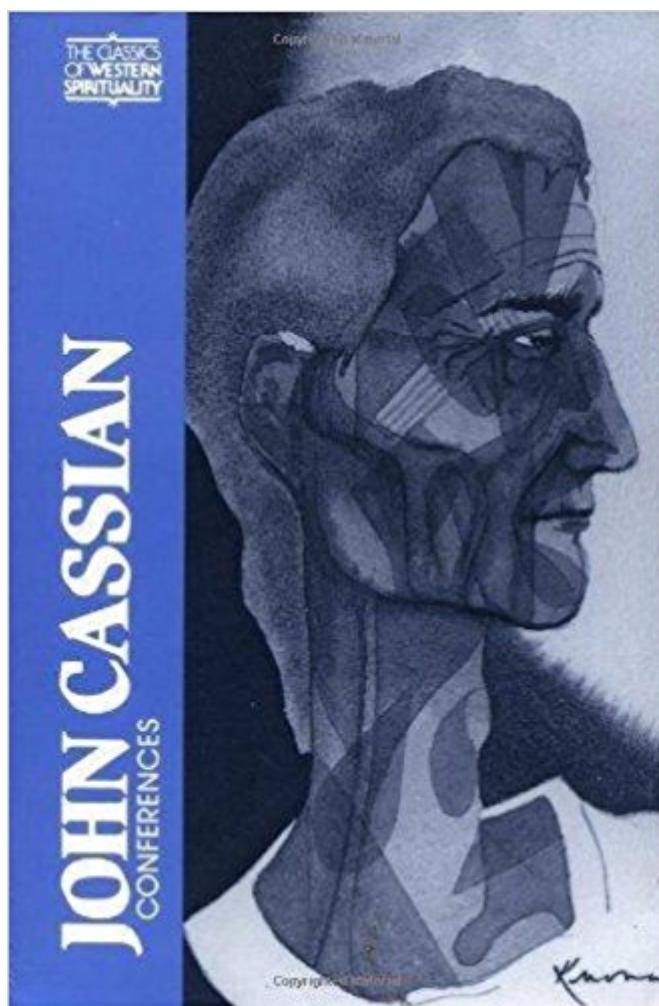


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John Cassian: Conferences (Classics Of Western Spirituality (Paperback))



Synopsis

John Cassian (c. 365-c. 435) journeyed to the West to found monasteries in Marseilles and the region of Provence. *Conferences* is his masterpiece, a study of the Egyptian ideal of the monk.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The appearance of this book is a first in church history....Ramsey's translation and comments will be an excellent help. --HallelThe complete English translation of Cassian's *Conferences* will be a welcome addition to the libraries of universities, monasteries and researchers. --Journal of Early Christian Studies

Text: English, Latin (translation)

What is included is good, however, not all of the conferences are included. Here you'll only find 1,2,3,9,10,11,14,15, and 18. All the conferences are online if you look for them...what you are getting here is a worthwhile preface and introduction which is well worth the price of admission.

Fantastic! Life changing in transforming your heart and helping find peace in the midst of the unfairness of life.

John Cassian (about 365-435) is one of the "Desert Fathers." The Introduction to this 1985 edition notes that "Cassian's work had two intentions, and the two intentions were mixed as ideas occurred to him. He wanted to point toward the highest modes of prayer... (a)nd he wanted to show the community of monks how to be a good and harmonious community." Cassian wrote, "there are three sources for our thoughts---God, the devil, and ourselves." (Pg. 52) He suggests that "discernment is the guide of all the virtues." (Pg. 64) He explains that "The reason why our prayers ought to be frequent and brief is in case the enemy, who is out to trap us, should slip a distraction to us if ever we are long-drawn-out." (Pg. 124) He compares training in continuous prayer to "the teaching of children who at first do not know the alphabet, do not recognize letters, and are unable to write with a sure and firm hand." (Pg. 132) He proposes that "The journey to God follows many routes. So let each person take to the end and with no turning back the way he first chose so that he may be perfect, no matter what his profession may be." (Pg. 158) He says that in Egypt there are three types of monks: (1) "the cenobites, those who live together in one community under the authority of an elder..."

As with all the books I have read from "The Classics of Western Spirituality" series, John Cassian's "Conferences" is both important and insightful. Cassian is, via the value placed on his writings by St. Benedict, a major figure in the history of western monasticism. This volume contains nine of Cassian's twenty-four conferences. The conferences cover such topics as prayer, perfection, and purity of heart. By using the device of interviewing famous Egyptian monks and hermits, Cassian deftly distills the essence of early Egyptian monastic and eremitic teachings on these and other topics. The scholarly introduction to this volume, written by Owen Chadwick, is indispensable for those wishing to set these teachings within the context of Cassian's life and thought. Mr. Chadwick, who has written a book on Cassian is just the man for this task and he does it well. Colm Luibheid is both the translator of this volume and the author of its skilled and entertaining preface. Cassian's devotion and humor are brought to life in this translation. Cassian still speaks to us today, one thousand six hundred after his death; in a world foreign to the one he was writing in. How can this be? It because the message of Cassian's writings: devotion and the quest to follow God in purity, spirit and truth, lies at the core of what we as human beings were created for. There is much here to help us (by the grace of God) along that narrow path which leads to the Father.

The Classics of Western Spirituality edition of Cassian's Conferences seemed extremely appealing, but it is inevitably disappointing to read out-takes from a work as majestic as the Conferences.

Admittedly, the Conferences can be daunting: the standard critical edition runs to three volumes, and the recent English translation is a hefty tome of nearly 1000 pages. But (and I say this advisedly) there is no substitute for mulling over the work as a whole. So I would suggest that instead of waiting for this edition to be reprinted, consider buying Boniface Ramsey's translation in the Ancient Christian Writer's series. If you are interested enough to read a second review, then you are probably interested enough to take on an unexpurgated version.

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