, at that time, the Commission for Religious was almost exclusively occupied with the chapter

⁶⁸ The written comments of the Council Fathers ran to well over 200 pages.

on religious which was to appear in De Ecclesia, and had little freedom to work on anything else. No time remained in the second session to discuss the newly abbreviated text. Toward the end of that session it had become obvious that, due to the extended discussion of De Ecclesia, only a small number of the proposed schemas could be discussed. Accordingly, on November 29, 1963, the Coordinating Commission announced that the five remaining schemas, including the one on religious renewal, would have to be further abbreviated. The second session of the Council ended December 4, 1963, and the schema on religious renewal had not been brought to the floor of the Council.

3. Third draft (April 27, 1964)⁶⁹
"De religiosus"

In early 1964, the Commission for Religious set to work abridging the text from 51 articles to 19. The document, retitled De religiosus, and dated April 27, 1964, was now only four pages long, the shortest version of all the drafts on religious life. Unfortunately, the abbreviation left a great deal to be desired in terms of content, and this had to be rectified in the next draft. There was no mention of the eremitical life in this draft.

⁶⁹ See Acta synodalia, 3-3-7, pp. 85-88.

4. Fourth draft (October 10, 1964)⁷⁰
"De accomodata renovatione vitae religiosae"

From September to October, 1964, the Commission for Religious worked on amending the text of the third draft. Cardinal Julius Döpfner, relator for the schema in the Coordinating Commission, believed that the schema contained one serious defect; it bypassed the concrete problems of contemporary religious life.⁷¹ In the light of this, and other comments, the schema was revised. The new text bore a new name, De accomodata renovatione vitae religiosae, as the Commission wished to underline the fact that the schema was both about renewal of religious life and its adaptation to the modern world. Among the changes was the inclusion of the distinct character of societies of apostolic life and secular institutes. More importantly, the schema discussed general principles only, and left particular disciplinary changes to the "competent authorities" to be carried out after completion of the Council.

Debate on the schema began November 11, 1964. There was much criticism of the text,⁷² some believing that the

⁷⁰ See ibid., pp. 143-152.

⁷¹ See ibid., pp. 431-436.

⁷² In contrast to the eleven pages of written interventions to the third draft, De religiosis, the fourth draft drew nearly one hundred pages; see Acta synodalia, 3-3-7, pp. 569-663.

draft in its present form was unacceptable and should be redone;⁷³ the members of the Commission on Religious were equally unhappy.⁷⁴

This draft made no mention of the eremitical life, a point which Bishop Remi De Roo of Canada brought up in a written intervention.⁷⁵ He stated that the Latin Church was undergoing an "ever growing renewal" of the eremitic life and he believed it urgent that the Western Church, in the person of the Council, "recognize the life of hermits as a state of perfection." Such approval would erase many prejudices and misunderstandings, as well as reassuring the hermits that the Church considered their lives were "both legitimate and sanctifying." Bishop De Roo recognized that the 1917 Code of Canon Law, in treating the religious life as one essentially led in common, excluded hermits from the religious state. It also demanded public vows of religion, which meant that a hermit who was not already a religious, could not be considered as such. A religious who wanted to become a hermit had to ask for exclauration "ad nutum S.

⁷³ Cardinal Dopfner was one of these. See ibid., p. 435: "Quare in praesenti sua forma acceptari non potest. Ideo fundus renovetur."

⁷⁴ Bishop G. Huyghe, of the Commission, believed the whole schema should be revised. See ibid., p. 474: "Novum schema efficiatur, quia vetus schema insanabile est."

⁷⁵ Bishop De Roo was bishop of Victoria, the Canadian diocese where Dom Winandy had established a colony of hermits, many of whom were religious.

Sedis", which created other problems.

Bishop De Roo maintained that Council approval of the eremitical life in principle, should then logically be followed by the appropriate canonical legislation. Some of the arguments put forward by Bishop De Roo included:

1. The growing renewal of the eremitical life in the Church which indicated the influence of the Holy Spirit.
2. The sanctifying value of the hermit's life which had been proven in the lives of constant Christian hermits in the history of the Church.
3. The prophetic value of the hermit's life which reminds the world and the Church that the building of the earthly city is not the final end of all things. In fleeing the noise of worldly activities, and opening his heart to the Holy Spirit, in a calm and recollected environment, the hermit "pursues an essential calling of the Church, the direct contemplation of God."
4. The eremitical life had not known a decline in the Eastern Church; its restoration would restore the vitality and inner integrity of the Western Church, as well as having ecumenical value.
5. Recognition of the eremitical life would correct the impression that the practice of the evangelical counsels was limited to that "form of institutionalized community life commonly known as religious life."⁷⁶

Some accepted the draft; however, others rejected it and demanded a complete revision. At the end of the debate, the Council decided (1155/882) to vote on the text article by article. A number of changes had to be made as a result of the modi expressed by the voting.

5. Fifth draft (September 16, 1965)⁷⁷
"De accomodata renovatione vitae religiosae"

The sub-commission charged with the alterations consisted of all the periti (experts) on the Commission. The plenary session was held from April 27 to May 1 and the Commission approved the final text. According to the revised text, religious no longer sought sanctity through the profession of the evangelical counsels, but rather sought "perfect charity".⁷⁸ The article also recognized that solitaries had played a part in the birth of religious life in the Church. The text read:

From the beginning of the Church there were men and women, who by the practice of the evangelical counsels, sought to follow Christ more freely and imitate him more closely and who, each in his own way, led lives consecrated to God. Many of them, inspired by the Holy Spirit, lived in solitude or founded religious families that the Church⁷⁹ gladly affirmed and approved by its authority.

⁷⁷ See Acta synodalia, 4-4-3, pp. 512-528.

⁷⁸ See ibid., p. 512. The fourth draft had read "Sacrosancta Synodus, postquam in constitutione De Ecclesia ostendit sanctitatis prosecutionem per consiliorum evangelicorum..." The revised draft read: "Sacrosancta Synodus, postquam in Constitutione De Ecclesia ostendit caritatis perfectae prosecutionem per consilia evangelica..."

⁷⁹ See Acta synodalia, 4-4-3, p. 512: "Inde ab exordiis quidem Ecclesiae fuerunt viri ac mulieres, qui per praxim consiliorum evangelicorum Christum maiore cum libertate sequi pressiusque imitari intenderunt et suo quisque modo vitam Deo dicatam duxerunt, e quibus multi, Spiritu Sancto afflante, vel vitam solitariam degerunt vel familias religiosas suscitaverunt, quas Ecclesia sua auctoritate libenter suscepit et adprobavit."

6. Promulgated text (October 28, 1965)⁸⁰
"Perfectae caritatis"

On October 28, 1964, the Council voted 2321/4 to accept the whole decree with minor modifications. It was proclaimed the same day. Article n. 1 of the Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life reads as follows:

From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels. They led lives dedicated to God, each in his own way. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits or founded religious families.⁸¹

In these documents we can see how the Church moved from a juridical emphasis on vows and the common life, as the essence of religious life, to the expression of religious life as a charismatic state, and in so doing, would allow for a renewal of an ancient form of religious life, the eremitical one. To see how this is to be accomplished, we shall turn now to the revision of the Code of Canon Law and its evolution after Vatican II was completed.

⁸⁰ See Acta synodalia, 4-4-5, pp. 584-593.

⁸¹ See FLANNERY, p. 611.

III. PREPARATION OF THE NEW CANON

A. Post-conciliar Period: Propositum monasticum

It is not surprising that, after the Council, there was much written on the eremitical life by those concerned with the restoration of eremitism in the monastic state. In 1966 the Cistercian Abbey in Spencer, MA, sponsored a study of proposed monastic legislation, by monks from around the world. The results, entitled Concilium monasticum iuris canonici, were published in 1966.⁸² This group followed the formulation of the 1917 Code. Eight canons treated the eremitic life, and the preface noted:

Other signs of the development of monastic life are the new forms of cenobitism and eremitism flourishing in various regions of the world today. The eremitic life, that admirable form of monastic life which, by the grace of God, often produced an exceptional sanctity in ancient times and even after the Middle Ages, is to be highly honored. In the necessary revision of Canon Law some canonical provision should be made to confirm and foster the eremitical life in the Church.

⁸² See "Propositum monasticum de codice iuris canonici recognoscendo" (=Propositum monasticum), in The Jurist, 26 (1966), pp. 331-357.

⁸³ See ibid., p. 331: "Alia signa incrementi vitae monasticae sunt novae species coenobitismi et eremitismi in dissitis orbis terrarum regionibus hodie florentes. Vita eremitica, illa praeclara forma vitae monasticae quae, per gratiam Dei, sanctitatem eximiam antiquitus, et usque post Medium Aevum, saepe produxit, valde honorandum est. Aliqua provisio canonica ad confirmandam fovendamque vitam eremiticam necessario in Iure Canonico recognoscendo, danda est."

The monks found the rationale for new legislation governing the eremitical life, in the Rule of St. Benedict, which had clearly distinguished two forms of monastic life: cenobitic and anchoritic (eremitic),⁸⁴ and in the revival of eremitical life in the Western Church.⁸⁵ They also cited n. 43 of Lumen gentium and nn. 1, 5, 6, 7 and 9, of Perfectae caritatis. These references, along with some allocutions of Pius XI and Pius XII all praised silence and solitude. With one exception,⁸⁶ they were addressed to specific groups rather than individuals but, by extension, could readily be applied to individual hermits.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ See RB 1980, p. 169.

⁸⁵ See Propositum monasticum, p. 350: "Ut constat ex traditione et clare agnoscitur in Regula Sancti Benedicti, monachorum genera sunt duo. Primum genus est coenobitarum, secundum, anachoretarum, i.e. eremitarum. Quaedam renascentis vitae eremiticae hodie apparet etiam in Occidente. Ergo provisio canonica est necessaria."

⁸⁶ The exception concerned the hermits in the Oriental Code. See PIUS XII, Postquam apostolicis, Canon 313, 4, on p. 147.

⁸⁷ Among these were: PIUS XI, Apostolic constitution, Umbratilem, 8 July, 1924, in AAS, 16 (1924), pp. 385-390 (addressed to the Carthusians); pp. 386-387 of this constitution were cited in the footnote to the eremitical reference in Lumen gentium n. 43); Letter to the Camaldolese, Compertum est, 5 June, 1927, in AAS, 19 (1927), pp. 273-274; PIUS XI, Apostolic constitution, Inter religiosos coetus, 2 July, 1935, in AAS, 35 (1935), pp. 296-298; PIUS XII, Allocution to an international congress on Oriental monasticism, Nous sommes heureux, 11 April, 1958, in AAS, 50 (1958), pp. 282-286; p. 383 was cited in the footnote to the eremitical reference in Lumen gentium, n. 43.

The first of the eremitical canons described a hermit thus:

Canon 31: The monk who, having withdrawn from the world, and leads an anchoritic life so that he can devote himself to God alone in solitude, quiet and silence, in joyful penance⁸⁸ and constant prayer and reading (lectio), seeking perfect charity, without forgetting concern⁸⁹ for the whole Church, is known in law as a hermit.

The next canon (Canon 32, 4) extended the definition of a hermit to include "any person, who being completely separated from the world, lives a solitary life."⁹⁰

The monastic institutes were hoping for eremitical statutes in the monastic section of the revised Code: and indeed the first published draft of the revised legislation (the 1977 schema), did treat eremitical life simply as a form of monasticism. However, as the discussions progressed, it became clear that there were also a number of non-

⁸⁸ These terms have been in use in the Church for hundreds of years and were used in Perfectae caritatis, n. 7: "Instituta quae integre ad contemplationem ordinantur, ita ut eorum sodales in solitudine ac silentio, in assidua prece et alacri paenitentia soli Deo vacent..." English translation in FLANNERY, p. 615.

⁸⁹ See Propositum monasticum, p. 350: "Monachus qui a mundo secedens vitam anachoreticam ducit ut in solitudine, quiete ac silentio soli Deo vacare possit, alacri paenitentia atque assidua lectione et prece perfectam caritatem quaerens, non omissa sollicitudine pro tota Ecclesia, in iure nomine eremitae gaudet."

⁹⁰ See ibid., Canon 32, p. 351, "Ii tandem qui omnino segregati ab hominibus vitam ducunt solitariam."

monastics who wished to consecrate themselves to God in the eremitical life.⁹¹ Consequently, as the legislation on the eremitical life evolved, it was decided that any potential hermit-monks were best treated under particular law and not universal law.

B. Initial Discussions: 1966-1968

In 1966, the commission entrusted with revising the canons on religious life held its first session, and began by endeavoring to sort out such terms as "religious", "hermit", "monk", and "anchorite" etc.⁹² They started by attempting to describe what was common to religious life in general, whether anchoritic, monastic or common.⁹³ What exactly was a religious? Was there a difference between a monk and a religious, or were monks religious? If monks were described solely in contemplative terms, what about those monks whose tradition included teaching or parish ministry? Was a hermit a monk or a religious? How was the eremitic life per se to be characterized?⁹⁴ The meeting on November 23, 1966, examined the definition of a hermit

⁹¹ See J. BEYER, "The Future of Religious Life: The New Legislation for Religious Life", in Concilium, 10-2 (1974), p. 80, in which the author discusses the case of diocesan priests and laymen who wish to become hermits.

⁹² See Communicationes (=Comm.), 2 (1970), pp. 169-170.

⁹³ See Comm., 16 (1984), p. 197; p. 211; p. 219.

⁹⁴ See Comm., 16 (1984), pp. 221-233.

proposed by the Propositum monasticum, and suggested some changes.⁹⁵ The November 24th meeting began with a revised definition, in which further changes were suggested (in parentheses):

A monk is known as a hermit or anchorite, who, entirely separated from the world in (completely) solitary life, in quiet and silence, constant prayer, reading (lectio) and willing penance (and labour), offers a sacrifice of praise and enlarges (supports)⁹⁶ the Church with a hidden apostolic fruitfulness.

The final text, approved on November 26, 1966, extended it further:

Under the name hermit or anchorite is included a religious who, in a completely solitary life in quiet and silence, constant prayer, reading (lectio), labour and willing penance, offers a sacrifice of praise and enriches the

⁹⁵ See Comm., 16 (1984), pp. 221-222, Canon 31, (the suggested changes are in parentheses): "Monachus (christifidelis/religiosus) qui a mundo secedens (separatus/absolute separatus) vitam anachoreticam (solitariam) ducit ut in solitudine (stricta solitudo), quiete ac silentio soli Deo vacare possit, alacri paenitentia atque assidua lectione et prece perfectam caritatem quaerens, non omissa solitudine pro tota Ecclesia, in iure nomine eremitaе gaudet." Some wanted to delete "alacri paenitentia" and "perfectam caritatem quaerens" from the definition, because Vatican II had said that all the faithful were called to this. Another pointed out that the anchoritic life was stricter than the eremitic life and this should be brought out clearly.

⁹⁶ See Comm., 16 (1984), p. 224, (the suggested changes are in parentheses): "Nominе anachoretae seu eremitaе venit monachus qui a mundo omnino segregatus (vitam complete solitariam), vitam solitariam in quiete et silentio, assidua prece, lectione et alacri poenitentia (et labore) laudis sacrificium offert et arcana foecunditate apostolica Ecclesiam dilatat (fovet)."

Church with a hidden apostolic fruitfulness.⁹⁷

At the second session, May 8-12, 1967, one consultor, referring to the last definition, observed that one did not become a religious-hermit simply by leading an eremitic life.⁹⁸ At this early stage the hermit was still being considered only in the context of an institute. That perception was not to change until 1971.

At the 1968 session, the schema title was changed from De religiosis to De institutis perfectionis,⁹⁹ and a general plan for the revision of the canons concerning consecrated life was approved. Under this proposal the canons were to be separated into two sections: matters common to all institutes (Pars generalis) and matters concerning specific groups (Pars specialis).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ See Comm., 16 (1984), p. 239: "Nomine eremitae seu anachoretarum venit religiosus qui vitam complete solitariam in quiete et silentio, assidueque prece, lectione, labore et alacri poenitentia in laudis sacrificium offert et arcana foecunditate apostolica Ecclesiam ditat."

⁹⁸ See Comm., 17 (1985), p. 120: "Exc. mus Praeses adiungit semper, uti par est, actum iri de fidei qui publicam professionem emisit suae peculiaris consecrationis, et quidem ab Ecclesiae auctoritate receptam; aliter enim ipse vocari nequit religiosus. Fidelis quilibet -- sacerdos vel laicus -- qui ad vitam solitariam agendam recedat neque est neque iure vocari potest religiosus eremita."

⁹⁹ See Comm., 2 (1970), p. 173, n. 4. In 1974, the title became De Institutis vitae consecratae per professionem consiliorum evangelicorum, see Comm., 6 (1974), p. 50.

¹⁰⁰ See Comm., 2 (1970), pp. 175-176.

C. 1971 Proposal: Canon 4

In 1971, explaining that many had requested that hermits be included in the revised Code,¹⁰¹ the Commission had given the eremitical life a separate title.¹⁰² Furthermore, it was intended for members of the faithful as well (etiam simplices christifideles). After further discussion, it was decided to place eremitical life among the preliminary canons (Canon 4) of the Special Part, rather than making it a separate title.¹⁰³ The proposed canon stated:

The Church recognizes the eremitic or anchoritic life, by which some of the faithful, through a stricter withdrawal from the world, consecrate their lives to the praise of God and the salvation of the world, using the same means common to institutes entirely ordered to contemplation, that is: silence, solitude, constant prayer and penance.

A hermit is recognized as a religious if he professes the evangelical counsels, stabilized by

¹⁰¹ See Comm., 5 (1973), p. 65: "Ratio introducendi istum titulum [De vita eremitica], invenitur in petitionibus quae ad nos pervenerunt ut in iure recognitio [sic] haberetur agnitio vitae eremiticae erga quam percipitur quidam motus in variis partibus orbis. Motus iste non coarctatur ad instituta monastica vel alia instituta perfectionis sed includit etiam simplices christifideles."

¹⁰² See ibid., p. 63, n. 16.

¹⁰³ See ibid., p. 66: "Altera emendatio respicit titulum quintum praecedentis schematis, cuius rubrica erat De vita eremitica. Titulus iste supprimitur. Re melius perpensa, Relator cum aliis Consultoribus Parvi Coetus putarunt immodicum esse titulum integrum huic materiae dedicare. Sufficeret ut unus canon conficeretur et poneretur inter canones praeliminares secundae partis schematis." See also ibid., p. 68.

vow, in the hands of the competent religious moderator or, if he does not belong to a religious family, in the hands of the Ordinary of the place. The hermit must have a personal rule of life or Rule, approved by the religious moderator or by the Ordinary of the place, and observed under the guidance of the religious moderator or the Ordinary of the place.¹⁰⁴

With this description, the commission had begun the process of excluding "institution" hermits from the canon. There was further refining to be done but the essentials of the final canon were present in the 1971 proposal.

D. 1977 Schema: Canon 92

In 1977, the first draft of the revised canons was published, and the canon on hermits (Canon 92), a simpler version of the 1974 proposal, read as follows:

1. Besides institutes of consecrated life, the Church also recognizes the eremitical or anchoritic mode of life, by which some of the faithful consecrate their lives to the praise of God and the salvation of the world through a stricter

¹⁰⁴ See Comm., 6 (1974), p. 79: "Ecclesia... agnoscit vitam eremiticam vel anachoreticam, qua christifideles, arctiore a mundo secessu, vitam suam consecrant in laudem Dei et mundi salutem eadem media adhibendo quae communia sunt institutis integre ad contemplationem ordinatis, videlicet: solitudine, silentio, prece assidua et paenitentia.

Eremita... religiosus stricte talis recognosci potest, si professionem consiliorum evangelicorum, voto firmatam, emittat in manibus cuiusdam competentis moderatoris religiosi vel, si familiam religiosam non pertineat, in manibus Ordinarii loci. Ipse debet insuper habere propriam vitae rationem seu regulam a moderatore vel Ordinario loci approbatam illamque servare sub dependentia vel moderatoris vel Ordinarii loci."

withdrawal from the world, the silence of solitude, and constant prayer and penance.

2, A hermit is recognized in law as a religious if he professes the three evangelical counsels stabilized by vow and has, and observes, a rule of life, under the guidance of the local Ordinary or the competent religious moderator.¹⁰⁵

As can be seen, the description still spoke of the possibility of a religious becoming a hermit being under the guidance of a "competent religious moderator",¹⁰⁶ and yet "recognized in law" the lay hermit as a "religious".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ See CODEX RECOGNITUS (SCHEMA), Schema canonum de institutis vitae consecratae per professionem consiliorum evangelicorum, Rome, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1977, "Canon 92, 1, Praeter haec vitae consecratae Instituta Ecclesia agnoscit vitam eremiticam seu anachoreticam, qua christifideles arctiore a mundo secessu, solitudinis silentio, assidua prece et paenitentia, suam in laudem Dei et mundi salutem vitam consecrant.

2, Eremita uti religiosus iure recognoscitur si tria evangelica consilia, voto firmata, profiteatur et propriam vitae rationem sub ductu Ordinarii loci aut competentis moderatoris religiosi habeat et servet." English translation in Schema of Canons on Institutes of Life Consecrated by Profession of the Evangelical Counsels: Draft, Washington, DC, Publications Office, United States Catholic Conference, 1977, p. 57.

¹⁰⁶ The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland thought that the canon on hermits should have been among the general canons rather than the preliminary ones; also, the term **religious** was being introduced for the first time, without any definition, and that it might be preferable to say instead: "Institutes of consecrated life may include an eremitical tradition, if such is acknowledged and included in their constitutions", see Report on the "Schema canonum De institutis vitae consecratae per professionem consiliorum evangelicorum, London, The Canon Law Society, 1978, Canon 92, pp. 11-12.

¹⁰⁷ In their evaluation of the 1977 schema, the Canon Law Society of America stated: "In place of uti religiosus substitute uti persona consecrata. Calling a hermit a

E. 1979 Proposed Revision: Canon 38

The observations or animadversiones on the 1977 schema made by the bishops, the Roman Congregations, the Union of Superiors General,¹⁰⁸ as well as those of the Commission members, were addressed in the revision. On May 29, 1979, the canon (now Canon 38), was presented for discussion in the following form (the words in parentheses being the alternatives to be debated):

1, Besides (these) institutes of consecrated life, the Church recognizes the eremitic or anchoritic life (recognizes hermits or anchorites) by which the Christian faithful withdraw further from the world and devote (dedicate, consecrate) their lives to the praise of God and the salvation of the world through the silence of solitude, and constant prayer and penance.

2, Hermits are recognized by law in the Church, as dedicated to God in consecrated life if, in the hands of the local Ordinary (or a competent superior), they publicly profess, by a vow or some other sacred bond, the three evangelical counsels and, have and observe their own rule of life under the guidance (of one or the other).¹⁰⁹

religious is a fiction of law inasmuch as he does not fulfill the definition of a religious." See CANON LAW SOCIETY OF AMERICA, Critique of Schema canonum de institutis vitae consecratae per professionem consiliorum evangelicorum, Washington, DC, CLSA, 1977, Canon 92, 2, p. 20.

¹⁰⁸ See Comm., 10 (1978), p. 161, for a list of all the persons or groups consulted for the revision of the 1977 schema on the Institutes of Consecrated Life.

¹⁰⁹ See Comm., 11 (1979), p. 328: "Canon 38, 1, Praeter (haec) vitae consecratae Instituta, Ecclesia agnoscit vitam eremiticam seu anachoreticam (agnoscit eremitas seu anachoretas), qua christifideles arctiore a mundo secessu, solitudinis silentio, assidua prece et

The discussion of the first paragraph ended with a decision to omit everything in parentheses in that paragraph.¹¹⁰ The coetus also decided that in the second paragraph the words "competent superior" should be omitted, since a member of a religious or secular institute who wished to become a hermit would come under the laws of that institute; the term "local Ordinary" should be changed to "diocesan Bishop", as the hermit addressed in the canon would be in relationship with the Bishop and not with an institute. One consultor suggested removing the words "by the Church", since the law being discussed was in fact the law of the Church. The proposal also recognized the hermit as dedicated to God in "consecrated life", rather than being recognized as a "religious". The discussions leading to this change in wording have not yet been published.

F. 1980 Schema: Canon 530

On June 20, 1980, a revised draft was presented to the Pope. In this draft the text on hermits (Canon 530) was that of the 1979 proposed revision, and the canon had been

paenitentia, suam in laudem Dei et mundi salutem vitam devovent (dedicant, consecrant).

2, Eremita uti in vita consecrata Deo deditus iure ab Ecclesia recognoscitur si tria consilia, voto vel sacro ligamine firmata, publice profiteatur in manu Ordinarii loci (vel competentis Superioris) et propriam vivendi rationem sub ductu eiusdem (unius vel alterius) habeat et servet."

¹¹⁰ See Comm., 11 (1979), p. 329.

relocated to the preliminary canons to the whole schema on consecrated life. The canon read as follows:

1, Besides institutes of consecrated life, the Church recognizes the eremitic or anchoritic life, in which Christ's faithful withdraw further from the world and devote their lives to the praise of God and the salvation of the world through the silence of solitude and constant prayer and penance.

2, Hermits are recognized by law as dedicated to God in consecrated life if, in the hands of the diocesan Bishop, they publicly profess the three evangelical counsels, confirmed by a vow or some other sacred bond, and then observe their own form of¹¹¹ life under the guidance of the diocesan Bishop.

G. 1982 Schema: Canon 604

In the discussions which followed the publication of the 1980 schema, Canon 530 drew some comments from the members of the coetus. Cardinal Philippe proposed that the canon recognize two types of hermits; those who belonged to some institute, and those who did not belong to any institute but wished to profess eremitical life in the hands of

¹¹¹ See PONTIFICIA COMMISSIO CODICI IURIS CANONICI RECOGNOSCENDO, Codex Iuris canonici: Schema Patribus commissionis reservatum, Vatican City, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1980: "Canon 530, 1, Praeter vitae consecratae Instituta, Ecclesia agnoscit vitam eremiticam seu anachoreticam, qua christifideles arctiore a mundo secessu, solitudinis silentio, assidua prece et paenitentia, suam in laudem Dei et mundi salutem vitam devovent.

2, Eremita uti in vita consecrata Deo deditus in iure recognoscitur si tria evangelica consilia, voto vel sacro ligamine firmata, publice profiteatur in manu Episcopi dioecesani et propriam vivendi rationem sub ductu eiusdem servet."

the diocesan bishop. The response of the commission was negative.¹¹² The canon on the eremitical life in the 1982 schema (Canon 604) was identical in English to that of the 1980 schema. In English, the canon in both the 1980 and 1982 schemata "recognized" the eremitical life. However, in Latin, the verb used to denote "recognize" was changed from recognosco (1980) to agnosco (1982).¹¹³ There was no juridic significance implied in this change.

H. 1983 Code

Can. 603, 1, Besides institutes of consecrated life, the Church recognizes the eremitic or anchoritic life by which the Christian faithful devote their life to the praise of God and salvation of the world through a stricter separation from the world, the silence of solitude and assiduous prayer and penance.

2, A hermit is recognized in the law as one dedicated to God in a consecrated life if he or she publicly professes the three evangelical counsels, confirmed by a vow or other sacred bond, in the hands of the diocesan bishop and observes his¹¹⁴ or her own plan of life under his direction.

¹¹² See PONTIFICIFIA COMMISSIO CODICI IURIS CANONICI RECOGNOSCENDO, Relatio complectens synthesim animadversionum..., Vatican City, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1981, c. 530, pp. 141-142.

¹¹³ Both agnosco and recognosco can be translated into English as to recognize, but agnosco, in the transferred sense, means to acknowledge, whereas recognosco has more a sense of recalling to mind. See A Latin Dictionary, 1969 edition, s.v. "agnosco" and "recognosco".

¹¹⁴ See CODEX IURIS CANONICI (1983), Code of Canon Law; Latin-English Edition, Washington, DC, Canon Law Society of America, 1984, p. 226: "Canon 603, 1, Praeter

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have seen how the official attitude of the Church towards the eremitical life has undergone an evolution since the promulgation of the 1917 Code, when the definition of "religious" precluded the hermit from being juridically recognized in the religious life of the Church. The recognition of the continuing presence of hermits in the Church, the growing demand in monasticism for new legislation on hermits, and the desire of the bishops for a pastoral rather than a juridical Council, all played a part in recognizing the eremitical life at Vatican II. This new awareness of hermits was translated, however tenuously, into the Vatican II documents, Lumen gentium and Perfectae caritatis.

The Council has affirmed that the religious life of the Church does not belong to its institutional structures, but to its very life and holiness. Structures do not define religious life, charisms do that, but they do protect and permit them to grow. One of the most ancient charisms of

vitae consecratae instituta, Ecclesia agnoscit vitam eremiticam seu anachoreticam, qua christifideles arctiore a mundo secessu, solitudinis silentio, assidua prece et paenitentia, suam in laudem Dei et mundi salutem vitam devovent.

2, Eremita, uti Deo deditus in vita consecrata, iure agnoscitur si tria evangelica consilia, voto vel alio sacro ligamine firmata, publice profiteatur in manu Episcopi dioecesani et propriam vivendi rationem sub ductu eiusdem servet." English version p. 227.

the Church was renewed at Vatican II, that of the eremitic life. This unique charism will be protected and allowed to flourish by a new canon in the revised Code, c. 603. When one follows the discussion on the eremitical life in the Code Commission, one becomes aware of how sensitive the members were to the need for moderation in the life of the hermit. While some members wished to emphasize total separation from the world,¹¹⁵ the consensus of opinion rather was to allow the hermit to decide how much separation he or she needed. It was not to be legislated. The final draft merely speaks of a "stricter" withdrawal from the world. Like his medieval predecessors, the diocesan Bishop is responsible for accepting the public profession of the hermit's vows (or other sacred bonds), approving their rule of life with all that entails, and, overall, remaining aware of the hermit's continuing living-out of the rule.

Having given the hermit, who is not a member of any institute of consecrated life, juridical status, we are now faced with the implications of this canon for the particular church. We will now look at some possible criteria for entrance into the eremitical state, formation within it and some guidelines for the rule of life.

¹¹⁵ Among the various suggestions were "a mundo absolute (vel plene) segregatus" and "a mundo omnino segregatus". See Comm., 16 (1984), pp. 221-224.

CHAPTER IV

HERMITS AND THE PARTICULAR CHURCH

In this chapter we shall examine the description of the eremitical state (Can. 603, 1), the requirements for canonical status (Can. 603, 2) and some possible juridical implications of that canon for the particular church. Among these implications, the following points could be noted: how does the diocesan bishop ascertain a genuine eremitical vocation if someone in his diocese wishes to become a hermit? How should he proceed? What are his responsibilities toward the hermit? What responsibilities does the hermit have to him? It is these and similar points that this chapter wishes to address.

Vatican II made clear that "all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love."¹ For some, this call to holiness will be heard as a call to the practice of what have customarily been called the "evangelical counsels":

¹ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, 21 November, 1964, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (=AAS), 57 (1965), n. 40, p. 45, "... omnes christifideles cuiuscumque status vel ordinis ad vitae christianae plenitudinem et caritatis perfectionem vocari." English translation in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. FLANNERY (=FLANNERY), Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1975, p. 396.

This holiness of the Church... appears in a certain way of its own in the practice of the counsels which have usually been called "evangelical". This practice of the counsels prompted by the Holy Spirit, undertaken by many Christians whether privately or in a form or state sanctioned by the Church, gives and should give a striking witness and example of holiness.²

Those who respond to a call to this particular way of holiness may, as Lumen gentium suggests, do so privately, or publicly as in a Church-approved state of life, such as the "consecrated life". In the Code of 1917 the basis of religious life was seen to be the institutional or "common life".³ When the secular institutes, whose members did not normally live in community, were recognised in 1947, the substance of consecrated life was perceived to be in the profession and living of the evangelical counsels. Although this profession is normally made within an institute, in addition to the institutional forms of consecrated life, the Code of 1983 has also recognized the eremitical form of consecrated life.

² Lumen gentium, n. 39, p. 44: "Haec autem Ecclesiae sanctitas... proprio quodam modo apparet in praxi consiliorum, quae evangelica appellari consueverunt. Quae consiliorum praxis, Spiritu Sancto impellente, a multis christianis assumpta, sive privatim sive in conditione vel statu in Ecclesia sanctitas praeclarum in mundo fert, et ferre oportet, eiusdem sanctitatis testimonium et exemplum." English translation in FLANNERY, pp. 396-397.

³ In the 1917 Code, the only officially recognized form of consecrated life implied common life, and thus religious life at the time was defined as a group of people having a common rule and living under a common roof.

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE EREMITICAL STATE

In the first paragraph of Can. 603, the Code defines the eremitical life; we shall now look at that description in order to analyze its elements.

Can. 603, 1: Besides institutes of consecrated life, the Church recognizes the eremitic or anchoritic life by which the Christian faithful devote their life to the praise of God and salvation of the world through a stricter separation from the world, the silence⁴ of solitude and assiduous prayer and penance.

A. Significance of the General Terms

1. Institutes

An institute of consecrated life is a duly erected group of persons, whose charism and way of life has been recognised by competent church authority. Fraternal life is common to all institutes of consecrated life (Can. 602) and "canonical common life" is prescribed for members of religious institutes (Can. 607, 2) and societies of apostolic life (Can. 740). Common life denotes "membership

⁴ Codex iuris canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus, Vatican City, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1983, American version of English language translation: Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition, trans. Canon Law Society of America, Washington, DC, 1984: Can. 603, 1: "Praeter vitae consecratae instituta, Ecclesia agnoscit vitam eremiticam seu anachoreticam, qua christifideles arctiore a mundo secessu, solitudinis silentio, assidua prece et paenitentia, suam in laudem Dei et mundi salutem vitam devovent."

of one body or institute, under its Constitutions and Rules and the authority of its Superiors."⁵ The "separation from the world" will vary in degree according to the apostolate of each institute.⁶ The Church recognises the group form of consecrated life in Can. 573, and the individual form in Can. 603.

2. Consecrated life

Life is consecrated in the Church by the profession of the evangelical counsels.⁷ These counsels, traditionally termed chastity, poverty and obedience, were implicit in the lives of the early monks, but it was only in the eleventh century that religious began making public vows. The meaning of these vows in the life of the hermit will be

⁵ See M.A. O' REILLY, Institutes of Consecrated Life, (unpublished class notes), Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 1988, p. 215.

⁶ This "separation" will be more obvious in a cloistered community (Can. 667) than in an active teaching congregation. Even in cloistered communities the separation may be even greater in a semi-eremitical community such as the Carthusians or Camaldolese. The Camaldolese allow a hermit-monk to go into even further seclusion five years after final vows. The monk then leaves his cell only on great feasts.

⁷ The definition of the institutional form of consecrated life is found in Can. 573, 1: "Vita consecrata per consiliorum evangelicorum professionem est stabilis vivendi forma qua fideles, Christum sub actione Spiritus Sancti pressius sequentes, Deo summe dilecto totaliter dedicantur, ut, in Eius honorem atque Ecclesiae aedificationem mundique salutem novo et peculiari titulo dediti, caritatis perfectionem in servitio Regni Dei consequantur et, praeclarum in Ecclesia signum effecti, caelestem gloriam praenuntient."

slightly different than for a member of an institute of consecrated life.

a. Chastity

Can. 599: The evangelical counsel of chastity assumed for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, as a sign of the future world and a source of more abundant fruitfulness in an undivided heart, entails the⁸ obligation of perfect continence in celibacy.

All Christians are called to chastity but those who profess this evangelical counsel, as hermits do, must do so in celibacy. The counsel requires not only abstention from marriage, but from every act, internal or external, which would violate the virtue of chastity.

b. Poverty

Can. 600: The evangelical counsel of poverty in imitation of Christ who, although He was rich became poor for us, entails, besides a life which is poor in fact and in spirit, a life of labour lived in moderation and foreign to earthly riches, a dependence and a limitation in the use and disposition of goods according to the norm of the proper law of each institute.

⁸ Can. 599: "Evangelicum castitatis consilium propter Regnum coelorum assumptum, quod signum est mundi futuri et fons uberius fecunditatis in indiviso corde, obligationem secumfert continentiae perfectae in coelibatu."

⁹ Can. 600: "Evangelicum consilium paupertatis ad imitationem Christi, qui propter nos egenus factus est cum esset dives, praeter vitam re spiritu pauperem, operose in sobrietate ducendam et a terrenis divitiis aliendam, secumfert dependentiam et limitationem in usu et dispositione bonorum ad normam iuris proprii singulorum institutorum."

One of the first acts of any hermit in the fourth century was to renounce all that he had and give the monies realized to the poor. Hermits earned enough for their own immediate needs and distributed the rest to the poor. Today, it would seem that for the hermit to be poor "in fact", begging for daily food is not implied, but rather the simplicity of life-style which manifests a given state of mind.

c. Obedience

Can. 601: The evangelical counsel of obedience, undertaken in a spirit of faith and love in the following of Christ who was obedient even unto death requires a submission of the will to legitimate superiors, who stand in the place of God when they¹⁰ command according to the proper constitutions.

The hermit is accountable canonically to the bishop and, if there is one, to the bishop's delegate, who would be in more constant touch; but the hermit must also be open to the spiritual director. Through the centuries, the hallmark of the false hermit has been the lack of obedience to any superior. The hermit is seemingly more independent than a member of an institute, but for that very reason the counsel of obedience takes on paramount importance. The hermit must

¹⁰ Can. 601: "Evangelicum oboedientiae consilium, spiritu fidei et amoris in sequela Christi usque ad mortem oboedientis susceptum, obligat ad submissionem voluntatis erga legitimos Superiores, vices Dei gerentes, cum secundum proprias constitutiones praecipiant."

be obedient to the bishop according to the prescriptions laid down in the rule of life. If this rule, over a period of time, turns out to be too onerous or not sufficiently ascetic, the hermit, having discerned the matter with the spiritual director, may ask the bishop for permission to modify it. If, on the other hand, the Bishop believes that the rule is not being observed, whether through laxity or immoderate asceticism, he has the right to call the hermit to obedience to his own rule.

3. Church

Since as Can. 1 of the revised Code explains, pertinent legislation applies only to the members of the Latin Rite (i.e. those baptized or received into the Latin Church), the hermits spoken of in this canon would belong to this Church only. Eastern Rite Catholic Churches have their own legislative norms to guide eremitic life.

4. Recognition in law

To "recognize" the eremitical form of life means to give it ecclesial approbation.¹¹ This means that, as in an institute whose members acquire certain rights and obliga-

¹¹ During a meeting of the Code Commission, May 29, 1979, a consultor asked if the term "recognize" was meant to signify "juridical recognition". The Secretary's answer was affirmative. See Communicationes (=Comm.), 11 (1979), p. 329.

tions on entering it, so too the hermit acquires certain rights and obligations. These are spelled out in the second paragraph of the canon and will be examined later.

5. Eremitic or anchoritic life

The terms "hermit" and "anchorite" are synonymous. As we have seen above, it was only in the late Middle Ages that the term "anchorite" came to mean one who was in "deeper reclusion". The Code Commission, meeting in 1966, proposed first to clarify some of the notions used in discussing religious life, among them, "hermits or anchorites" (eremitae seu anachoretæ). It was agreed that these words would be considered synonymous in law, and would be used to express the term "vita solitaria", which had been employed by the second Vatican Council in Lumen gentium.¹²

6. Christian faithful

The term "Christian faithful" comprises the baptized, whether cleric or lay (male or female). However, in virtue of the context, it is evident that the term as used here does not apply to religious. Indeed, any religious who wish to lead the eremitical life are subject to the particular

¹² See Comm., 6 (1974), p. 78: "Cum vita eremitica seu anachoretica, quæ in documentis conciliaribus vita solitaria appellatur..."

law of their own institute.¹³

B. Distinctive Characteristics of the Eremitical State

The law provides for three distinctive elements which would characterize the eremitical life:

1. stricter separation from the world,
2. silence of solitude,
3. constant prayer and penance.

These particular terms were taken from the Vatican II Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life,¹⁴ which described the members of contemplative institutes as "giving themselves over to God alone in solitude and silence, in constant prayer and willing penance,"¹⁵ but the terms are centuries

¹³ One member of the commission studying the 1980 schema, Archbishop Coffy, thought that the eremitical canon, might be useful to those transferring from the monastery to the eremitical life. The answer was negative: "Hoc in canone non agitur de religiosis; canon enim incipit 'Praeter vitae consecratae Instituta, Ecclesia agnoscit...' " See PONTIFICIA COMMISSIO CODICI IURIS CANONICI RECOGNOSCENDO, Relatio complectens synthesim aniamadversionum..., Vatican City, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1981, pp. 141-142.

¹⁴ See Comm., 6 (1974), p. 79: "... descriptio vitae eremiticae, quae in paragrapho prima apparet, magna ex parte collecta est ex n. 7 Decreti Perfectae Caritatis, ubi de institutis quae integre ad contemplationem ordinantur."

¹⁵ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life, Perfectae caritatis, 28 October, 1965, in AAS, 58 (1966), n. 7, p. 705: "Instituta quae integre ad contemplationem ordinantur, ita ut eorum sodales in solitudine ac silentio, in assidua prece et alacri poenitentia soli Deo vacent." English translation in FLANNERY, p. 615.

old and described the solitaries of the fourth century as much as they do those of the twenty-first century.

1. Stricter separation from the world

All those who follow the consecrated form of life separate themselves to some extent from the world, but hermits must do so to an even greater degree.¹⁶ The characteristic element of the eremitical life¹⁷ is "stricter separation from the world" in its most literal sense, and the canon places this first¹⁸ among the three essential elements of this state. At the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the hermit goes apart from society in order to live with God alone, thus having little contact with others except for reasons of necessity or charity.

¹⁶ Religious are to "separate from the world" in order to give the public witness which is proper to each institute. See Can. 607, 3: "Testimonium publicum a religios-is Christo et Ecclesiae reddendum illam secumfert a mundo separationem, quae indoli et fini uniuscuiusque instituti est propria."

¹⁷ See "Propositum monasticum de codice iuris canonici recognoscendo", in The Jurist, 26 (1966), p. 350. In the light of Vatican II, many monks offered suggestions for the proposed monastic legislation. Some of the proposals concerned the eremitic life. The canon on hermits was written for monks who presumably were already leading a life "apart from the world" and yet described a hermit-monk as a "monachus a mundo secedens".

¹⁸ At the November 1971 meeting of the coetus, the description of the eremitical life as it appeared in Can. 4 emphasized the importance of the words "separation from the world" by printing the words arctiore a mundo secessu in italics. See Comm., 6 (1974), p. 79.

The hermit is separated externally from society, but in fact lives a life which is in profound communion with the whole Church and, indeed, with all humankind; living apart from society is an expression of the solitary dimension of all.

The solitary, though he may spend much time alone is never alone in the sense of being alienated from humanity, unaware of its sorrows and agonies and unmindful of his responsibility to bring persons, known and unknown, to the mercy of God through prayer. As "watchmen upon the walls" the solitaries are at the point where the forces of evil and the redemptive power of God meet.¹⁹

The life of the hermit is an icon of the solitude of all Christians in their solitude before God; this separation from the world is the hallmark of the hermit.

2. Solitude and silence

Can. 31 of the 1966 Propositum monasticum, used the traditional terms "solitude and silence" to describe the anchoritic life, terms which contrasted with the cenobitic life led by other monks. The coetus, in its first draft, used this canon for its proposal,²⁰ and retained the terms which then appeared in all succeeding drafts.

¹⁹ M. MARY CLARE, "Eremitical Revival in the Anglican Church in the Twentieth Century", in Solitude and Communion, ed. A.M. ALLCHIN, Oxford, SLG Press, 1975, p. 67.

²⁰ See Comm., 16 (1984), p. 239.

Solitude and silence do not mean that the hermit must live absolutely alone, never speaking to another human being, for this has never been the eremitical tradition.²¹ Thus, for instance, the Fathers of the Desert, receiving any visitor as though it was Christ who was present, practiced a carefully discerned hospitality.²² They met weekly for liturgy and visited one another, although with discretion. There is nothing in the canon forbidding the hermits in the diocese from meeting occasionally for mutual support.²³

²¹ If one reads the Apophthegmata patrum, (Sayings of the Desert Fathers), it is clear that mutual visits between hermits to discuss spiritual matters were accepted as normal for experienced hermits, although some might opt for complete silence, either temporarily or permanently. See The Desert Christian: Sayings of the Desert Fathers, trans. B. Ward, New York, Macmillan, 1980. See also The Wisdom of the Desert: Sayings of the Desert Fathers of the Fourth Century, trans. T. Merton, London, Sheldon Press, 1974.

²² The desert solitaries tended to distinguish between visitors who came out of a desire to learn about solitude and those who came out of mere curiosity.

²³ See S. BONNET and G. GOULEY, Les ermites, Paris, Fayard, 1980, p. 113, where the French hermits being interviewed by Bonnet, seemed to be either totally indifferent to meeting with other hermits or else very enthusiastic. Said one of the "nays": "Il me faut préciser encore que je n'ai personnellement aucun lien avec d'autres ermites... et que je ne souhaite pas en nouer. Il faut être conséquent avec son choix de solitude et de silence, et ne pas employer en vain l'expression 'désert'. Dieu seul doit être notre aide et notre réconfort. Certes, il faut recevoir ceux qui viennent à nous 'comme le Christ lui-même'. Mais rechercher des contacts, cela me paraîtrait verser dans l'illusion." On the other hand one hermit had contact with about 20 other hermits: "Les relations entre ermites? Elles sont assez fréquentes. Je ne connais qu'un seul cas d'ermite tout à fait reclus, au sens de: ne voyant absolument personne; encore ne paraît-il pas parfaitement équilibré. Personnellement, je suis en relation avec une bonne vingtaine de con-

Depending on the number of hermits in the diocese, the bishop may wish to set up an association of diocesan hermits, as has been done in Spain.²⁴

Human relations, whether familial or societal will be regulated by the hermit's personal rule of life and the necessity of breaking silence and solitude for the sake of charity.²⁵ The hermit is usually someone whose prayer life has grown so intense as to demand a concentration that can only be found in solitude, a solitude that the hermit will not lightly compromise.

3. Constant prayer and penance

If withdrawal from the world, solitude and silence are the essentials of the eremitical life, it is because

frères des deux sexes, dont certains sont fort édifiants et qui tous sont assez fidèles à la vie en solitude." See p. 34.

²⁴ See D.J. ANDRES, "Proyecto de estatutos diocesanos para los eremitanos de la Iglesia particular de... Comentario aplicativo al can. 603 del CIC", in Commentarium pro religiosus, 67 (1986), pp. 185-239. See also E. SASTRE SANTOS, "La vida eremitica diocesana forma de vida consagrada: Variciones sobre el canon 603", in ibid., 68 (1987), pp. 99-124; 245-267; 331-358; ibid., 69 (1988), pp. 145-170; 307-312; ibid., 70 (1989), pp. 89-189.

²⁵ Dorotheos of Gaza, a sixth century monk, gave three reasons for leaving one's cell: the first (and most important) one was that of charity, the second was listening to the reading of the scriptures, and the third was spiritual discernment. See Dorothee de Gaza: Oeuvres spirituelles, introduction and trans. by L. Regnault and J. de Préville, Sources chrétiennes, vol. 92, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 1963, pp. 488-490.

they are necessary to the prayer life of the hermit²⁶ which is the essence of the eremitical vocation. As Bishop Remi de Roo pointed out at Vatican II, in discussing the place²⁷ of the hermit in the life to the Church:

The hermit fills a prophetic role. He lives by anticipation in heaven. He reminds the world and the Church that the building of an earthly city is not the final end of all things. Fleeing the noisy whirlwind of all activities, he opens his heart to the Holy Spirit in an atmosphere of calm and interior recollection. Thus he pursues an essential calling²⁸ of the Church, the direct contemplation of God.

There is no blueprint of prayer which can be followed

²⁶ If the first and foremost duty of a religious is the contemplation of divine things and union with God in prayer, then this applies even more strongly to those whose whole life is to be spent in prayer. See Can. 663 1: "Rerum divinarum contemplatio et assidua cum Deo in oratione unio omnium religiosorum primum et praecipuum sit officium."

²⁷ That the hermit has a place in the Church has been debated for as long as there have been Christian hermits. Christianity has always been corporate and some question the solitary life for that reason. This is perhaps a question of ecclesiology. If the Church is seen primarily in juridical or institutional terms, then the hermit is conceived of as one over against the many. If, however, the Church is seen as a community of many persons but one body, with many gifts but one Spirit, then the gifts of each belong to all and what belongs to each, belong to all. In the words of Peter Damian (1007-1072), the eremitical life is a corporate solitude (solitudo pluralis), and the prayer of the hermit is no longer a solitary action but indeed, the hermit's cell becomes a veritable Church in miniature (minor ecclesia), and the hermit is united with all other Christians. See A. LOUF, "Solitudo pluralis", in Solitude and Communion, pp. 17-29.

²⁸ See Acta synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II (=Acta synodalia), Vatican City, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970-1980, 3-3-7, p. 609.

by every hermit, instead all must find their own way, obeying the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Although the pattern of the experience of the Desert Fathers can be found in the Apophthegmata patrum, as well as in the works of Cassian,²⁹ the contemporary hermit may deepen prayer life with daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours and mental prayer. The study of Sacred Scripture, and meditation on it, will situate the hermit within the biblical sources which have always informed the eremitic life.

The Eucharist is the heart of the prayer of the Church and daily participation in its celebration is recommended for all clerics and religious,³⁰ although, in practice, this may not always be possible. Indeed for hermits, depending on their isolation, such participation may have to be weekly rather than daily. According to Thomas Merton, the whole life of the hermit, which is one of silent and solitary adoration of God, is eucharistic in the

²⁹ See "The Conferences of John Cassian", in The Works of John Cassian, trans. E.C.S. Gibson, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, eds. H. WACE and P. SCHAFF, vol. 11, Oxford, Parker, 1894, pp. 387-409.

³⁰ Can. 276, 2, 2 : "Duplici mensa sacrae Scripturae et Eucharistiae vitam suam spiritualem nutrant; enixe igitur sacerdotes invitantur ut cotidie Sacrificium eucharisticum offerant, diaconi vero ut eiusdem oblationem cotidie participant"; Can. 663, 2: "Sodales cotidie pro viribus Sacrificium eucharisticum participant, sanctissimum Corpus Christi recipiant et ipsum Dominum in Sacramento praesentem adorent."

sense that it is a continuous life of praise and thanksgiving for the gifts of God.³¹

Although the function of the hermit is to live the mystery of the Church's life in solitude and silence, rather than to celebrate the liturgical mysteries, if the hermit is a priest he may wish to celebrate daily Eucharist in the hermitage.³² Following the ancient eremitic tradition, the hermit would participate in the Sunday Eucharist at a nearby church.³³ This could be a part of the public witness to the community.

The practice of the daily recitation of the psalter began with the Fathers of the Desert, and has been retained

³¹ See T. MERTON, The Silent Life, London, Burns and Oates, 1961, p. 114.

³² All priests are to nourish their spiritual life by daily celebration of the Eucharist. See the following: Can. 276 2, 2: "... enixe igitur sacerdotes invitantur ut cotidie Sacrificium eucharisticum offerant." Can. 904: "Sacerdotes, memoria semper tenentes in mysterio Sacrificii eucharistici opus redemptionis continuo exerceri, frequenter celebrent; immo enixe commendatur celebratio cotidiana, quae quidem, etiam si presentia fidelium haberi non possit, actus est Christi et Ecclesiae, in quo peragendo munus suum praeceptum sacerdotes adimplent." The hermit, however, will not normally have a member of the faithful present and thus has reasonable cause to celebrate alone: Can. 906: "Nisi iusta et rationabili de causa, sacerdos Sacrificium eucharisticum ne celebret sine participatione alicuius saltem fidelis." See also W.H. WOESTMAN, "Daily Eucharist in the Postconciliar Church", in Studia canonica, 23 (1989), pp. 85-100.

³³ See Can. 1247: "Die dominica aliisque diebus festis de praecepto fideles obligatione tenentur Missam participandi."

by hermits throughout the centuries.

It is the Psalter more than anything else that has preserved the essentially corporate and communal aspect of the Christian solitary and prevented him from escaping into a life abysmally concerned with soul culture, or losing his identity among undifferentiated contemplatives of all religions.³⁴

The liturgy of the hours, prayed daily throughout the world, is a constant prayer of praise and petition which the church offers to God. The hermit, alone in solitude, is nevertheless a part of the praying community of the whole church. Each hermit will also have his or her own private devotions, whether the daily recital of the rosary or the Jesus prayer, which nourish personal prayer-life.

The traditional forms of penance for hermits include vigils, fasting, abstinence and mortification of the body. The hermit can be expected not only to follow the penitential practices suggested for all the faithful,³⁵ but also to

³⁴ R. WELLS, "The Biblical Background to the Solitary Life", in Solitude and Communion, p. 53.

³⁵ See Can. 1249: "Omnes christifideles, suo quisque modo, paenitentiam agere ex lege divina tenentur; ut vero cuncti communi quadam paenitentiae observatione inter se coniungantur, dies paenitentiales praescribuntur, in quibus christifideles speciali modo orationi vacent, opera pietatis et caritatis exercent, se ipsos abnegent, proprias obligationes fidelius adimplendo et praesertim ieiunium et abstinenciam, ad normam canonum qui sequuntur, observando." Can. 1250: "Dies et tempora paenentialia in universa Ecclesia sunt singulae feriae sextae totius anni et tempus quadragesimae."

go beyond³⁶ the norms of fasting and abstinence as well.³⁷ These matters should be covered in the hermit's own rule of life which will be approved by the bishop.

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR CANONICAL STATUS

The second paragraph of Can. 603 states the four conditions necessary for the recognition of the hermit as dedicated to God in the consecrated life of the Church.

Can. 603, 2: A hermit is recognized in the law as one dedicated to God in a consecrated life if he or she publicly professes the three evangelical counsels, confirmed by a vow or other sacred bond, in the hands of the diocesan Bishop, and observes his³⁸ or her own plan of life under his direction.

³⁶ The ascetical practices of the hermit must be discerned with the help of the spiritual director and the bishop's delegate. Obedience to them in this matter may constitute an act of asceticism in itself. As we have seen in the history of the English medieval solitaries, the life itself was to be considered penitential and all extreme forms of penance or fasting were eschewed.

³⁷ See Can. 1251: "Abstinencia a carnis comestione vel ab alio cibo iuxta conferentiae Episcoporum praescripta, servetur singulis anni sextis feriis, nisi cum aliquo die inter sollemnitates recensito occurrant; abstinencia vero et ieiunium, feria quarta Cinerum et feria sexta in Passione et Morte Domini Nostri Iesu Christi."

³⁸ See Canon 603, 2: "Eremita, uti Deo deditus in vita consecrata, iure agnoscitur si tria evangelica consilia, voto vel alio sacro ligamine firmata, publice profiteatur in manu Episcopi dioecesanii et propriam vivendi rationem sub ductu eiusdem servet."

A. Significance of the Terms

1. Public profession of the evangelical counsels

The hermit must profess publicly the three evangelical counsels (cc. 573-576),³⁹ which are generally assumed in the form of private vows. The vows or promises made by the hermit must be made in public but they are not, technically speaking, public vows.⁴⁰ Religious make a public vow of religion (and they must now do so even for temporary profession),⁴¹ the hermit may prefer to make promises at temporary profession and take vows at final profession. The vows are made publicly to underscore the fact that hermits, like members of an institute, "should endeavour to be associated with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God."⁴² In seeking solitude, they also, in a hidden way, help the Church more effectively in its task. From a canonical point of view, public profession confirms the

³⁹ These are the introductory norms common to all institutes of consecrated life. The hermits who fall under this canon are not members of any institute. However, "being dedicated to God in the consecrated life" (Canon 603, 1), they do have something in common with members of religious institutes.

⁴⁰ Can. 1192, 1: "Votum est publicum, si nomine Ecclesiae a legitimo Superiore acceptetur; secus privatum."

⁴¹ Can. 654: "Professione religiosa sodales tria consilia evangelica observanda voto publico assumunt, Deo per Ecclesiae ministerium consecrantur et instituto incorporantur cum iuribus et officiis iure definitis."

⁴² FLANNERY, *Renewal of Religious Life*, n. 5, p. 614.

status of the professed hermit.

2. Vow⁴³ or other sacred bond

Lumen gentium, n. 44, affirmed that those who contribute to the saving mission of the Church by pledging their lives to the ideal of the evangelical counsels, bind themselves to their practice by vow or other sacred bonds (per vota aut alia sacra ligamina).⁴⁴ The hermit has a choice of making profession with either a vow or a "sacred bond". In the first version (1971) of the canon on hermits (can. 4), profession was to be made with a vow (voto firmatam)⁴⁵ even if the hermit did not belong to a religious family. The canon on hermits in the 1977 schema (Can. 92) also called for a vow for profession.⁴⁶

However, on May 29, 1979, the coetus discussed the proposed revision of what was now Can. 38, which would give the hermit a choice of profession by "vow or other sacred bond" (voto vel alio sacro ligamine firmata), and although one consultor suggested that, in the interest of safeguard-

⁴³ Can. 1191, 1: "Votum, idest promissio deliberata ac libera Deo facta de bono possibili et meliore, ex virtute religionis impleri debet."

⁴⁴ See Lumen gentium, n. 44, p. 50.

⁴⁵ See Comm., 6 (1974), p. 79.

⁴⁶ See 1977 Schema, p. 28, Can. 92, 2: "Eremita ... si tria evangelica consilia, voto firmata."

ing perpetuity, only vows should be allowed,⁴⁷ the coetus voted to retain both "vow or other sacred bonds".⁴⁸ Such a sacred bond can be a promise, an oath, a pledge or a consecration binding in conscience. The fact that hermits may choose to make either vows or promises underlines the reality that, although hermits share the profession of the evangelical counsels both with members of religious institutes (who make vows) and with members of secular institutes (who usually make promises), they are neither. Hermits will probably choose to take vows rather than promises, but the choice is theirs to make.

3. Diocesan bishop⁴⁹

The diocesan bishop⁵⁰ or his equivalent⁵¹ is to

⁴⁷ See Comm., 11 (1979), p. 330: "... per meglio assicurare la perpetuità, togliere vel alio sacro ligamine."

⁴⁸ See ibid., p. 331.

⁴⁹ The 1971 proposal, Can. 4, used the term "Ordinarii loci", as did the 1977 schema, but this was changed in the 1979 proposed revision and remained constant afterwards. The hermit addressed in the canon is in relationship with the Bishop and not with an institute. See Comm., 6 (1974), p. 79; Comm., 11 (1979), pp. 330-331.

⁵⁰ The Manual for Bishops, issued by the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1983, in listing the rights and responsibilities of the diocesan bishop regarding religious, placed Can. 603, 2, under rights. See T. GREEN, A Manual for Bishops: Rights and Responsibilities of Diocesan Bishops in the Revised Code of Canon Law, Washington, DC, United States Catholic Conference, 1983, p. 68, no. 9.

receive the profession of the evangelical counsels by the hermit. As was the custom of his medieval predecessors, the bishop would probably delegate the overall responsibility for the hermit(s) in his diocese to one person,⁵² who would act in his name. Again, as in medieval times, the bishop has a special relationship with his hermits.

4. Plan of life

Similar to the constitutions of institutes of consecrated life, each hermit must have a rule of life, approved by the bishop of the diocese, and lived out under his guidance. This protects the authenticity of the eremitical lifestyle, and in approving the plan, the bishop or his delegate assumes the responsibility for seeing that this

⁵¹ Can. 368: "Ecclesiae particulares, in quibus et ex quibus una et unica Ecclesia catholica exsistit, sunt imprimis dioeceses, quibus, nisi aliud constet, assimilantur praelatura territorialis et abbatia territorialis, vicariatus apostolicus et praefectura apostolica necnon administratio apostolica stabiliter erecta."

Can. 381, 2: "Qui praesunt aliis communitatibus fidelium, de quibus in can. 368, Episcopo dioecesano in iure aequiparantur, nisi ex rei natura aut iuris praescripto aliud appareat."

⁵² The bishop may wish to delegate, with a special mandate, the responsibility either to the vicar general or the episcopal vicar. See Can. 134, 3: "Quae in canonibus nominatim Episcopo dioecesano, in ambitu potestatis executivae tribuuntur, intelliguntur competere dumtaxat Episcopo dioecesano aliisque ipsi in can. 381, 2 aequiparatis, exclusis Vicario generali et episcopali, nisi de speciali mandato."

rule is followed or, when considered necessary, altered.⁵³ Each hermit, under the impetus of the Holy Spirit, will choose a particular way of living the eremitic life; this might be a modified form of an already existing monastic rule, or an earlier medieval rule. The essence of the solitary life is stricter separation from the world, silence and solitude, with constant prayer and penance; each hermit will have a personal way of achieving that end. Each rule may be different but there will be a commonality, not only with other hermits, but with the basic pattern which was given to the Church by the Desert Fathers. More will be said about this later.

B. Profession in the Eremitical State

1. Requirements⁵⁴ for admission

The right of admitting candidates to the eremitical state pertains to the bishop or his delegate. The bishop may wish to follow the guidelines in Can. 642, which could

⁵³ The hermit will want to discern any changes with his or her spiritual director, in order to avoid possible psychological or physical errors.

⁵⁴ In assessing the health, mental or physical, as well as the character, etc., of the candidate, it is necessary to be aware of Can. 220: "Nemini licet bonam famam, quia quis gaudet, illegitime laedere, nec ius cuiusque personae ad propriam intimitatem tuendam violare."

apply by analogy.⁵⁵ If the person asking for entrance to the eremitical state has never lived as a hermit, the bishop might suggest that the candidate first live as a hermit for a period of time, perhaps for one year, and then return to the bishop and discuss the experience. If the experiment has proved to be positive, the bishop may decide to accept the candidate for probation or he may feel that further experience is necessary. If he has not already done so, the Bishop may delegate a priest or religious (or even a committee) to be in charge of any hermits in the diocese. This person would be responsible for verifying that all the requirements⁵⁶ deemed necessary for the eremitical life in the diocese were met.

a. Age

There is no required minimum age for admission to the eremitical state but, while it is possible for someone to enter an institute of consecrated life after the seventeenth

⁵⁵ Can. 642: "Superiores vigilantia cura eos tantum admittant qui, praeter aetatem requisitam, habeant valetudinem, aptam indolem et sufficientes maturitatis qualitates ad vitam instituti propriam amplectendam; quae valetudo, indoles et maturitas comprobentur adhibitis etiam, si opus fuerit, peritis, firmo praescripto can. 220."

⁵⁶ The nature of the eremitical state, together with its many difficulties, should be kept in mind when establishing objective criteria for admission. Irreparable harm could be done to the candidate or to the diocese if an unsuitable candidate were accepted.

birthday,⁵⁷ this would not be prudent for anyone entering the eremitical life. Each diocese may set its own age at which someone would be considered mature enough to enter, but it would probably be unwise to accept anyone under the age of thirty.⁵⁸

b. Physical health

A physical examination of the candidate is recommended to confirm the candidate's ability to withstand the eremitical life. Health insurance may be an important factor in countries which do not have government sponsored medical care. Who will be responsible if the hermit becomes physically or mentally incapacitated? Is the hermit to be on the diocesan health plan? In the case of a handicapped person, it would depend entirely on the bishop whether or not to accept the person. Much would depend on the handicap itself, the possibility of future deterioration of health due to it, and also, and perhaps most important, the way the person has coped with the disability over a period of time.

⁵⁷ Can. 643, 1: "Invalidi ad novitiatum admittuntur qui decimum septimum aetatis annum nondum compleverit."

⁵⁸ This is an arbitrarily chosen age. There may well be candidates who are prepared at an earlier age but these would be exceptional cases.

c. Free status

The candidate should show proof of baptism, confirmation and free status⁵⁹ before being accepted by the diocese. The baptismal certificate should be a recent one as it would ordinarily note a previous marriage⁶⁰ or religious profession.⁶¹ If there is no record of the baptism (for whatever reason), the testimony of a trustworthy witness would be acceptable.⁶²

In the case of a candidate who has previously been married, one must distinguish between those who have received a declaration of nullity and those who are still bound by a valid marriage. Both situations present dif-

⁵⁹ The candidate should be free of any outstanding debts or other obligations, such as military service or litigation.

⁶⁰ According to present practice, a separation agreement, even a perpetual one, would not be sufficient, and thus a candidate with a living spouse must show proof of a declaration of nullity or dissolution by the Holy See. Otherwise, because of the rights and obligations of both spouses, the vow of chastity could not be made.

⁶¹ If the candidate has ever been incorporated into an institute of consecrated life, documentation from the competent major superior regarding the candidate's freedom from sacred bonds is required. The reasons for leaving that institute should also be given to the bishop.

⁶² Can. 876: "Ad collatum baptismum comprobandum, si nemini fiat praeiudicium, sufficit declaratio unius testis omni exceptione maioris, aut ipsius baptizati iusiurandum, si ipse in aetate adulta baptismum receperit."

ferent problems,⁶³ but the reasons for the marriage break-up should be ascertained.⁶⁴ If the previous marriage has ended in a civil divorce⁶⁵ but no declaration of nullity has been given, the reasons should be discussed with the bishop.⁶⁶

In such instances, the candidate must demonstrate

⁶³ In evaluating those candidates who have been previously married, either with or without a declaration of nullity, the bishop would perhaps wish to be guided by the policy in practice at the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, pertaining to applicants requesting dispensations from Can. 643, 1, 2, (one who is bound by a valid marriage to a living spouse). The policy of the Congregation is discussed in C.J. DOSKEY, "Annulments and Entrance into Religious Life, Priesthood and Diaconate", in Canon Law Society of America: Proceedings, 47 (1985), pp. 117-118. See also F.C. BAUER, "The Admission of the Previously Married and Annulled to Sacred Orders, Diaconate and Religious Life", in ibid., pp. 126-129.

⁶⁴ Confidentiality could be a problem, especially if the would-be hermit has received a declaration of nullity from another diocese. If the decree of nullity has come from his diocese, it would seem that the bishop has the right to see the files in his own diocesan tribunal. Certainly the presence of a vetitum or monitum against the candidate should be taken seriously. See F. G. MORRISEY, "La formation des séminaristes et le respect de la personne", in Studia canonica, 22 (1988), pp. 18-19. See also P. SMITH, "Lack of Due Discretion and Suitability for Ordination", in ibid., 21 (1987), pp. 125-140.

⁶⁵ If there has been no civil divorce, there can be no question of the diocese receiving the person as a candidate until there has been at the very least, a legal separation. In such cases, it might be wiser for the bishop to encourage the person to live the eremitical life, but without the official sanction of the diocese.

⁶⁶ The bishop should ascertain the causes for the separation and the divorce, as well as the present relations with the spouse and, in particular, the bishop will want to know the spouse's reaction to the partner's desire to live the eremitical life.

that the former spouse, who has lost his or her marital rights in both the civil and canonical forum (cc. 1151-1155; 1692), has renounced these rights in a valid civil legal document. Proof should also be offered that any children have reached full legal status and are morally and financially provided for.⁶⁷

d. Suitable character

Most institutes of consecrated life, especially those which lead austere lives, require potential candidates to undergo psychological testing before entrance. The eremitic life also demands psychological maturity and emotional stability⁶⁸ and it would be wise to evaluate this before the candidate is accepted.⁶⁹ Perhaps the most important factor to look for is common sense. A sense of humour would help also. Good judgment should be sufficiently reflected in external factors. Any obligations, financial or otherwise,

⁶⁷ The hermit does not cease being a parent or grandparent on entering the hermitage, and there are other questions regarding children which should be evaluated by the bishop before accepting someone as a hermit. See DOSKEY, "Declaration of Nullity", pp. 120-121.

⁶⁸ However, the wise bishop will remember that one cannot make a correlation between psychological maturity and spiritual maturity.

⁶⁹ Most dioceses send their seminarians for such evaluation and the bishop may elect to send would-be hermits to the same centre but, if possible, the candidate should be sent to psychologists used by monastic communities. These will frequently be monks themselves and well aware of the pitfalls inherent in the eremitic life.

would, hopefully, have been dealt with before the candidate even comes to the bishop.⁷⁰ The bishop, however, may decide to ask for an expert opinion on any of these matters.⁷¹

e. Spiritual maturity

The future member of an institute of consecrated life enters a milieu where there are structures already in place to ascertain the spiritual maturity of the person. In many communities the future candidate spends a year or more getting acquainted with the group (and allowing the group to become acquainted with the candidate), before a formal application is made for entrance. The hermit, however, is expected to be spiritually mature even before entering.⁷² There is no litmus test for spiritual maturity, especially that required for the eremitical life, and perhaps only the experience of the hermitage will determine this. A familiarity with the bible, the writings of the Desert Fathers,

⁷⁰ When considering the suitability of a hermit, the bishop would be wise to consider the ramifications of such an action under the local civil law.

⁷¹ See R.A. HILL, "Screening Candidates: the Need to Know", in Review for Religious, 45 (1986), p. 458-462, in which the author discusses how much should be known about a candidate. If the hermit has been attending the same parish church for several years, the bishop might well ask the opinion of the parish priest.

⁷² Many of the hermits of today may have already spent years in religious life, having had to leave because the particular law of the institute had no provision for the eremitical life.

liturgy, theology and spirituality would be helpful, but it is the prayer life of the candidate which is most important.

f. Financial considerations

It is important to ascertain, before the person is accepted as a candidate for the eremitical state, just how that person will be financially supported.⁷³ Financial support for the hermit may come from several sources: work done in the hermitage, money received from family or from a religious community or, if the hermit is a priest, from mass offerings.⁷⁴ The "labour" of the hermit, which must be appropriate to the eremitical vocation, may be sufficient, wholly or in part, to take care of daily needs.⁷⁵ Although the hermit may renounce a life of material security, at the same time it should be noted that he or she has no right to

⁷³ A report on the more than 300 hermits living in France in the late seventies brought out the bishops' reluctance to take on someone who might possibly become a burden on the diocese. "Le logement et le gagne-pain doivent être assurés, soit que l'intéressé appartienne à un ordre qui continuera de s'occuper de lui, soit qu'il les trouve lui-même. Dans de très nombreux cas, les évêques refusent à des candidats ermites de s'installer dans leur diocèse parce qu'ils ne peuvent les prendre en charge matériellement." See BONNET, Les ermites, p. 196.

⁷⁴ The hermit who is a priest should not be asked to perform acts of ministry outside of those to which he has agreed on entering into the eremitical state.

⁷⁵ Correcting college extension courses, weaving, and painting icons are only a few of the possibilities.

demand support from the diocese.⁷⁶

If the hermit is to receive financial aid from family or a community, perhaps a trust fund could be set up to assure the continued support. It would be advisable for the hermit to name someone to administer temporarily any funds that will be set aside until final profession. After final profession, the person delegated by the bishop would help to resolve any financial questions. Although a simple life-style will not require a great deal of money, nevertheless medical expenses⁷⁷ or unforeseen circumstances may require a sudden cash outlay. The hermit does not have the resources of a community to draw on, and yet must not become a burden on the diocese. All financial commitments must be approved by the bishop (or the appointed delegate) before the hermit is accepted for final profession. Indeed, the object of the commitment to poverty made by each hermit should be carefully spelled out in the rule of life.

⁷⁶ This does not mean that the hermit cannot be dependent on the diocese if the bishop so desires, but the hermit should first make firm financial arrangements and have them approved by the bishop. As we have seen in the medieval period, benefactors can change their minds or die, and the diocese would then have to take on a financial responsibility for which it may be ill-prepared. This is especially important if there is more than one hermit in the diocese or if the country does not have universal medical or social insurance.

⁷⁷ The bishop may wish to put the hermit on the diocesan health plan to cover medical emergencies.

2. Formation

From ancient times, hermits have learned their way of life by imitating an experienced hermit. A non-hermit, no matter how holy, cannot speak with the same authority as a real one. Today, however, trial and error may be the only way for most hermits to learn. It was a favorite saying of the desert that the cell would teach the neophyte all that was necessary. This is still true today: the eremitical life begins in the heart of the hermit but is experienced only in the hermitage.

a. Place

The location of the hermitage will largely be determined by the amount of solitude⁷⁸ needed by the hermit, but the site chosen must be approved by the bishop. There are probably as many ways of seeking solitude as there are hermits.⁷⁹ Hermits are to be found almost anywhere:⁸⁰ in the

⁷⁸ The hermitage should be isolated enough to assure the silence and solitude needed, but not so isolated as to threaten the security of the hermit, especially if a woman.

⁷⁹ If the hermit chooses rental property, he or she must arrange the monthly or yearly payments. The bishop may lend the hermit diocesan property, but it must be clear that the property remains under diocesan ownership if the hermit chooses to leave (or is dismissed from) the eremitical state.

⁸⁰ One Anglican hermit, who supports herself by writing, has a tiny apartment in one of the colleges at Oxford University, where she has been given access to the Bodleian library.

middle of the country, in the midst of the poorest quarter of a big city, isolated on a mountain or on the outskirts of a forest, in the centre of a small village of a few hundred inhabitants, or on the outskirts of a town. Each hermit has to find the location which best suits the degree of solitude needed and, most importantly, is conveniently available. The nearness of a church or chapel to enable participation in Sunday liturgy can be an important factor. Hermitages are often abandoned rectories, long unused chapels, or prefabricated cottages.⁸¹ Depending on the location, heating in winter can be a serious problem, and must be seriously considered when moving into long abandoned buildings. Another factor to take into account would be the availability of the necessities of life. Where and when does the hermit buy groceries?

One might imagine that the simple life-style of the hermit would be reflected in an austere room furnished with a bed, a table, a shelf for books and perhaps an icon or crucifix on otherwise unadorned walls. This is perhaps a romantic view of the eremitic life. The more prosaic truth is that the hermitage has to serve as bedroom, study, oratory, workshop and place of storage. The hermit should

⁸¹ In Great Britain, small mobile homes "set in a quiet spot, within the grounds of convents where these are of sufficient size, seem to be the most favored solution" to women solitaries. See P. SMART, "Alone with God", in The Tablet, 9 January 1988, pp. 32-33.

have the basic furnishings plus whatever is needed for any work to be done within the hermitage.

b. Length of probation

The hermitage experience should last long enough for both the bishop and the hermit to discern the will of God. This might last from three to five years.⁸² The hermit could then make temporary profession, followed by another two or three years of the hermitage experience before the final public profession of the evangelical counsels. Each case will be different, and depending on the previous training and maturity of the hermit, will require more or less time to respond fully to the call.

c. Supervision

During the period of preparation,⁸³ the hermit will be guided by the person delegated by the bishop as his re-

⁸² See BONNET, Les ermites, p. 196: "La vie solitaire obéit à des lois que l'ancienne pratique a dégagées et que la tradition a transmises. Il y a des techniques du desert: comment organiser son temps, comment se nourrir, comment faire face à telle difficulté psychologique. Cela s'appréhendra souvent pendant deux ou trois ans, avec un ermite plus expérimenté auquel le supérieur ecclésiastique confiera le novice avant de l'autoriser à s'installer seul."

⁸³ The duration of the preparation is to be decided by the bishop and communicated to the hermit at the beginning of the period.

presentative, and by the spiritual director.⁸⁴ The latter must be objective and thus should have no part in the decision-making process regarding the acceptance or rejection of the candidate for profession.⁸⁵ The director will help the hermit to interpret reality and, hopefully, avoid some of the possible spiritual, psychological or physical errors inherent in the eremitical life. It is the bishop or his representative, who will assume the overall responsibility.

In the beginning, the hermit will perhaps meet more often with both these individuals than would be necessary later on. The hermit may of course leave at any time during this process or the bishop may decide that the candidate is unsuitable for the eremitic life and withdraw all support.

3. Profession⁸⁶

The hermit must decide what form of commitment he or

⁸⁴ It is presumed that by the time the decision is made to ask for admission to the eremitical state, the candidate has had a spiritual director for some time. The bishop may accept that director or, after consultation with the hermit, advise another.

⁸⁵ For an analogy see Can. 240, 2: "In decisionibus ferendis de alumni ad ordines admittendis aut e seminario dimittendis, numquam directoris spiritus et confessoriorum votum exquiri potest."

⁸⁶ The word "profession" used for hermits is not technically the same as the profession by which religious are incorporated into a religious institute. The profession made by members of secular institutes or of a society of apostolic life, although recognized by the Church, is not "religious profession" in the true sense of the term.

she wishes to make, whether by vows or promises of some type. Possibly, the candidate may prefer to make promises at temporary profession, with vows to follow at final profession. Most hermits will undoubtedly make vows but for those who choose to make promises, these are permitted by the Code. It will be up to the bishop to decide how long a period should elapse before the hermit makes final profession. Likewise, he or his delegate receives the hermit's vows. As the hermit is being accepted in a public profession, whether the ceremony takes place in the cathedral, the nearest parish church, or the hermit's "home" parish, the congregation should be involved.

4. Obligations and rights

Entrance into the eremitical state is accompanied by both obligations and rights. The hermit's principal obligation is to be faithful to the rule of life which has been approved by the bishop. If the hermit has agreed to take on some special service or ministry to the diocese, then this obligation must be fulfilled.⁸⁷ As a member of the Chris-

⁸⁷ For instance, in a diocese which is short of priests, the bishop might ask the priest-hermit to take responsibility for Sunday Eucharist in a parish which is without a regular priest. This must be addressed before final profession and not imposed after he has been in the hermitage a number of years, however much the needs of the active apostolate demand it. It may be difficult at times for the other priests in the diocese to accept that this "priest who is doing nothing" will refuse to do ministry except in dire emergency. Since the hermit's whole aposto-

tian faithful, the hermit also has all the basic obligations and rights of cc. 208-223. If the hermit is a layperson, the obligations and rights of cc. 224-231 would also apply. The bishop may freely give the hermit any other rights he wishes.⁸⁸

In all instances, an agreement having civil effect should be made between the diocese and the hermit providing that, in the case of departure, the former hermit has no claim to compensation for services rendered or for future considerations. However, depending on the circumstances, the diocese should treat this person with charity and equity (by analogy, see Can. 702).

5. Separation from the eremitical state

a. Transfer

With the permission of the bishops of both dioceses,

late is ordered to contemplation, the canon regarding institutes wholly devoted to contemplation would also apply to hermits. See Can. 674: "Instituta, quae integre ad contemplationem ordinantur, in Corpore Christi mystico praeclaram semper partem obtinent: Deo enim eximium laudis sacrificium offerunt populum Dei uberrimis sanctitatis fructibus collustrant eumque exemplo movent necnon arcana fecunditate apostolica dilatant. Qua de causa, quantumvis actuosi apostolatus urgeat necessitas, sodales horum institutorum advocari nequeunt ut in variis ministeriis pastoralibus operam adiutricem praestent."

⁸⁸ By analogy, Can. 670 may apply: "Institutum debet sodalibus suppeditare omnia quae ad normam constitutionum necessaria sunt ad suae vocationis finem assequendum."

the hermit who has made final profession could transfer to another diocese. The hermit would not have to repeat the vows as they are taken in perpetuity.⁸⁹ If the hermit has not yet made final profession, then the case could be treated as a departure.

b. Departure

A person who has made temporary profession in the eremitical state may leave at the expiration of the vows or request an indult from the bishop to depart from the state. The diocesan bishop is under no obligation to allow the candidate to make final profession. Indeed, if he doubts the authenticity of the vocation, or if a physical or psychological infirmity has manifested itself, which would make the hermit unsuited for a life in solitude, the bishop has a duty to refuse final profession. The candidate may of course approach another diocese and try again.

If the hermit has made final profession and wishes to leave, the diocesan bishop may grant dispensation from the eremitical vows. A hermit who is a cleric is still bound by celibacy and the other obligations of the clerical state.

⁸⁹ By analogy Can. 684, 3, might apply: "Ut religiosus a monasterio sui iuris ad aliud eiusdem instituti vel foederationis aut confederationis transire possit, requiritur et sufficit consensus Superioris maioris utriusque monasterii et capituli monasterii recipientis, salvis aliis requisitis iure proprio statutis; nova professio non requiritur."

c. Dismissal

For grave reasons (external, imputable and juridically proven), the hermit could be dismissed from the eremitical state. Although not a member of an institute, it would seem that a hermit who contracted marriage today, even civilly, would be liable to dismissal (Can. 694, 1, 2^o),⁹⁰ as would responsibility for any of the offenses mentioned in Canons 1397 and 1398.⁹¹ Many of the causes for dismissal of members of an institute mentioned in Can. 696, 1, could be similarly applied to a hermit: habitual neglect of the obligations of the eremitical life; repeated violations of the sacred bonds; obstinate disobedience to the lawful prescriptions of the bishop in a serious matter; and grave scandal arising from the culpable behaviour of the hermit.⁹²

⁹⁰ Can. 694, 1: "Ipso facto dimissus ab instituto habendus est sodalis qui: 2, matrimonium contraxerit vel, etiam civiliter tantum, attentaverit."

⁹¹ Can. 1397: "Qui homicidium patrat, vel hominem vi aut fraude rapit vel detinet vel mutilat vel graviter vulnerat, privationibus, de quibus in can. 1336, pro delicti gravitate puniatur; homicidium autem in personas de quibus in can. 1370, poenis ibi statutis punitur."

Can. 1398: "Qui abortum procurat, effectu secuto, in excommunicationem latae sententiae incurrit."

⁹² Can. 696, 1: "Sodalis dimitti etiam potest ob alias causas, dummodo sint graves, externae, imputabiles et iuridice comprobatae, uti sunt: habitualis neglectus obligationum vitae consecratae; iteratae violationes sacrorum vinculorum; pertinax inobedientia legitimis prescriptis Superiorum in materia gravi; grave scandalum ex culpabili modo agendi sodalis ortum; pertinax sustentatio vel diffusio doctrinarum ab Ecclesiae magisterio damnatarum; illegitima absentia, de qua in can. 665, 2, per semestre protracta; ali-

The hermit could have recourse against the decision to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The procedure outlined in the Code for the dismissal of diocesan right religious (cc. 697-701) could be followed with the necessary adaptations being made.⁹³ If there are several hermits in the diocese, the bishop might want them to be aware of the procedures that will be followed by the diocese, if it becomes necessary to terminate the commitment of a perpetually professed hermit.

III. THE PARTICULAR FORM OF LIFE

The hermit's plan of life should manifest the eremitical life-style described in Can. 603, 1. The rule must thus reflect the hermit's strict separation from the world, as well as the particular choices made as to how he or she will live in silence and solitude, and in constant prayer and penance. Many hermits enter the eremitic life with a very rigorous rule all mapped out. Time (and the Holy Spirit) will bring about a more balanced plan.⁹⁴ Most

ae causae similis gravitatis iure proprio instituti forte determinatae."

⁹³ The canons on dismissal could be incorporated - if only by a reference - into the diocesan particular law or the rule of life or the contract (if any) with the hermit, whichever way is most appropriate to the local situation.

⁹⁴ It is the Spirit who inspires the rule of life but the rule must not become an idol. A certain flexibility must accompany the rule, and obedience to the spiritual director and the bishop's delegate, when contemplating

solitaries seem to feel that the rule is absolutely necessary as a support⁹⁵ when they do not feel like praying, or when they are sad or beginning to experience real solitude and the lack of human companionship.

Then they can be obedient to the rule, if nothing else, and continue to persevere. Also, hermits must take their vocation very seriously but it helps if they do not take themselves too seriously. In this matter, as in others, the support of the hermit's spiritual director will be of inestimable value. The director, in ordinary circumstances, would be the person most likely to be aware of any problems the hermit might be encountering in being faithful to the rule of life.

Continuing solitude will unmask the false self for there is no way to avoid seeing the pretensions and illusions that one has refused to perceive before. If the vocation is genuine, hermits become aware of the grace-filled presence of the Holy Spirit and, in accepting personal weaknesses with humility, can then begin to change the rule. They may need either more or less sleep, food, time for work

changes in the rule, will act as a safeguard.

⁹⁵ See BONNET, *Les ermites*, p. 129, where a monk, who had lived in community for thirty years before passing another thirty years in solitude, mused: "La règle n'est pas un contrainte, mais un appui, l'expression des meilleures tendances de l'âme, le rappel de ce que les saints ont vécu."

or reading than they had allowed for. In a sense, only the hermitage experience can teach the hermit the rule, and the wise bishop will not want to accept the hermit's plan of life until several years have passed. It is more important to have a balanced life of prayer, reading and work, than to make a rigid rule and attempt to observe it precisely.⁹⁶

A. Physical Environment

1. Hermitage

The hermit must not seem to possess more than those who are truly poor for, no matter what garb the hermit chooses to wear, nor what prayer schedule is followed, it is all in vain if the poor people in the area envy the comforts of the hermitage. The external life-style of this radical form of life begins with the simplicity of the dwelling place. The hermit lives in a solitude which implies a real sociological separation from the community and this should manifest itself in the choice of hermitage.

2. Food

The eremitic life-style has always been one of great

⁹⁶ One French hermit reflected: "Au début, j'ai élaboré un code de vie très strict (horaires, nourriture, travaux manuels, lectures). Les années passent et vous apprennent à vivre davantage selon l'esprit que selon la lettre, cependant il ne faut pas s'éloigner trop de la lettre qui peut servir de garde-fou en période de moindre ferveur." See BONNET, Les ermites, p. 75.

simplicity which is amply demonstrated in simple meals. Most of the French hermits cited by Bonnet in his study tended to be vegetarian although it wasn't always clear whether this was the result of a desire for simplicity or a matter of penance. The most common fare seemed to be cheese, vegetables, legumes and grains, and fruit in season.⁹⁷ Some hermits would probably drink the local wine while others never drink anything but water. Often the solitary in a village or small town will find small gifts of food left outside the hermitage by neighbors who respect the hermit's solitude, but this is not something to count on. In the rule of life the hermit will indicate, at least in a general way, what dietary regime is to be followed. This would include not only any days of special fasts, but also stipulate what the fast will consist of, lest immoderation lead to illness.

The French hermits cited by Bonnet seemed to remain in good health and have little or no need of doctors. If the hermitage is in an isolated location, some attention

⁹⁷ Obviously the availability of different kinds of food is a factor. Benedict allowed "a generous pound of bread" (panis libra una propensa) per day, whether it was to be eaten at one meal or divided between dinner and supper. The monks were not permitted to eat the meat "of four-footed animals" (carnium... quadrupedum), which reflected ancient monastic tradition. Benedict allowed a half-bottle of wine per day, since the monks of his day apparently could not be convinced that monks should not drink wine at all (Licet legamus vinum omnino monachorum non esse, sed quia nostris temporibus id monachis persuaderi non potest). See RSB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English, ed. T. FRY, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1981, p. 240.

should be directed as to who will take the responsibility of informing the bishop if the hermit should need a doctor. Any decision to change the dietary regime radically should be discussed with the bishop (or his delegate) and the spiritual director, and permission obtained before implementation.

3. Clothing

The canon does not mention any special garb to be worn by the hermit. The matter has been left up to the individual.⁹⁸ The hermit is not a member of an institute of consecrated life, and therefore, is not obligated to wear any specific habit in order to identify the person as such.⁹⁹ If the hermit wants to wear some external garb that marks the eremitical state, the approval of the bishop must be sought, or, the bishop himself may even wish the hermits in his diocese to wear some type of clothing which identifies them as hermits.

⁹⁸ See T. MERTON, Contemplation in a World of Action, Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1971, p. 241: "The Christian solitary should avoid all trappings and decor of a theatrical eremitism -- the hood, the costume, the retinue of devoted birds and squirrels (though they will be around anyway), the diet of bread and water, the stone pillow, the rosary of knotted string, the bed of twigs. These things are affectations, and we might as well recognize that even the classification of 'hermit' has its dangers."

⁹⁹ One Canadian hermit, who supports himself by teaching religion in a secondary school, wears a modified monastic habit in the hermitage but ordinary clothes when he goes out.

4. Financial support

Most hermits, following the ancient eremitical tradition, believe that it is necessary to find work,¹⁰⁰ either manual or intellectual, which will support them and which can perhaps be done at the hermitage. While poverty in an institute consists in being dependent on the superior or the community for everything, the hermit may, in fact, own what is necessary while at the same time be lacking the very real security offered by belonging to a community. The hermit who has an independent income should turn over control of his resources to someone else, and be obedient to the bishop (or his delegate) as regards his or her needs. This would be true also in the case of any gifts; determining what would be retained and what will be given to the poor, for any surplus should be shared. A hermit who is a priest always has the possibility of receiving mass offerings, especially if the bishop has asked him to do limited ministry in a parish that would otherwise have no priest. However, as noted above, it should be clearly understood what services

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Wagner, a hermit, says: "It is also consistent that a hermit, even if possessed of some means of outside income, attempt to earn a living whenever possible. Apart from the human obligation not to be burdensome to others, work, especially in the form of manual labour, is a natural physical and psychological balance to the intensity of the life in solitude. Bishops are not (unless they wish it) responsible for providing a would-be hermit with an income!" See E. WAGNER, "Eremitism in the Church", in Review for Religious, 46 (1987), p. 587.

the priest is required to perform for the diocese before he makes final profession.

Those who are not ordained may have more difficulty in making ends meet. A former religious may receive support from the community, either by way of food or regular sums of money. Some hermits are able to paint icons, do weaving, or make crosses or other objects to be sold. Some are able to teach part-time. Some may be given clothing by friends or relatives. The solitary lives very frugally and thus has fewer needs to be met. All of the above concerns should be addressed in the personal rule of the hermit before episcopal approval is given. It doesn't matter much what the hermit does, as long as it is in keeping with the eremitical vocation and is approved by the bishop.¹⁰¹

The position of the hermit vis-a-vis the bishop is a somewhat anomalous one. It should be ascertained before profession whether the hermit is to be considered an employee of the diocese, or is to have some kind of contractual agreement. If the bishop decides to support the hermit financially, either fully or partially, whether by a type of contractual agreement, or by providing a living for the her-

¹⁰¹ One Canadian hermit who realized that he needed more exercise, discussed the matter with the bishop's delegate, and received permission to run fifteen minutes twice a day. Physical fitness may be an important factor if the hermit leads an otherwise sedentary life.

mit by giving that person responsibilities similar to an employee, he should be aware of any liability (if any) that the diocese might have under civil law.¹⁰² Further, if there is a contractual agreement, and either the hermit or the bishop wishes to terminate it, must civil law procedures be followed? All of these juridical implications should be taken care of before final profession.

B. Solitude and Silence

Entering into a life of solitude is to enter into a battleground, both psychologically and spiritually. The only defence is prayer and the encouragement of an experienced spiritual director. It is especially in the beginning years that the hermit has need of spiritual advice from someone who can affirm the eremitic experience. The more time that is passed in solitude, the more one wishes to "do" something for the beloved, and herein lies a pitfall if the

¹⁰² These and other similar actions may give rise to an implied "agency" type of relationship that could make the diocese liable for the financial, contractual or tort actions of the hermit. Black's law dictionary defines "agency" as a "relation in which one person acts for or represents another by latter's authority, either in the relationship of principal and agent, master and servant, or employer or proprietor and independent contractor." There are a wide variety of fiduciary relationships that involve agency principles as well as a variety of ways to create such relationships. See Black's Law Dictionary, 5th ed., (1979), s.v. "agency." See also K.E. FISCHER, "Repondeat superior redux: May a Diocesan Bishop be Vicariously Liable for the Intentional Torts of his priests?", in Studia canonica, 23 (1989), pp. 119-148.

call is genuine. With prayer and the help of the spiritual director, the rule will become liberating and the solitary will have less need of such a rigid structure. Time spent in the garden or workshop soon becomes a part of the prayer of the solitary.

The degree of silence required by each hermit will vary. Some hermits will seldom, if ever, speak to anyone outside of absolute necessity, while others are open to receiving people who have spiritual needs. Many will make daily visits to the poor or the sick. One French hermit had originally planned to cut himself off from all family ties but realised that this hurt others who didn't share his call to solitude, and planned yearly visits to family and friends. Most find a middle way between not receiving any visitors and receiving any who come. For the most part, visitors seem to respect the hermit's desire for solitude.

Silence is, above all, interior. To keep silence does not mean becoming a mute, but becoming a listener. Charity toward others, whether families, friends or neighbors, will often be the deciding factor as to how much communication the hermit maintains with the world outside the hermitage. Over the centuries perplexed hermits have discovered that God seemingly calls them into solitude, and then sends a constant stream of visitors. Most hermits are sensitive to those who come seeking prayer or spiritual

guidance and seem resigned to offering it.¹⁰³

Depending on their interests, some hermits will receive a few theological or spiritual journals, while others will have their wider range of interests reflected in their choice of reading matter. Nearly all will steep themselves in the masters, the Desert Fathers as well as Cassian, and Benedict. All of this must be covered in their rule.

C. Constant Prayer and Penance

There is no one model of prayer that can be put forward for all hermits. Prayer life will take on as many forms as there are hermits. Contemplative prayer will constitute a large part of the prayer life of the hermit but there should also be a structure which supports it: Eucharist,¹⁰⁴ the Liturgy of the hours¹⁰⁵ and other devotions.

¹⁰³ Visitors seem to be an endemic problem in the solitary life. Each hermit will find a suitable answer to the situation, always keeping in mind the supreme law of charity.

¹⁰⁴ With few exceptions, most of the French hermits, perhaps reflecting the fact that many were either priests or ex-religious, found daily Eucharist a necessary part of their spiritual life. Some, however, were too far away from a church or not physically capable of the daily journey to the nearest church. A friendly local priest would often celebrate mass several times a month. The priest-hermits celebrated Mass in the hermitage several times a week, if not every day. Those who were not ordained sometimes had to go out of their way to attend Mass, and this was one advantage for those living in the city, where there were many churches with daily mass.

The solitary must not be isolated from the Christian community, but must, in some way, be anchored to that community. Whether this takes the form of Sunday Eucharist in the nearest church or an ongoing relationship with a nearby religious community does not matter much. Each hermit will be different. Most hermits are "found" by the nearby community and asked to provide spiritual help. Discernment of the Spirit is most important here, and each hermit will have to decide how much time is to be spent on this call to assist others. By temporary profession, the plan of life will have, at least, a skeletal structure for the prayerlife to be followed by the hermit. The experience of time will flesh it out.

Most of the French hermits seemed to have received the permission of the bishop to keep the Blessed Sacrament in their oratories.¹⁰⁶ This may well be granted by the bishop to an isolated hermit. Finally, after long experience in the hermitage,¹⁰⁷ the daily life of prayer, work and

¹⁰⁵ Many found that after several years in solitude, contemplative prayer simply became the daily prayer and they could not pray the Office as they had done previously.

¹⁰⁶ This was not true of those who had access to city churches and thus, at that time anyway, could visit whenever they wished.

¹⁰⁷ See BONNET, Les ermites, p. 147, where an experienced hermit states: "Il faut vingt ou trente ans de vie solitaire pour savoir vraiment ce que cela représente. Et ceux qui ont cette expérience ne parlent pas. Non qu'ils ne le veuillent, mais parce que leur expérience est impossible

reading becomes a liturgy of the hours itself.

The life of the hermit is one of penance, but perhaps the most important word to describe the penance of the hermit is "reasonable".¹⁰⁸ In the medieval period, recluses were cautioned that the life itself was penitential, and that any extra privations were to be approved by the spiritual director. Health and spiritual director permitting, then, the modern hermit may wish to follow a much stricter fasting regime than the Church prescribes, bearing in mind that, occasionally, "moderation" is itself a penance. Sometimes it is only when their health is threatened, that hermits begin following a moderate rule. The rule should contain a balanced plan for fasts and vigils.

à communiquer."

¹⁰⁸ See MERTON, Contemplation, p. 253: "The right order of things in the solitary life is this: everything is centered on union with God in prayer and solitude. Therefore the most important 'ascetic practice' is solitude itself, and 'sitting alone' in the silence of the cell. This patient subjection to loneliness, emptiness, exile from the world of other men, and direct confrontation with the baffling mystery of God sets the tone, so to speak, for all other actions of the solitary. Without this clear acceptance of solitude in its most naked exigencies, the other practices might confuse the issue, or obscure the true end of the solitary life, or even become escapes from it. Once solitude itself is fully accepted, the other practices--fasting, work, vigils, psalmody and so on -- gradually fall into place, their need and their efficacy being now properly understood in relation to the whole of 'life in the cell.'"

CONCLUSION

The first paragraph of Canon 603 describes the distinctive characteristics of the eremitical life, and the second paragraph delineates the obligations for canonical status. The distinctive elements are the same ideals espoused by the desert hermits of the fourth century as well as the medieval solitaries. Like his medieval counterpart, the bishop of today assumes a tremendous responsibility when he accepts a hermit in his diocese. It is in the practical application of the second paragraph that problems, both old and new, can arise.

Today, as in the Middle Ages, the bishop can probably assume that his successor will be willing to continue supporting, whether spiritually or financially, a hermit whom he has accepted in the diocese. This is especially true where the bishop has made every effort to ascertain the suitability of the candidate, his or her financial support, and has appointed a capable person to oversee the hermit's commitment and possible needs. A new bishop arriving in the diocese where a hermit is installed should also find the guidelines the diocese has in place in terms of admission, formation and profession, as well as departure, dismissal (voluntary or involuntary), or transfer.

The bishop must ascertain that the candidate is

spiritually mature before accepting final profession; the hermit must have ongoing spiritual direction and the accountability of the director ascertained. The bishop has the right to be consulted as to who the director is to be, but should not simply appoint someone unknown to the hermit. The eremitical vocation is a monastic one, and perhaps a monk (if available) should be consulted as to the acceptability of the director. The bishop must also appoint a confessor.

The financial support of the hermit must be assured before the hermit makes final profession; who is to decide how much money is needed by the hermit? If the hermit has a steady source of income, such as a part-time job, perhaps some should be set aside for when such work is impossible. Many of these problems can be foreseen but others will be "new on the scene". What counts most, it seems, is for those involved to proceed prudently. Since Can. 603 is new in the law, it is obvious that serious questions will arise as to its eventual application in certain circumstances. With time, though, the situation will become clarified and this renewed form of consecrated life will shine forth as the blessing it is called to be for the particular Church and for the Church as a whole.

CONCLUSION

In the first centuries of the Church there were many who followed the Lord by practicing the ascetic life. The ideal of the martyr as the "perfect Christian" became very real in the face of terrible persecution, but when the persecutions ceased, physical martyrdom was replaced by "spiritual" martyrdom. The ascetics began to move away from established society, and set themselves apart in the desert, where they led austere lives of prayer, fasting and penance. Introduced into the West in the fifth century, solitary life thrived until the sixteenth century when, in most countries, the Reformation ostensibly sounded its death knell.

In the twentieth century, in spite of the fact that the 1917 Code of Canon Law recognized only one basic form of consecrated life, that is life in community, the seemingly dormant eremitical life began once again to revive. The Second Vatican Council, in three separate documents, recognized this phenomenon in the Western Church. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium), n. 43, spoke of the sanctifying value of the eremitical life, proven in the different forms of religious life lived in solitude; the Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life (Perfectae caritatis), n. 1b, recognized the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the eremitical life of the early Church; and, finally, the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad gentes divinitus), n. 18, stated that, while all forms of

religious life should be promoted, the contemplative life was indeed necessary to the fullness of the Church's presence, whether that life was to be implanted from an existing religious tradition or to be seen as a return to "the more simple forms of early monasticism." In Lumen gentium, n. 44, the religious life of the Church is presented as part of its "life and holiness", rather than with its institutional structures. In the same document, the Council recognized that the practice of the evangelical counsels was not restricted to those in religious life, and thus the way was open to the acceptance of one of the most ancient forms of consecrated life, that of the solitary, into the present day life of the Church.

In response to the documents of Vatican II, the 1983 revised Code of Canon Law includes the eremitical life among the forms of consecrated life. Indeed, the three distinctive elements in the law, which characterize the eremitical state, the stricter separation from the world, the silence of solitude and the constant prayer and penance, are taken directly from the Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life.

The eremitical life as lived in the past, took place in a society that essentially accepted the solitary way. In the West, because of our history, we sometimes tend to see little of value in the solitary life for it seems to have no

meaning. In a world which places a high value on "activism", this could be a major stumbling block in the path of those who feel called to solitude, no less than for those who must ascertain and affirm the authenticity of the call.

The modern bishop daily faces problems that his medieval predecessors never dreamed of, and yet, in the canon on hermits, the Code envisages him, in effect, taking on responsibilities which would normally be assumed by a whole team of people in an institute of consecrated life. He must decide, for instance, if someone is suitable for the eremitical life, if that person's financial position is stable (both for now and in the foreseeable future), and he must assume overall responsibility for the guidance of their spiritual life. Although much of this can (and should be) delegated, nevertheless the final obligation rests upon him.

From our study of the eremitical life in the early and medieval Church, several conclusions can be drawn as we apply the knowledge and experience of the past to present-day situations.

First, the bishop who accepts a hermit in his diocese is to make certain that all possible steps have been taken to ensure the suitability of the candidate, in terms of legal freedom (civil and canonical), of physical and psychological health, and of spiritual maturity. The proba-

tion period should be fairly long in order to allow sufficient time for the realization of the call to solitude to take place.

Second, the hermit withdraws from the world to lead a life of solitude and silence, a life of constant prayer and penance. The only persons who will truly be aware of the hermit's fidelity to this life are the spiritual director or the confessor. The bishop, therefore, should approve of the hermit's choice only after a careful scrutiny of the director's qualifications. Since the eremitic life is a monastic vocation, there should be some consultation with someone who is experienced in monastic life, even if this means going outside of the diocese to find this person.

Third, various financial questions should be settled before the hermit is accepted for final profession. This would include means of support, administration of any funds owned by the hermit, as well as accountability for the same to the diocesan financial officers. Contingency plans for any medical emergency that might arise should also be in place.

Fourth, the length of time to be spent in probation should be decided before the candidate begins, with the understanding that it may be lengthened for a specified period (for instance, the probation should last from one to

three years).

Fifth, it would be preferable were the bishop to delegate someone to be responsible for overseeing the hermit's living out of the rule of life. This person, unlike the spiritual director, could be part of the decision-making process regarding the acceptance or rejection of the aspirant for profession.

Sixth, any service to be rendered to the diocese by the hermit must be discussed, and agreed upon, by both the bishop and the hermit before final profession is made. The bishop, no matter what the needs of the diocese, should not ask a priest-hermit to take on any obligations other than those agreed upon. Similarly, a hermit should not be ordained to the priesthood simply because of the needs of the diocese, as this could well put an impossible burden upon him.

Seventh, the regulations of the diocese regarding admission, formation and profession should be clearly set out before a candidate is accepted. As well, the diocese should have directives for transfer, departure and dismissal in place before possible problems arise. The candidate should be appraised of all of these before entering.

Eighth, the rule of life should not be formally accepted until sufficient time has elapsed to demonstrate

its suitability for the particular hermit. Only a long period of time can ensure that the hermit is indeed responding to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and not to an excess of zeal. In the meantime, a general rule, perhaps one already approved, could be observed by the candidate, with the appropriate adaptations. In the rule of life, the hermit must express in a concrete way, the manner by which the separation from the world, the silence and solitude, as well as the constant prayer and penance, will be accomplished. The financial considerations, the amount of sleep, food, exercise, reading and work should all be addressed, bearing in mind that the rule is not written in stone, and above all, the hermit should strive for a balanced life of prayer, reading and work rather than attempt to become the "ideal" hermit.

As in medieval times, the bishop takes on a heavy responsibility when he accepts the profession of a hermit. As the great English canonist, William Lyndwood, said in the fifteenth century, regarding the enclosure of recluses who were unsuitable or insufficiently endowed, the "Bishop should take care therefore not to enclose any but those mentioned already in this chapter: otherwise, as I reasonably judge, he will be bound to provide from his own table for

those enclosed by him."¹ The bishop of today is no less responsible for those he accepts as hermits in his diocese.

In the future we would hope to see further studies in this field, especially regarding eventual associations of hermits, forms of accountability, the apostolate of hermits (for instance, by writing, spiritual direction, etc.). Perhaps, at some time in the future, an appropriate new liturgy for the ceremony of consecration could be prepared, possibly drawing on some of the medieval forms used for the enclosure of recluses or the blessing of hermits. Further, a contemporary study of the theology of the eremitical life is sorely needed, and, in a few years, an evaluation of the positive and negative effects of the new legislation and recent experiences would not be amiss.

¹ F.D.S. DARWIN, The English Medieval Recluse, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1944], p. 54.

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