

THE IDEOLOGY OF MONASTIC AND ARISTOCRATIC COMMUNITY IN LATE ROMAN GAUL

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The fifth century was a time of great change in the Mediterranean world. The classical, pagan world was being replaced by a new Christian one. And, in the west, there was a new barbarian presence to be dealt with as well. The elite classes around the empire dealt with these changes in different ways.

In Gaul, aristocratic society came under siege during the fifth century. The barbarian settlement in particular caused a crisis for Gallic aristocrats. The barbarians competed with Gauls for social status, economic influence, and political office. Another problem for the Gauls was that there just were not very many of them. They were scattered far and wide, each focused on his own local interests.

If Gallic aristocrats were to survive as a class, they were going to

have to devise ways to maintain aristocratic solidarity¹. This study will argue that, unlike other areas of the empire, where aristocrats often contributed to their own decline by their competition with each other, Gallic aristocrats made common cause². Few in number they may have been, but they compensated by finding novel means of creating unity from diversity and a new sense of aristocratic community.

The Christian church played a significant part in the way that Gallo-Roman aristocrats redefined their roles. One does not normally think of Christianity as advocating an elitist ideal during this period, but the Gauls managed to find aspects of Christian beliefs and practices that were consistent with their own ideologies. By incorporating Christian sentiments, Gauls were able foster their own survival. For example, it is well-known that Gallo-Roman aristocrats held a virtual monopoly on the episcopate, and in so doing were able to solidify their positions as local *potentates*³.

Ideologically speaking, moreover, secular and ecclesiastical attitudes about status coalesced. The contrast made by Gallic secular aristocrats

¹ On this process, see, in general, R. W. Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition*, Univ. of Texas Press 1993.

² Note the decline of the Italian aristocracy; see Th. Burns, "Ennodius and the Ostrogothic Settlement," *Classical Folia* 32, 1978, 153-168; P. Llewellyn, "The Roman Clergy during the Laurentian Schism (498-506)," *Ancient Society*, 245, 262; S. J. Barnish, "Transformation and Survival in the Western Senatorial Aristocracy, c. A.D. 400-700", *Papers of the British School at Rome* 56, 1988, 140-141; and J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian (A.D. 395 to A.D. 565)*, London 1923², 466.

³ See M. Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien: Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten von 4. bis 7. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1976; R. W. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul*, Washington 1989; and H. Wieruszowski, "Die Zusammensetzung des gallischen und frankischen Episkopats bis zum Vertrag von Verdun (843) mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Nationalität und des Standes", *Bonner Jahrbucher* 127, 1922, 1-83; and note the assertion of the Frankish king Chilperic, "*nulli penitus nisi episcopi regnant; periet honor noster et translatus est ad episcopos civitatum*" (Greg. Tur., *HF* 6, 46).

between the *boni* ("good people") with the *mali* ("inferior people") was paralleled by the ecclesiastical opposition of "the upright" (*boni*) to "the wicked" (*mali*)⁴. It was but a small step to equate "good men" in a theological sense with "good men" in a social sense. After all, a good Gallic aristocrat would assume, both groups of *boni* were comprised of the same people. This parallel between secular and ecclesiastical *boni* presumably underlay a theological point made in a sermon attributed to Faustus of Riez, which noted: "One who has goods (*bona*), you shall be a good man (*bonus*): wealth is good, gold is good, silver also is good, family ties are good, possessions are good. All such things are good, but whence do you do good (*bene*)?"⁵. Here, ecclesiastical and secular ideology regarding the *boni* dovetailed seamlessly⁶.

Furthermore, the same terminology of patronage and authority which had been applied to secular potentates also was applied to bishops. Germanus of Auxerre, in the fifth century, was called the

⁴ Note Cass. *Collat.* 11, 10, for the "*bonos et malos, iustos et iniustos*". Churchmen considered questions such as, "*cum hic mali interdum bona capiant, boni malis afflicentur*" (Euch., *Epist. ad Valer.* 725); cf. Euch., *De laud. erem.* 35, "*apud alios malum sit malum fecisse, apud hos vero malum est bonum non fecisse*." They assumed "*bonos et iustos viros semper persecutionem malorum sustinuisse*" (Faust., *Serm.* 5: CSEL 21, 240); "*oremus pro bonis, ut semper ad meliora conscendant, pro malis, ut cito ad emendationem vitae ... confugiant*" (Faust., *Serm.* 3: CSEL 21.236). The spoke of the afterlife, "*ubi bonorum ac malorum summa et inconfusa discretio est*" (Euch. *Epist. ad Valer.* 717).

⁵ "*Esto bonus, qui habes bona. bonae sunt divitiae, bonum est aurum, bonum et argentum, bonae familiae, bonae possessiones. omnia ista bona sunt, sed unde facias bene?*" (*Serm.* 5: CSEL 21, 241-242).

⁶ Other secular aristocratic terminology also was adopted by the church. The seeking of *gratia* ("favor", "influence") and *potentia* ("power", "authority") sometimes was nearly as important in the church as it was in the secular world. For the terminology, see Paul. Pell., *Euch.* 264-265, and *De sept. ord. eccl.* 5 (*P.L.* 30, 154). See also M. Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft*, 123, 127; J. N. L. Myres, "Pelagius and the End of Roman Britain," *JRS* 50, 1960, 21-36; and K. F. Stroheker, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien*, Tübingen 1948; repr. Darmstadt 1970, 9.

"special patron" of all Gaul⁷. And in the sixth, Pantagathus of Vienne, and Viventiolus and Priscus of Lyons, all were described as "potentes"⁸.

What this study will do is to focus upon the ways that the monastic movement in Gaul in particular contributed to the Gallic attempts to preserve their class solidarity and sense of elitism. Edward Gibbon described monks as "unhappy exiles from social life"⁹. Regardless of the validity of this claim elsewhere, it certainly was not true for Gaul. This paper will suggest that monks and the monastic movement were an integral part of the Gallic aristocratic lifestyle. And, in general, it will be suggested that the monastic movement in Gaul was in several ways unlike the movement in other parts of the empire.

One such difference involved personnel. Speaking for the empire as a whole, A. H. M. Jones suggested that "Hermits, monks and nuns were drawn indiscriminately from all classes of society from the highest to the lowest..."¹⁰. Not so, however, in Gaul, at least as regards the leadership of the monastic movement. It has long been recognized that in the fifth century Gallic aristocrats not only flocked to the monastic life but also appropriated it¹¹. In the late fourth century it was still possible for a humble foreigner like Martin of Tours to achieve prominence in the Gallic church, but the fifth century produced no Martins.

⁷ "Patronus proprius" (VGermani 46).

⁸ "Religione potens", "potens meritis", "arbitrio iustitiaque potens": L. Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule* (3 vols.), Paris 1907-15², I, 188-189; II, 165-168. For the bishop as patron in the Celtic tradition, see K. F. Stroheker, *Adel* 9; see also M. Heinzelmänn, *Bischofsherrschaft*, 123, 127; and E. L. Woodward, *Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Empire*, London 1916, repr. New York, 1990, 77.

⁹ *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (J. B. Bury ed.) 4, 62.

¹⁰ A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire A.D. 284-640. A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, University of Oklahoma Press 1964, 931; see also R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order. Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire*, Cambridge 1967, 210.

¹¹ See R. W. Mathisen, *Factionalism*; and F. Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich. Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastische Entwicklung (4, 8 Jahrhundert)*, Munich-Vienna 1965.

What has not been sufficiently recognized, however, is the degree to which these monk-cum-aristocrats continued to maintain their aristocratic affiliations, outlook, and pursuits. Some modern writers, for example, have assumed that Gallic monks withdrew from society and enthusiastically embraced an extreme ascetic lifestyle, and others have suggested that monasteries like Lérins provided a refuge for aristocrats who wished to escape the troubles of their times¹².

The theme of escape undeniably was a commonplace. Paulinus of Nola wrote to Eucherius about escape "from the confusion of this world"¹³. Vincentius of Lérins wrote, "avoiding the turmoil and crowds of cities, I inhabit a little dwelling on a remote farmstead and within it the retreat of a monastery"¹⁴. Faustus, abbot of Lérins who became bishop of Riez, preached, "we will imitate God, moreover, by abandoning the world, by not avenging injuries, by forsaking our own desires ... by refusing honors"¹⁵. Reports such as these could be interpreted to signify a rejection of the outside world and all of its social conventions. But it will be argued here not only that Gallic aristocrats coopted the monastic life, but also that aristocratic Gallic monks continued to participate in Gallic aristocratic life as enthusiastically as before¹⁶.

One first might consider just who the monks were, and where they came from. Hilary, a monk of Lérins who became bishop of Arles, said of his predecessor Honoratus, "what land, moreover, what nation does not have its citizens in that monastery," and asserted that Honoratus assembled a "congregation gathered from different parts of the land," where "all thought that in it their homeland and family and

¹² See F. Prinz, "Lerinum als 'Flüchtlingskloster' der nordgallischen Aristokratie", *Mönchtum*, 147-158; and R. Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul*, Berkeley 1985.

¹³ "Ab istius mundi strepitu" (*Epist.* 5, 4).

¹⁴ "Urbium frequentiam turbasque vitantes remotioris villulae et in ea secretum monasterii incolamus habitaculum..." (*Comm.* 1).

¹⁵ "Imitabimur autem deum negligendo saeculum, iniurias non persequendo, voluntates proprias respuendo ... honores ... declinando" (*Serm.* 2, *De nativitate*: CSEL 31, 229).

¹⁶ R. W. Mathisen, *Factionalism*, XII.

all like things had been returned to them"¹⁷. One very justifiable interpretation of this passage is to take it to mean those who, following the injunctions of *Matthew* 19, 20 and *Mark* 10, 29-30, relinquished their homes and families, found them again in the monastery. This certainly was Cassian's interpretation (*Collat.* 24, 26). What the monks gave up, they regained in the monastery. But a complementary interpretation is that such passages also describe a microcosm of the outside world brought into the monastery.

As elsewhere in the Roman world, Gallic monks were initially laymen¹⁸. The Gallic monks, moreover, did not keep to themselves. There was no anchorite movement worthy of note in Gaul¹⁹. Even Gallic hard-liners such as Cassian and Julianus Pomerius (neither of whom, it might be noted, was a native Gaul) accepted the inadvisability of extreme monastic seclusion²⁰. Cassian had a biblical justification for the cenobitic life: "therefore, the discipline of the cenobites had its origin in the time of apostolic preaching... It is written thus in the Acts of the Apostles: the multitude of believers had one heart and one soul"²¹.

And Eucherius of Lyons, whose *De laude eremi* was intended as a glorification of a life of isolation, concluded his work by speaking of the joys of a communal existence. Not only had he settled there himself, he also welcomed back his friend Hilary, saying, "Good Jesus, what a group and gathering of saints did I behold there... When you

¹⁷ "*Quae adhuc terra, quae natio in monasterio illius cives suos non habet... congregatio ... ex diversa terrarum parte collecta ... omnes ... in illo sibi patriam ac propinquos et omnia simul redditat computantes*" (*VHonorati* 17-19).

¹⁸ See S. Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age*, London 1926, repr. New York 1970, 369; and A. H. M. Jones *LRE*, 933. For Gaul, see *Corp. chr. lat.* 148-132-135, "*monasterii vero omnis laica multitudo... laica vero omnis congregatio*" -note that the monks were not even called "monks".

¹⁹ For a few isolated possible examples, note Greg. Tur. *VPat.* 10, 1; 11,1; 13, 1; and 15.

²⁰ Cass., *Collat.* 18, 5; Jul. Pom., *Vit. cont.* 3, 28, 1.

²¹ "*Itaque coenobitarum disciplina a tempore praedicationis apostolicae sumpsit exordium... quae in Actibus Apostolorum ita scribitur: multitudinis credentium erat cor unum et anima una*" (Cass., *Collat.* 18, 5).

had been returned and inserted into their body, my dearest Hilary, you granted much to yourself, and much indeed to those who now rejoice in your return with an eager exultation"²².

So in Gaul the cenobitic movement prevailed. Nor did Gallic cenobites keep to themselves. No, they mingled regularly with Gallic aristocratic laymen. Sulpicius Severus, for example, described the setting of his *Dialogues*, which took place at his monastery at Primuliacum, thus: "there rushed in a crowd of monks, the priest Evagrius, Aper, Sabbatius, and Agricola; and a little later there arrived the priest Aetherius with the deacon Calupio and the subdeacon Amator (clearly clerics)... after a while it was announced that many saeculares stood outside ... asking to be admitted"²³. After some discussion, it was decided to admit the ex-vicar Eucherius and the consular Celsus. This symposium, therefore, included representatives from three domains: monks, clergy, and pious high-ranking laymen. Another laymen who frequented monasteries was the *vir inlustris* Domnulus, who regularly visited the Jura monasteries in the 460s (Sid. Apoll., *Epist.* 4, 25, 5).

The ability of non-monastic laymen to circulate in monastic circles was facilitated by two complementary practices: on the one hand, the rejection by most Gallic monks of an extreme ascetic lifestyle, and on the other the adoption by many *saeculares* of a modified ascetic regimen.

As elsewhere in the Roman world, Gallic monks advertised their adherence to the ascetic ideal. Saint Honoratus, the founder of Lérins, for example, was dutifully described as sleeping in a bed of sackcloth with a stone for a pillow (*VHonorati* 2 [9]). In practice, however, the

²² "*Quos ego illic, Ieso bone, sanctorum coetus conventusque vidi! ... horum, mi Hilari carissime, redditus insertusque consortio, plurimum tibi, plurimum etiam illis contulisti, qui nunc pro reditu tuo alacri exultatione laetantur*" (*De laud. erem.* 43-44).

²³ "*Haec me loquente, Gallo iam ad narrandum parato, inruit turba monachorum, Evagrius presbyter, Aper, Sabbatius, Agricola, et post paululum ingreditur presbyter Aetherius cum Calupione diacono et Amatore subdiacono; postremus Aurelius presbyter... interrea nuntiatur multos saecularium stare pro foribus ... ut admitterentur rogantes*" (*Dial.* 3, 1, 3-7).

Gallic monks in general do not seem to have been fanatic in their pursuit of asceticism. One recalls that when Caesarius of Arles, early in his career, was appointed cellarer at Lérins, he quickly encountered resistance from monks who resented his ascetic ways, and he was soon replaced (*VCaesarii* 1, 6).

Cassian, moreover, saw a lack of dedication as the reason why monasticism was slow to take hold in Gaul, noting, "this is why in these regions we see no monasteries established with so great a multitude of brothers, because they are not supported by the resources of their own work, so that they are able to endure constantly in them, and if there are sufficient supplies to support them in some way from some other source, nevertheless their love of leisure (*otium*) and their inconstancy of spirit do not permit them to stay long in place. Whence this opinion is endorsed in Egypt by the ancient fathers, 'The working monk is afflicted by a single demon, the otiose one is devastated by many'"²⁴.

Just as it was part of the secular aristocratic ideology, *otium* continued to be sought in the monastery. In general, Gallic monastic life seems to have been more genteel than rigorously ascetic; one recent commentator has even described Primuliacum as an "aristocratic spa"²⁵. Which is not to say, of course, that the lack of zeal of some Gallic monks did not receive the rebuke of some hardliners, especially

²⁴ "Hinc est quod in his regionibus nulla videmus monasteria tanta fratrum celebritate fundata quia nec operum suorum facultatibus fulciuntur, ut possint in eis jugiter perdurare, et si eis suppeditare quoquo modo valeat sufficientia victus alterius largitate, voluptas tamen otii et pervagatio cordis diutius eos in loco perseverare non patitur. unde haec est apud Aegyptum ab antiquis patribus sancita sententia: operantem monachum daemone uno pulsari, otiosum vero innumeris spiritibus devastari" (*Inst.* 10.23). And Julianus Pomerius condemned those who seem "to prefer leisured study [*otiosum studium*] to the fruitful service of the common good in ruling the many" (*Vit. cont.* 3, 28, 1).

²⁵ R. Van Dam, *Leadership*, 135; see also J. F. Kelley, "The Gallic Resistance to Eastern Asceticism", *Studia patristica* 17, 1982, 506-510.

from the circle of Paulinus of Nola²⁶.

Paulinus himself criticized the lack of commitment of some casual Gallic monks. He complained to Sulpicius Severus about a letter sent via an "unspiritual monk" of whom he complained, "he need not have been compelled to falsify a monk in himself, as you ordered, or to see one, as was necessary, in me. Let him therefore have his military cloak and his army boots and his impudence, since he fears to change the one or to abandon the other"²⁷. He went on at great length about how monks should be recognized as "not proud men in embroidered garments, but humble ones in bristly clothes of goat's hair, not bodyguards in fine mantles, but men draped in rough cloaks, fastened up not with a military belt but with a length of rope, men with hair not long and trimmed over a shameless brow, but cut close to the skin in chaste ugliness, half-shorn irregularly, shaved off in front, leaving the brow naked..."²⁸. Paulinus, however, had long since transferred himself to Italy. And his complaints only serve to show that the Gauls did things their own way. Gallic monks apparently did not wish to abandon the secular community.

At the same time that monks were pursuing, in most cases, a genteel asceticism, pious aristocratic *saeculares* were ostentatiously adopting a quasi-ascetic lifestyle of their own²⁹. Numerous Gallic

²⁶ In the gathering mentioned above, a protege of Paulinus protested against the inclusion of all the *saeculares*: "*tum Aper, 'nequaquam,' inquit, 'istos nobis admisceri convenit, quia ad audiendum curiositate potius quam religione venerunt'*" (Sulp. Sev., *Dial.* 3, 1, 3-7; see Paul. Nol. *Epist.* 38, 8; 39, 2-3, 44, 4).

²⁷ "*Inspiritalem monachum ... ne cogereetur monachum aut in se, ut iusseras, fingere aut in me, ut necesse erat, cernere. sibi ergo ille habeat armilausam suam et suas caligas et suas buccas, quarum alia mutare, alia deducere timuit'*" (Paul. Nol., *Epist.* 22, 1).

²⁸ "*Non vestibibus pictis superbi sed horrentibus cilicibus humiles nec chlamyde curtalini sed sagulis palliati nec balteo sed reste succincti nec improba adtonsi copitis fronte criniti sed casta informitate capillum ad cutem casesi et inaequaliter semitonsi et destituta fronte praerasi...*" (*Epist.* 22, 2; cf. 17, 1, trans. P. G. Walsh, *Letters of Paulinus of Nola*, London 1966-1967, v. I, 197-198).

²⁹ See Sid. Apoll., *Epist.* 4, 24, 3; 7, 7, 3. On Gallic asceticism, see F. Ela Consolino, *Ascesi e mondanità nella Gallia tardoantica. Studi sulla figura del vescovo nei secoli IV-VI*, Naples 1979; J. Fontaine, "L'ascetisme chrétien dans la

laymen became *religiosi* or *conversi* by making a *professio religionis*. *Religiosi* were expected to observe chastity and to wear inconspicuous clothing and footwear³⁰. Sidonius Apollinaris, a Gallic aristocrat who after serving as prefect of Rome became bishop of Clermont circa 469, advised many of his aristocratic confreres to adopt the religious life³¹.

This kind of "conversion" was viewed as being just as admirable as formally entering a monastery or taking clerical orders. Eucherius of Lyons, for example, discussing two ex-prefects, noted "one rose to the religious life, the other into the priesthood"³². The distinctions among pious laymen, monks, and clerics became blurred. Sidonius told of a visit to his old friend Maximus, whom he described as "greatly different from his old appearance: his dress, his step, his modest air, his color and his talk, all had a religious suggestion; moreover, his hair was short, his beard long, three-legged stools served as seats, his door-ways had hangings of haircloth, his couch was devoid of down, his table of purple, and even his hospitality, though kindly, was frugal, with a greater abundance of vegetables than of meat..." Sidonius finally discreetly had to query the other guests, "what kind

litterature gallo-romaine d'Hilaire a Cassien", *Atti de Colloquio sul tema Gallia Romana. 10-11 maggio 1971. Promosso dall'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Rome 1973, 87-115; M. Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft 73-98*, 185-211; S. Pricoco, *L'isola dei santi. Il cenobio di Lerino e le origini dei monachesimo gallico*, Rome 1978, 25-59, 131-186; F. Prinz, *Mönchtum*, 47-54; P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, Oxford 1978; and G. Turbessi, *Ascetismo e monachesimo prebenedettino*, Rome 1961; see also R. Van Dam, "Images of Saint Martin in Late Roman and Early Merovingian Gaul", *Viator* 19, 1988, 12, "the connection between holiness and aristocracy became a common feature in the self-promotion of families and individuals".

³⁰ See *Corp. chr. lat.* 148. 84-85, 114, 119, 122, 146, 152, 171, 180, 184; 148A. 8, 43-44.

³¹ See Sid. Apoll., *Epist.* 7, 12, 4; cf. 2, 1, 4; 4, 15, 2; 8, 4, 4; 4, 13; 4, 15; 4, 25; 8, 4, 4; see also Gennad., *Vir. ill.* 86, and Paul. Pell., *Euch.* 521.

³² "*Unus in religionis, alius in sacerdotii nomen ascendit*" (Euch., *Epist. ad Valer.*: PL 51, 719) referring to Hilary and Petronius; see R. W. Mathisen, "Petronius, Hilarius, and Valerianus: Prosopographical Notes on the Conversion of the Roman Aristocracy", *Historia* 30, 1981, 106-112.

of life has he assumed from the three orders: does he live as a monk, a cleric, or a penitent?"³³. Sidonius realized that his friend had adopted the religious life, but it was not immediately clear -nor, perhaps, was it even particularly significant- just how he had done so.

Even aristocrats who had not become *conversi* were expected to make concessions to the religious lifestyle. Sidonius' description of the *vir illustris* Vettius is particularly revealing. After first discussing Vettius' love of training horses, carrying hawks, and judging dogs, he continued, "among these activities there is frequent reading of the scriptures ... he reads the psalms frequently, he more frequently recites them, he functions as a monk with a new kind of lifestyle, wearing not the pallium but the general's cloak"³⁴. Sidonius concluded with his famous statement, "I admire a priestly man more than a priest"³⁵. Sidonius recognized that there was something new in the wind: it had become perfectly acceptable to compare the lifestyle of a distinguished aristocrat to that of a monk. In the new ideology, all were part of the extended aristocratic community.

The consolidation of the three orders -monks, clergy, and pious laymen-, was further facilitated by another practice, common in Gaul, if uncommon elsewhere. This was the taking of ecclesiastical orders by monks. Some spectacular examples are well known: the monasteries of Tours, Marseilles, and Lérins provided many leading fifth-century Gallic bishops. Speaking of Marmoutier, Sulpicius Severus asserted, "What city or church was there that did not wish a

³³ "*Multum ab antiquo dissimilis incessu. habitus viro, gradus pudor color sermo religiosus, tum coma brevis barba prolixa, tripodes sellae, Cilicum vela foribus appensa, lectus nil habens plumae, mensa nil purpurae, humanitas ipsa sic benigna quod frugi, nec ita carnis abundans ut leguminibus ... quod genus vitae de tribus arripisset ordinibus, monachum ageret an clericum paenitentemve*" (Sid., *Epist.* 4, 24, 3-4; part of trans. from Anderson, *Sidonius*, London: Loeb, 1965.

³⁴ "*Inter haec sacrorum voluminum lectio frequens ... psalmos crebro lectitat, crebrius cantat, novoque genere vivendi monachum complet non sub palliolo sed sub paludamento*" (*Epist.* 4, 9).

³⁵ "*Plus ego admiror sacerdotalem virum quam sacerdotem*" (*Epist.* 4, 9, 5). Note also his commento Philagrius (*Epist.* 7, 14, 10) "*comple ipse personam religiosi, ego vel imaginem*".

bishop from Martin's monastery?"³⁶. And in 428, Eucherius could claim that Lérins "both nourished the most outstanding monks and sent forth the most sought-after bishops"³⁷. This practice was frowned upon elsewhere: in 418, the bishop of Rome Boniface complained that "some from the local crowd of monks, and laymen as well, are hastening to the episcopate. This in particular, however, is known to have been forbidden, both by my predecessors and recently by me, in letters sent to Gaul and Spain, in which areas this presumption is common..."³⁸.

But a phenomenon which perhaps has been not so well appreciated is the extent to which monks took lower orders as well. Jerome, for example, circa 414 wrote to Rusticus, a young Gallic monk, "live in the monastery, so that you might deserve to become a cleric", apparently suggesting the role of the monastic life as a steppingstone to greater things³⁹. And Gregory of Tours wrote of a woman bringing her son to the monastery at Acaunum, "so that he might become a cleric"⁴⁰.

Individual examples abound. Many of the monks of Lérins, such as Honoratus, Faustus, Vincentius, and Salvian, were ordained as priests⁴¹. Rusticus of Narbonne and Venerius of Marseilles had been fellow monks and co-presbyters under Proculus at Marseilles, presumably in the monastery of St. Victor (*CIL* 12.533). And Hilary

³⁶ *VMartini* 10, "quae enim esset civitas aut ecclesia, quam non sibi de Martini monasterio cuperet sacerdotem?".

³⁷ "Et praestantissimos alat monachos et ambiendos proferat sacerdotes" (*De laude eremi* 42). See also Sid. Apoll., *Carm.* 16, 109-110.

³⁸ "Nonnullos ex monachorum populari coetu ... sed et laicos ad sacerdotium festinare. hoc autem specialiter et sub praedecessoribus nostris, et nuper a nobis interdictum constat, litteras ad Gallias Hispaniasque transmissis, in quibus regionibus familiaris est ista praesumptio..." (*Epist.* "Exigit dilectio": *PL* 20, 669ff).

³⁹ *Epist.* 125, 17, "vive in monasterio, ut clericus esse merearis".

⁴⁰ "Ut factus clericus" (*Greg. Tur., Glor. mart.* 75).

⁴¹ Faustus: *VHilarii* 12 (15); Vincentius and Salvian: Gennad., *Vir. ill.* 65, 68.

of Arles ordained Romanus of St. Claude⁴². A monastic career, therefore, did not preclude a clerical one.

Some aristocratic Gauls, moreover, saw a stop at a monastery like Lérins as but a waystation in their ecclesiastical careers, a training-ground for what was to come. Several of the most famous alumni of Lérins, for example, such as Hilary of Arles, Lupus of Troyes, Caesarius of Arles, and Johannes of Reom only actually stayed in the monastery for a year or two⁴³. They then returned to an active life in the "real world."

Gallic monks used scripture to justify their rejection of the sequestered life and their return to center stage. A favorite passage in this regard was *Matthew* 5, 14-16, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"⁴⁴.

Eucherius of Lyons, for example, did so -at great length- in his *De laude eremi*⁴⁵. So did Faustus of Riez, in his sermon *In depositione sancti Honorati episcopi*⁴⁶. Hilary of Arles did so more briefly in his *Sermo de vita sancti Honorati*: "By however much his life was hidden,

⁴² *VRomani* 18-19: "audita namque memoratorum fama, sanctus Hilarius Arelatensis episcopus, missis in causa clericis, beatissimum Romanum haud longe sibi a Vesontionensi urbe fecit occurrere, cuius incitamentum vitamque dignissima praedicatione sustollens, inposito honore presbyterii, ad monasterium honorifice repedare permisit".

⁴³ Caesarius: *VCaesarii* 5; Johannes: *VJohannis* 1-4: *MGH Scr.rer.merov.* 3, 502-517, written in 659.

⁴⁴ "Vos estis lux mundi. Non potest civitas abscondi supra montem positi. neque accendunt lucernam, et ponunt eam sub modio, sed super candelabrum, ut luceat omnibus qui in domo sunt. sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus, ut videant opera vestra bona et glorificent Patrem vestrum, qui in caelis est..." See also *VHilarii* 24[31], "Lucerna tua fidei lumine splendens, etiam caeteras super ecclesiae candelabrum positas lucere concessit".

⁴⁵ *De laud. erem.* 36; see also pseudo-Euch., *Exhortatio ad monachos*: *PL* 50, 865-868.

⁴⁶ *Corp. chr. lat* 101a.775 = *CSEL* 21, 259; see also Faust., *Serm. de s. Maximo*: *PLS* supp.3.634, *CChr* 101, 407, and Faust., *Epist.* 5 (*MGH*).

by so much more did his fame shine forth⁴⁷.

Faustus also expanded upon the same theme in his general exposition of the idea that a stay at a monastery prepared one for an episcopal career in his sermon on his predecessor Maximus, who before becoming bishop had been abbot of Lérins: "Thus, a great light does not burn for itself, but its light is thrown about and afar... He was enriched there so that he might bear interest here, there he was illuminated so that he might shine here ... he was absent a short while from his homeland so that he might bring wealth and riches back to his homeland... Lucky is the land which bore such a one, and gained a patron in place of a pupil"⁴⁸. These Gallic monks were no shrinking violets. Like their aristocratic brethren, they sought fulfillment in the setting of the broader aristocratic community⁴⁹.

In this context, moreover, one discovers another example of how aristocratic and monastic ideologies coalesced. In the secular aristocratic world, it always had been conventional to view the school as a *palaestra* or *gymnasium*, an exercise ground which would prepare the student to undertake a secular career⁵⁰. In the fifth century, aristocratic ideologies regarding education were assimilated into the church, and especially into the monastic experience. This was especially the case with Lérins, where the monastery too became a

⁴⁷ "*Quanto magis eorum vita abscondebatur, tanto magis fama emicabat*" (Sermo 10).

⁴⁸ "*Sic lampas magna non sibi accenditur, sed lumen suum eminus et circumiecta iaculatur ... illic ditatus, ut hic foenaret, illic illuminatus, ut hic refulget ... absentat paulisper a patriae, ut novas opes ac divitias reportet ad patriam ... felix terra quae talem genuit, ac de alumno patronum ... remisit*" (PLS 3, 635, 640).

⁴⁹ Compare P. Rousseau, "In Search of Sidonius the Bishop" *Historia* 25, 1976, 366, "the virtue of monks became less a textbook model of spiritual health for other men, and more a transfusion into the bloodstream of the whole community".

⁵⁰ See, for example, Aus., *Epist.* 22, 6; *Eclog.* 2, 31; *Epig.* 95, 1; *Grat. act.* 14; *Prof.* 12, 1; Aug., *De civ. dei* 2, 7; 8, 13; *Conf.* 1, 13; 3, 3; 7, 11; Cass., *Var.* 4, 25; Ennod., *Dict.* 7, 1; 9, 6, 17; *Epist.* 1, 5, 9; 1, 9, 1-2; 2, 6; Sid., *Carm.* 2, 167-8; 3, 6, 2; 14; *Epist.* 4, 15, 91, 23, 108, 212, *Epist.* 1, 6, 2; 2, 2, 2; 9, 9, 14; 9, 14, 4.

gymnasium, or a *palaestra*, or a *schola*⁵¹.

Speaking of Philosophy, for example, Sidonius wrote to Faustus of Riez, "She is an inseparable comrade at your side whether you drill in urban exercise grounds or you discipline yourself in hidden solitudes; she is your consort in both Athens and the monastery"⁵². This incongruous juxtaposition became perfectly reasonable in the new aristocratic-cum-monastic ideology⁵³.

Elsewhere, Sidonius used the theme of the monastery as *palaestra* to introduce another element illustrating the integration of monasticism into broader aristocratic society. Sidonius spoke of Faustus' prayers, "which you have transferred from the palaestra of the eremetical congregation and from the senate of the cell-dwellers of Lérins into the city whose church you oversee; nothing of the abbot has been modified in the bishop"⁵⁴.

The attitude that monks who became bishops still remained monks became a commonplace, and provides further evidence for the lack of differentiation between a monastic and a clerical career. Hilary of Arles said of his predecessor Honoratus, "He flourished, therefore, in the church of Christ just as he had flourished before in the monastery"⁵⁵. And Faustus of Riez said of his predecessor Maximus, "and he who recently as an abbot had acted as a bishop, later as a

⁵¹ Monastic *schola*: see Faust., *Epist.* 1/8, to Ruricius; and Caes., *Reg. ad virg.*; Faust., *Serm. de Maximo*: PLS 3, 636; *Corp. chr. lat.* 148A, 181.

⁵² "*Haec tuo lateri comes inseparabilis, sive in palaestris exerceris urbanis sive in abstrusis macerare sollitudinibus, haec Athenaei consors, haec monasterii*" (*Epist.* 9, 9, 13). For the comparable isolation of the philosophic and monastic life, see Euch., *De laud. erem.* 32.

⁵³ As it did in the clerical-aristocratic world, see Avitus, *Epist.* 53; and Cass., *De inst. div. lit.* 21.

⁵⁴ "*Quas de palaestra congregationis heremitidis et de senatu Lirinensium cellunanorum in urbem quoque, cuius ecclesiae sacra superinspicis, transtulisti, nil ab abbate mutatus per sacerdotem*" (*Epist.* 9, 3, 4).

⁵⁵ "*Floruit igitur sub ipso Christi ecclesia sicut monasterium ante floruit*" (*VHonorati* 28).

bishop continued as an abbot"⁵⁶. This attitude also applied to other clerical orders: speaking of Honoratus' time as a presbyter, Hilary also asserted, "He himself, a monk who possessed all the virtues of the priesthood, preserved in the priesthood all the humility of a monk" (*VHonorati* 3[16]).

The *topos* of bishop-as-monk achieved reality in another common practice: the founding of urban monasteries by monks who had become bishops. Hilary of Arles, Eucherius of Lyons, and Maximus of Riez all founded their own monasteries⁵⁷.

The commonality of both interest and personnel between monks and clergy resulted in another anomaly of Gallic monasticism: monastic independence. Only in Gaul were abbots recognized as being independent of bishops, at least in the fifth century. Monks were under the authority not of the bishop but of the abbot, who was chosen by the monks themselves: the Council of Arles of circa 452 decreed, "The entire lay multitude belongs under the care of the abbot ... truly, the entire lay congregation belongs under the sole and unimpaired supervision and disposition of its own abbot, whom it shall elect for itself"⁵⁸.

This phenomenon lies in stark contrast to other areas of the empire where the relations between monks and bishops usually were not so

⁵⁶ "Et qui iam dudum in abbate pontificem gesserat, postmodum abbatem in pontifice custodivit" (Faustus *De s. Maximo et episcopo et abbati Lirinensi*: PLS 3, 637).

⁵⁷ Hilary: See *VHilarii* 10(13) and *VCaesarii* 1, 12, as well as F. Benoit, "L'Hilarienne d'Arles et les missions en Bretagne (Ve-VIe siècle)", in G. le Bras and F. Gilson eds., *St. Germain d'Auxerre et son temps*, Auxerre 1950, 181-189; S. Pricoco, *L'isola*, 50; and F. Prinz, *Mönchtum*, 62. Eucherius (the *insula barbara*): *PL* 50, 1213; Dekkers, Eligius, and Aemilius Gaar eds., *Clavis patrum latinorum, qua in novum corpus christianorum edendum optimas quasque scriptorum recensione a Tertulliano ad Bedam*, Turnhout 1961², n. 496; Maximus: Faust., *Epist.* 6, 9, 12; see sS. Pricoco, *L'isola*, 56.

⁵⁸ "Omnis laica multitudo ad curam abbatis pertineat.... laica vero omnis congregatio ad solam ac liberam abbatis proprii quem sibi elegerit ordinationem dispositionemque pertineat" (*Corp. chr. lat.* 148, 134); see also A. H. M. Jones, *LRE*, 933; and F. Prinz, *Mönchtum*, 57.

cordial⁵⁹. This fact of ecclesiastical life was stressed in a famous passage of Cassian, who reported, "This is the opinion of the fathers, from antiquity until the present ... that in every way the monk ought to avoid both women and bishops." Not quite so famous, however, is Cassian's aside in the same passage: "I cannot relate it without some confusion of my own, for I have been able to avoid neither my sister, nor the authority of a bishop." Cassian's qualifier more accurately reflects the reality of monastic life in Gaul: monks, bishops, and even, as in this instance, women, mixed in monastic circles just as they did in secular aristocratic society⁶⁰.

In fifth-century Gallic aristocratic society, therefore, the worlds of monks, clerics, and laymen merged. There was a constant movement among them, and they were seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. All were viewed as possible sources of influence and authority. One recalls the time when Sidonius was called upon to name a new bishop of Bourges. He noted that the three possible backgrounds of candidates were that of *monachus*, *clericus*, and *saecularis* (*Epist.* 7, 9, 9). All were part of the aristocratic community.

This period saw a reconciliation of apparent inconsistencies. Laymen could act like monks, and monks like laymen. Monks could become bishops, and bishops could act like monks. And all were equally appropriate occupations for aristocrats. As a result of their ability to resolve the potential inconsistencies among these spheres of activity, the Gauls were able to meet the changes in their world with a unified front, and as a result were able to survive the storm and to maintain an influential presence on into the Middle Ages.

⁵⁹ A. H. M. Jones, *LRE*, 932-933, "The eremitic and monastic movements were in some sense a rebellion against the constituted authorities of the church." For another Gallic exception, see Hormisdas, *Epist.* 150.

⁶⁰ Cass., *Inst.* 11, 17, "*Quapropter haec est antiquitus patrum permanens nunc usque sententia, quam proferre sine mea confusione non potero, qui nec germanam vitare potui, nec episcopi evadere manus, omnimodis monachum fugere debere mulieres et episcopos*". Eventually, of course, Gallic bishops did move to assert their control over the monasteries: see *Corp. chr. lat.* 148, 138; 153; 205; 208-209; 148A, 11, 26.

Resumen / Abstract

During the fifth century, with the arrival of the barbarians and the rise of the Christian church, aristocratic society in Gaul was sorely threatened. This study argues that Gallic aristocrats responded by making common cause. They compensated for their fewness in numbers and fostered their own survival by using Christian ideologies to create a new sense of aristocratic community. In Gaul, this period saw a reconciliation of apparent inconsistencies. Laymen could act like monks, and monks like laymen. Monks could become bishops, and bishops could act like monks. And all were equally appropriate occupations for aristocrats. As a result of their ability to resolve the potential inconsistencies among these spheres of activity, the Gauls were able to meet the changes in their world with a unified front, and as were able to maintain an influential presence on into the Middle Ages.

Las invasiones bárbaras del siglo V y la creciente importancia de la Iglesia cristiana afectó seriamente a la posición social de la aristocracia de Galia. Este artículo pone de manifiesto cómo la respuesta aristocrática fue hacer causa común para asegurar su supervivencia; así utilizaron la ideología cristiana para transmitir un nuevo sentido a la comunidad aristocrática, permitiéndoles mantener su influencia y unidad en tiempos posteriores.