Benedictine Allegorical Exegesis on the Psalms: The Monastic Search for God Through Scripture and Its Pertinence for Today

Ian Smith
Assumption College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.assumption.edu/honorstheses

Part of the History of Christianity Commons, Philosophy Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.assumption.edu/honorstheses/37

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors Program at Digital Commons @ Assumption College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Assumption College. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@assumption.edu.
BENEDICTINE ALEGORICAL EXEGESIS ON THE PSALMS:
THE MONASTIC SEARCH FOR GOD THROUGH SCRIPTURE AND ITS PERTINENCE
FOR TODAY

By
Ian Smith
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Marc A. LePain
Theology

A Thesis Submitted to Fulfill the Requirements of the Honors Program at Assumption College

April 28, 2018
Contents

INTRODUCTION: ................................................................................................................................. 3

CHAPTER 1: General History of Christian Monastic Life ................................................................. 6

CHAPTER 2: The Culture of the Grammatica and the Quaerere Deum in Daily Monastic Life .......... 12

CHAPTER 3: Monastic Exegesis ........................................................................................................ 20

CHAPTER 4: Cassian and Augustine: Examples of the Monastic Exegesis of the Psalms .............. 29

CHAPTER 5: Where Exegesis Stands in Modern Scholarship ......................................................... 43

BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................................................................................. 54
INTRODUCTION:

The Western world has been defined by two distinct cultures, one culture being that founded in Greek reason and the other is that of Christianity. These two cultures are seemingly irreconcilable since the former did not seem to allow for the spiritual faith of the Christians. When the world of Christianity came into existence, there arose a tension between the two cultures, yet it was through Christianity and its inclusion of reason into Faith that the West was able to survive the struggle between the two cultures. Its solution was through the Bible, i.e. the written word or the Scriptures. Scripture, as the written word gave to the world of reason, the world of the *logos*, a challenge under the title *Quaerere Deum*, to seek God. This defining aspect of Christianity took shape through the Scriptures since as a written word they had *logos* but also carried with the words the revelation of God. The Greek *logos* did not wrestle with the idea of God in the Christian sense for this God was too far removed from the confines of reason to even be understood by reason initially in the Greek sense. Christianity brought into the *logos* something new that would allow for reason to reach a God that was above our comprehension. The modern world, with all its focus on scientific objectivity has forgotten the Christian sense of the combination of the *logos* with divine revelation. This is notable in the way exegesis of the Scriptures has been carried out through the centuries since the beginning of Christianity. I will explore how this unification is especially apparent through exegesis played out in the Christian monastic culture.

Monasticism came out of a Christian life which was dedicated to the learning of Scriptures so that one could find God; it was a life dedicated to the *Quaerere Deum*. As such, it follows the teachings of Christ as they came down to us through the writings of the New Testament. The idea was that through the study of the Scriptures, the *logos*, one could find God
since God revealed Himself through the Scriptures. The Scriptures themselves were taken as a whole in the form of the Bible, but it was through the study of the word, the *grammatica* (a Greek term), that one would be able to open up the understanding to find God in the Scriptures. This shaped the daily monastic life which included such things as the *lectio* or the reading of Scriptures and the prayer life of the monks. Through the *grammatica*, the monk was able to learning Scripture and thereby come to know God, and by learning correctly what the Scriptures had to say the monks would take on the form of worship found in the Scriptures, particularly that of the Psalms. The Psalms especially became an important aspect of the monk’s life since through them one could come to know God but also to pray to Him. Without the preliminary task of the monk in the *grammatica* however there would be no *lectio* and subsequently no prayer. More importantly, without the *lectio* there would be no exegesis of Scripture. Within the monastic tradition, this exegesis was to take on the task of spiritual exegesis, or allegory, and this was to define a special characteristic of the monastic culture which influenced the rest of Christianity and the Western world since the time of St. Benedict, the Father of Western monasticism. This spiritual exegesis was to reveal to the Christian the presence of Christ within the Scriptures taken as a whole, the unity of the Old and New Testaments where the Scriptures of the former are given their complete meaning through the New.

It is out of this tradition of spiritual exegesis, of allegory, that the Scriptures and the Old Testament Psalms would become vital for the life of the monk. Through this monastic exegesis the *Quaerere Deum* would be consummated and the life of the Christian could be carried out in full. Christian monasticism gave to the West a full Christian life which gave the Middle Ages their distinct Christian culture. The monastic life sought to live out its *Quaerere Deum* through
Christ’s commandment to love one another.¹ The combined cultures of the *logos* and the *Quaerere Deum* allowed for the flourishing of this culture to engage in a breadth of reason that engaged with word of Scriptures and its meanings. However, the modern age has forgotten about this kind of exegesis and has restricted itself from being able to address the questions concerning spiritual matters and ultimately the question of God and employs nothing more than a historical criticism. It is through a return to the exegesis of monastic culture that we may be able to become fully aware of the questions which open up to us the possibility of a truly Christian life. This is a life that gives humanity a correct understanding of the community in a Christian sense, to love our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God² whom all men must find in account of His revelation through the *Logos* who is Christ. My thesis will explore the nature of allegorical exegesis on the Book of Psalms within the Benedictine monastic tradition of the Middle Ages produced by its distinct culture of the *Grammatica* and the *Quaerere Deum*. Besides its historical significance, what is the importance of allegorical exegesis for modern man?

---

¹ John 13:34
² Matt 22:37-40: “Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.”
CHAPTER 1: General History of Christian Monastic Life

The middle ages are often thought of as the “Dark Ages,” but with Christian monasticism, and through its influence in the early part of this time period between the ancient and modern ages of the world, these middle ages are some of the brightest the world has ever seen. It was specifically the monastic orders and particularly the Benedictines which came at the time of the Fall of Rome and which acted as a cultural bridge bringing the ancient world in touch with a new age. Out of the Benedictine Order a new culture emerged. Benedictine monasticism was part of a tradition of monasticism which was a distinct form of Christian life defined by the words: “Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33). This is the history of the monks and was the source of all monastic life. Christ said this as well in the Gospel of Luke, “Yet one thing is wanting to thee: sell all whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me” (Luke 8:22). These words especially gave those who were seeking a life deeply rooted in Christ an incentive to leave the world and enter a monastery. The monastic life is the Christian life lived to the fullest and these Benedictine monks then, not surprisingly, were able to shape the Christian and monastic culture to be what it is today.

The roots of monastic culture took hold first in Egypt in the 3rd century A.D. with St. Antony (251-356) the desert hermit often called the Father of Christian monasticism. With the rise of Constantine to power and the peace which resulted, the lives of Christians shifted into a more relaxed nature. This easier manner of living the Christian life necessitated a call to a more

---

5 Woods. Pg. 25.
austere life consistent with those words of Christ which called for renunciation. St. Antony lead a lifelong endeavor to follow God spiritually in a life dedicated to prayer and manual labor in a new way and soon became an inspiration for others who were seeking a more long-lasting dedicated Christian life. The shift from Christian communities formed under the hardships of the persecutions to the eremitical life popularized the call to live a poor and chaste life in a solitary way. Egypt became a suitable place to live the sacrifice called for by Christ principally because the desert provided the setting for a demanding task separated from contemporary life at that time. Contemporary life was filled with too many distractions for a serious Christian seeking to live according to Christ’s commandments. Thus, the abandonment of Christians’ lives for a fuller ascetical life taking on Christ’s commandments in a new way was in store which led to St. Antony’s radical movement. However, this hermit life soon began to lose its first fervor, and though there were many who sought the spiritual life following the life of St. Antony, a new wave of monastic life began to emerge: the cenobium (i.e. the community).

From the Egyptian eremitical life, St. Pachomius (286-346) made a transition to a structured life of a community which was designed to reflect more of the early forms of Christian communal living. This new life took on a strict observance, almost militaristic, under a superior or authority who represented Christ in the spiritual life. Although this new life took on a more communal nature with a structured life to make spiritual progress, St. Pachomius’ cenobites were still more like unto hermits living together rather than within a solely communal structure. There was still the preservation of the eremitical life of the hermits, namely praying, work, and

---


penances, which were to continue as structures within the monastic life, yet it was not until St. Basil the Great (329-379) that the monastic life took on a total communal nature.

The full transition into a strict Christian communal life emerged with St. Basil, another monastic father who went to observe St. Pachomius’ communities and was impressed by them. St. Basil returned to his homeland in East Asia Minor to found his own communal monastery, but whereas the monasteries of St. Pachomius took on an almost militaristic austerity of the eremitical life within a group framework, St. Basil dedicated his monastery strictly to a Christian communal life. His goal was to create a Christian life dedicated solely to “the Christian life of brotherly love and care, with the asceticism of service and humility, and penitence for sin.”

There was no individual asceticism; the individual was to be engaged within the whole of the community. This form of the Christian monastic community is important since it is from St. Basil’s community that St. Benedict gains much of his inspiration in *The Rule* for the cenobitical life. As two great father figures of monasticism who emphasized such communal living, St. Basil and St. Benedict both influenced the monastic traditions in the East and West respectively.

It is the Western monastic line with St. Benedict which takes a more prominent role for the purpose of my thesis. To mention some of the names associated in this line of monastic culture, there was St. Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 293-373), St. Jerome (342-420), St. Augustine (354-430), St. Martin of Tours (d. 397), and finally St. John Cassian (360-435). Beginning with

---

9 Knowles. Pg. 22.
10 As I shall discuss exegesis within Chapter Three, it is important to note here that exegesis was to be done with the whole of Christianity in mind. The whole of Christianity would be influenced by monastic exegesis since it addressed a need in Christianity to ground itself in the Scriptures. Thus the importance of the communal life of a particular monastery takes on a more important stance within the monastic tradition.
St. Athanasius, he was exiled to the West from Alexandria first at Trier in Italy, then at Rome where St. Jerome was residing. Influencing St. Jerome, the monastic life was introduced into Italy. With St. Augustine, there developed a monastic life although it was not to have such a huge following as the Benedictines would. However, St. Augustine’s writings influenced much of the monastic exegetical thought of Benedictine monasticism. St. Cassian and St. Martin of Tours brought monastic culture from Egypt directly to various areas of Italy and Gaul. St. Cassian himself provided what would become the mystical theology of Western monasticism. These fathers of monasticism were influential in the spread of monasticism from Egypt to various places, most importantly that of Italy where St. Benedict’s Rule was to emerge from the structure at Monte Cassino.

Monte Cassino was the starting place of St. Benedict’s mode of monastic life. It is from this mother-house of Benedictine life that monastic culture was reformed, retained, preserved, and strengthened in the West throughout the ages since its beginning. However, Monte Cassino was, in the historical context of the time, just a monastery. Its fame was made well known by the formulation of its monastic life in the Rule. It was a compendium of 300 years of monastic life and came at a time of great change in the Western world as “a nucleus that could escape destruction when towns were destroyed, and that could receive gifts and prosper in times of peace.”

The fathers of monasticism, with their writings and engagement with the Scriptural texts, influenced the foundation of St. Benedict’s Rule and through this the rest of Christianity. This is the patristic monastic tradition based in the early beginnings of Christian monasticism which

---

12 Knowles. Pg. 25.
13 Knowles. Pg. 30.
14 Woods. Pg. 28.
15 Knowles. Pg. 37.
takes its roots in the Words of Scripture. What makes St. Benedict distinct from all previous monks and deserving of the title “Father of Western Monasticism” is his formulation of these thoughts in his Rule.\textsuperscript{16} This masterpiece excellently formulated how it is that the austerity of the hermit fathers would mesh with the framework of a community with all its focus on the Quaerere Deum. It is simple in its wording and structure, yet fulfills all aspects of the monk’s spiritual journey as well as his physical life. David Knowles asserts three primary aspects which set it apart from all previous monastic rules and ways of life: first, it was practical; second, it was both “spiritually uncompromising and physically moderate and flexible”; and third, it is unique in providing a source whereby abbots and monks can be guided.\textsuperscript{17} As all monasticism had been based in the words of Christ’s commandment to follow Him and St. Benedict kept this at the forefront of all that was written in the Rule, but which also carried with it a sense of a “school” of the Lord’s service as a result of the communal aspect taken by St. Benedict.

With the rise in popularity of the Rule, there were many who took on this form of life thus creating the Benedictine Order. The monasteries following the parameters set out in the Rule of St. Benedict became centers of cultural life after the collapse of Roman civilization in the West and were often looked to for direction and leadership. Their distinct life transformed the Middle Ages giving this period of history its Christian societal structures and character. Besides their many achievements in agriculture, wine and beer making, and the various sciences just to name a few, their greatest contribution was in the fields of learning which extended into the spiritual life unique to monastic communities. There arose within Benedictine monasticism a dual structure of the grammaticca always directed in its path towards the Quaerere Deum. From the grammaticca emerged the learning of the Word of God. There was in monastic traditions from

\textsuperscript{16} Knowles. Pg. 34.
\textsuperscript{17} Knowles. Pg. 34.
the very beginning a heavy engagement in the singing and learning of the Psalms and it is from this that the importance of exegesis emerged. Knowledge of the Psalms meant proper interpretation, i.e. exegesis. However, this learning (*grammatica*) was directed as secondary to the *Quaerere Deum* within the monastic culture. The observance of Christ’s words is at the core of all monasticism (since all must follow Christ through the words of Scripture), and it is through the life of the Benedictine monks that the Words of Scripture came to life in a way that brightened the ages of man with the light of Christianity. Learning was highly stressed within monasticism, and in some ways took on a level that was almost equal to the *Quaerere Deum* and thus this problem, a conflict between the two goals of monasticism, needed to be reconciled.

First, we shall see how these goals were made concrete in the lives of monks and then how exegesis is able to take on this task of reconciliation as a special part of patristic exegesis played out in monasticism.
CHAPTER 2: The Culture of the *Grammatica* and the *Quaerere Deum* in Daily Monastic Life

St. Benedict’s *Rule* provides for a “school of the Lord” and it is this idea that shows the saint’s idea of reconciling the distinct culture of the *grammatica* (learning) and the *Quaerere Deum*. In St. Benedict’s prologue to the *Rule*, he says “Therefore we intend to establish a school for the Lord’s service. In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome.”

The *grammatica* and the *Quaerere Deum* are to be reconciled within the monastic school, but the specific ways are left undecided within the monastic structure. However, the final intention of the monastery for St. Benedict is undoubtedly the *Quaerere Deum*. The monastic structure within the *Rule* regarding this dual eschatology of the monastic school is left flexible but follows a circular path as one searches for God through His Word but needs the grammatical learning necessary for understanding what has been written. What makes the monastic approach distinct, however, is that the path of learning, though almost equally as important as the quest for God, is left as secondary to that search. Although there is the main focus on the *Quaerere Deum*, there is still left the necessity of the *Grammatica* for carrying out this special calling in monasticism.

*Grammatica* is necessary in knowing the Word of the Lord, as St. Benedict clearly states:

*Never swerving from his instructions, then, but faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom.*

Scripture is used in almost every chapter of St. Benedict’s *Rule*. By Scripture’s influence within the life of the Christian and by virtue of its place within the rule the *Rule*, the *grammatica* is raised to a spiritual level with its particular adaption to exegesis of Scripture. St. Benedict says in

---

19 St. Benedict. Pg. 6.
his chapter four that the monk must listen readily to holy reading and to devote himself often to prayer, yet it is assumed already that the monk who is reading necessarily has some learning, and there are other chapters (38 and 48) which include that all monks have some sort of reading.

The actual nature of this reading within the monastic life, however, is where the *Grammatica* comes into play, for it not only denotes knowledge of just grammar and sentence formation and language structure, but it also takes on the meaning that one understands in a deeper way what he reads. The Greek *grammatica* is a synonymous term with *litteratura*, which Jean Leclercq talks about as being the foundation of a general culture where there is a logical analysis of the texts and not just a deciphering of letters. St. Benedict’s attitude towards literature is concerned primarily with knowledge of the Scriptures, yet not exclusively. The secular schools studied the *auctores*, the authors, of classical texts (mainly the poets) but these are full of myths and pagan ideas. They present a danger for the serious Christian life but these ideas also had some influence in certain monastic traditions. Leclercq expounds upon the two natures of the monastic school as a result of the use of literature: it is both classical and rabbinical because of the methods of grammar used and the texts to which the methods are applied.

The attitude taken by St. Benedict in his *Rule* is that the learning methods of the *Grammatica* are elementary in the sense that one must learn them sufficiently enough for the immediate need of understanding the Bible, its commentaries, and the works of the monastic fathers. However it was often the case that the monk’s learning allowed him not only to read the Scriptures, but also to know the Psalter by heart. Through the Merovingian period, this was

---

21 Leclercq. Pg. 23.
22 Leclercq, Pg. 24.
especially true as the method of learning was reduced primarily to just the Psalms (although there is no complete evidence this was so at the beginning of the Benedictine Order). Again the *grammatica* was, within the monastic school, a tool used in service of the Lord. To exemplify even more distinctly St. Benedict’s attitude towards learning, Leclercq compares St. Benedict’s contemporary, Cassiodorus of Vivarium (490-c.585), as one whose direction of reconciling the two monastic elements in the monastic school equalized the spiritual *Quaerere* and the practical *grammatica*. The monastery Cassiodorus founded in Vivarium takes on a more scholastic approach to the nature of monasticism by putting both the Christian eschatological goal on the same level as its complementary *grammatica*. This produced another contrast against St. Benedict which consists of the details that Cassiodorus put into the methods of studies: the *ratio studiorum*. His methods were strict and rigid whereas the directives St. Benedict gives to his monks tend to be more open assuming that one must be learned, but nevertheless putting aside any lack of knowledge for the sake of the spiritual and thus the good will of the individual monk in reaching heaven. For St. Benedict, the study of letters by no means forms the monk’s ultimate vocation. The learning of literature was vitally important in the life of the monk and although the methods may change within the learning of literature, the ideals which shape these methods cannot change. Cassiodorus’ ideals are the *grammatica* on par with the *Quaerere Deum* which allows for instability as even the *grammatica* and its methods will change and thus Cassiodorus’ monastery has no lasting influence like St. Benedict’s. St. Benedict’s attitude of literature keeps the *grammatica* in terms of being extremely beneficial to the spiritual life but not necessarily important to the monk’s vocation to follow Christ.

---

23 Leclercq. Pg. 23.
24 Leclercq. Pg. 27.
25 Leclercq. Pg. 28.
Within Leclercq’s conclusion to chapter one, he wraps up this problem between the studies of monasticism and the *Quaerere Deum*. St. Benedict proposes for the monastery a spiritual program, a goal which is the *Quaerere Deum*. The *ratio studiorum* is not focused upon as the goal, though St. Benedict does make some direct references to such studies as can benefit the Christian life because of their importance when followed under monastic direction. He would be far from denying it a place within the *Rule* which would thereby show a rejection of the notion of learning even on a non-sacred level. The Benedictine Order then, from the very beginning, takes-on and is constantly being renewed with this task of finding the equilibrium in the imbalance of the *grammatica* and the *Quaerere Deum*, and this gives St. Benedict’s *Rule* the strength by which it has continued and will remain so throughout the ages.

It is then appropriate to discuss the nature of the *grammatica* as it plays-out more concretely within monasticism because it makes place for the possibility of the *Lectio Divina*, the “Divine Reading” and subsequent exegesis of Scripture. *Lectio divina* (or just *lectio*) denotes the daily action when the monk participates with the words of Sacred Scripture through reading. The structure of this reading is that the monk commits himself entirely both with the body and the soul as he reads Sacred Scripture. This is the sacred learning of the literature of the Bible through which one can more easily engage with the exegesis of the Bible. Integration of the *lectio* within the *Rule* signifies its importance within the structure of monastic culture as we can see primarily within chapters 4, 38, 42, and 48, where the *lectio* is addressed directly. The *lectio* is seen clearly in chapter forty-eight26 where St. Benedict assumes that all the monks know how to read since for the time of Lent, a monk is to receive a codex of what to read in a library. It is also suggested

---

that he read Scripture, Cassian, and St. Basil.²⁷ But even with this structure within the monastery, how is it that individual monks were to read?

The lectio allows the monastic experience of learning to take place through the reading of sacred texts which in turn developed the monk’s spiritual life. Lectio is the principal occupation of the monk and is composed of two elements which will be broken down for our understanding: the legere and the meditari or meditatio.²⁸ The lectio is first an act of the reader where one uses not only his mind but also the use of his senses as the person reading will read aloud so that he may not only form the words in his mind but also in his speech and thereby hear the written word. The components of the lectio are the legere which translates “to read” and the audire, “to hear.”²⁹ There were various moments throughout the monk’s day when the legere was focused upon (e.g. during certain communal prayers when lessons or Scripture is to be read and at meal-times). Within the ancient world, however, reading was an audible action where not only did the reader grasp at the meaning of the text with his mind while reading, but often augmented this understanding through reading aloud (“audire”) since the reader could listen to the formation and words of the text.³⁰ This creates a nature of dialogue and when connected to the lectio divina (when one “listens-to” the sacred texts) and it leads to a dialogue with God. As Robertson

---

²⁷ Leclercq. Pg. 17
²⁸ Leclercq. Pg. 16.
²⁹ Leclercq. Pg. 19. These two terms are sometimes used inseparably.
³⁰ This kind of reading took precedence due to the nature of the written word. According to Roberston (refer to footnote 31 below; pg. xviii-xx), writing from the ancient times up till around the changes of the 1200s was often confusing and lacked the sophistication that technology brought to the written word. It was necessary for one to read the text aloud since grammatical structures such as punctuation were not used. By engaging in the legere the reader could come to understand the texts through listening and understanding the text as more of an understanding. However, with the use of the technology, legibility improved, and silent and private reading became possible while the meditation (the meditatio as I will discuss in the upcoming paragraphs) lost its necessity.
explains, there comes with this form of reading “an intimate dialogue with a living, present, divine interlocutor who will answer when the reader appeals to him.”

While the *legere* allows us to hear and listen to the Word of God, the second but more important component to the *lectio* is the *meditatio* which denotes the processes of the reader coming to an understanding and embodiment of the text he is using and is often the main-focus of the whole *lectio divina*. The *meditatio* is oriented towards the practical and moral order since this describes the process by which the reader, because of his bodily interaction with the text (first through the mouth and second through the ears), is able to think about the words and apply them to his life experience. This is an “intending” that leads to action after what has been contemplated for “his will is in the law of the Lord: and on his law he shall meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters which shall bring forth its fruit, in due season” (Psalm 1:2-3). Within the monastic setting, the *meditatio* took on a newer meaning where it referenced a dedication to learning the Scriptures by heart as one read them, a kind of memorization of the Word of God. Leclercq links this meaning monasticism gave to the *meditatio* with the phrase *Os justi meditabitur sapientiam* (the mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom) (Psalm 36:30) as it is from the mouth whereby the Word is translated to the mind and heart of the monk. Also, through the *meditatio*, one can begin to pray since “reading aloud transforms reading into prayer. Pronouncing the words under one’s breath, one quite literally ‘tastes’ them in the mouth, and more profoundly, *in ore cordis*, ‘in the mouth of the heart.’”

---

32 Leclercq. Pg. 20.
33 Leclercq. Pg. 21.
34 Robertson. Pg. xiv.
Robertson discusses this idea as a sort of “reading-reception” by which the reader was able to integrate what was learned from the sacred writings into his individual life.

The *legere* and the *meditatio* constituted the *lectio* and produced peculiar consequences for the *lectio*, one that Robertson names as memorization\(^{35}\) and another that Leclercq names as reminiscence\(^{36}\) both which took a hold on the entire subjective experience of the monk within his spiritual development. Memorization comes first since through *lectio* the monk will come to learn Scriptures to such an extent that he is able to recall multiple passages without reference to the text. The monk is almost continually reflecting on the words which he has so meticulously read. This has produced a distinct daily life within the monastery since at almost every action the words of Scripture influenced the individual. This comes even after the various times of the day set for sacred reading and prayers in the *Rule* of St. Benedict. The other consequence, reminiscence, takes on a more active role within the life of the monk than does mere memory especially when reading Scripture. During such times of prayers, reading, and even sermons, reminiscence would allow the monk to recall other passages that certain words or phrases would trigger in the monk’s mind. These passages were not always complementary and could often contain a connection with merely one word.\(^{37}\) However, this consequence of monastic *lectio divina* led to the distinct exegetical tradition of the monks where, instead of a systematic and methodological approach of scholarship, reminiscence allowed the monk to explore Scriptures in a way that was not restricted by certain scholastic processes (St. Bernard is exemplary of this in his sermons on the Song of Songs as explained in Leclercq’s discussion of this subject\(^{38}\)).

\(^{35}\) Robertson. Pg. xiv.
\(^{36}\) Leclercq. Pg. 91.
\(^{37}\) Leclercq. Pg. 91.
\(^{38}\) Leclercq, Pg. 92.
As was mentioned above, however, with the coming of the 1200s, this culture became lost within the sea of change; the stress of sacred, spiritual learning shifted to scholasticism and its more literal, methodological approaches to reading Scripture as the written text gained advances with its legibility. In this context Robertson discusses the topic of the Ressourcement movement of certain authors within the middle of the 1900s of which Leclercq and de Lubac were two leading figures.\textsuperscript{39} Not only did they open a great deal of neglected research in the subject of medieval exegesis, but they also sought to combine their methods of research with methods that are similar to the lectio bringing to the modern age an approach to exegesis of the patristic, monastic exegesis that has been largely, if not completely forgotten. It is from this fundamental cultural aspect of monasticism, the grammatica through the lectio divina whereby monastic culture is able to partake of exegesis on a level of scriptural scholarship that has been unmatched since its beginning. The activity of the lectio divina is based on literature which is dealt with the grammatica; this shows the necessity of the grammatica since without a foundational knowledge of deciphering a text, the methods of the lectio must be used in monastic exegesis as it is oriented entirely towards daily life and not merely through a humanistic or scientific abstract approach taken among scholars of modern times.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} Robertson. Pg. xviii.
\textsuperscript{40} Leclercq, Pg. 22.
CHAPTER 3: Monastic Exegesis

It is from the *Lectio* that we get monastic exegesis. The authors of the Ressourcement movement within the Church will be addressed here along with exegesis since they have dealt with the subject extensively and have produced a large portion of the contemporary emphasis on the patristic exegetical tradition from monasticism. This exegetical tradition takes a spiritual outlook which has been forgotten (or at least fallen out of favor) in the modern world as these authors will claim. The monks provided the source for this exegesis and it is the ideas expounded by these authors about its place within the history of Christianity that allow these authors to renew this tradition through their research. The Ressourcement movement took a strong hold with some theologians (particularly those in France) in the middle of the 1900s before Vatican II and provided some inspiration for Vatican II’s attempt at a return to the foundations of Christianity. This will imply, then, that spiritual exegesis is not merely an historical phenomenon but something of a goal within Christianity that has continued throughout the ages since its foundation within the Christian tradition.

The research which these authors undertook is vastly extensive and is at some points overwhelming with the sheer amount of biblical, patristic, and even modern references in line with their thinking. Their hope was to provide a knowledge of exegesis to the Christian world which was not a step back but a movement forward with a *renewal* and not merely a return to the biblical exegesis as it was found within the patristic-monastic tradition up until the 12th century. The exegetical domain of monasticism is oriented entirely towards the life of the monk and not just towards the abstract knowledge achieved within scientific methods as is the case with much of modern scholarship to which the Bible has become an object studied devoid of any spiritual meaning. Exegesis in the patristic-monastic tradition allows us to approach Christ through the
Scriptures and this becomes a way of life as it is accomplished through the *lectio*. The Ressourcement movement found that the spiritual interpretation had been replaced by modern research methods that were exceptional but also extremely literal. One of the foremost of the Ressourcement authors describe the situation as a “high mania for harmonization, and false notions of biblical inerrancy or tradition. The marvelous thing is that the mind is freed from this sort of approach by regular recourse to our ancient authors.”\(^{41}\) It is from de Lubac’s idea that we will understand an old approach to exegesis with a modern context allowing for the allegorical tradition to continue integrated within its roots.

For a further clarification of what the Ressourcement authors were fighting against, we can take a look at some of the ideas of Dom Celestin Charlier in *The Christian Approach to the Bible*. Charlier says that there is a problem when modern man reads the Bible which is that the modern man does not read it at all. To be more specific, the modern man does not read it as he ought and this leads to modern man’s “prejudice and downright blindness.”\(^{42}\) This characteristic of the modern reader was due to excessive nominalism, lack of participation in the Liturgy, and the moral corruption of the Churchmen beginning in the 13\(^{th}\) century until the 16\(^{th}\) century when the Bible was ousted from its integration within the life of the patristic-monastic tradition of the Church.\(^{43}\) The overall sense of the period between the 13\(^{th}\) and 16\(^{th}\) centuries was individualism which increased in importance drastically alongside the Protestant Revolt with its “new-found spirit of independence that was in the air, a spirit which was untrammeled by tradition.”\(^{44}\) Out of these ages arose Scientism from the 19\(^{th}\) century of Germany which lacked tradition and sought


\(^{43}\) Charlier, Pg. 13.

\(^{44}\) Charlier, Pg. 16.
to find abstract knowledge instead of relying on tradition as had the monastic period of Christianity.

Thus we find de Lubac’s depiction of the state of modern exegesis; “Faced with the exegetical constructs of the Fathers of the Church, we can easily be tempted to object: this was of course, a great and lovely dream, but critical research has long since discredited it – and faith can get along perfectly well without it.”45 However, the “allegorism” of the fathers is not just an object in de Lubac’s study as Scientism would reduce the idea to. The fact that de Lubac’s whole focus of his work does not merely include a scientific method of viewing the Christian fathers’ use of allegory, but also partakes in this kind of exegesis himself; his work is riddled throughout with his interpretations of what the Scriptures say in light of the monastic fathers. This fact can allude to the foundational reason de Lubac is hoping to make clear: that the monastic tradition is not reserved to the time of the monasteries leading up to the 1200s and nothing more. During this age of the fathers (as an early stage for Christianity), Christianity needed its establishment in the Scriptures. Exegesis was able to provide the means, yet the Christian world would deem itself sufficiently established within this tradition so as to break from it as the world approached the 12th and 13th centuries.46 The need for finding the spiritual meaning in the Scriptures, the allegorical exegesis, had been slowly put aside for the task of finding the literal meaning of the Scriptures. The past needs of Christianity grounded spiritually in the Scriptures have been accomplished by the monastic tradition and readily given to us in literal form. de Lubac and his contemporaries in the Ressourcement movement rejected that this reduction to the literal form should be the end of the spiritual exegetical tradition and have sought to bring the tradition back.

46 de Lubac. Sources. Pg. 4.
Why this should be so will be clear once we understand how de Lubac and his fellow scholars thought about “the meaning of Scriptures.” The meaning is “spiritual” for de Lubac and not allegorical. This distinction comes after a discussion of how the Scriptures have been taken in the past. Allegory is the term used by many of the fathers and monks and the term would be sufficient since symbolic transposition of Biblical exegesis was termed as allegory and meant, for a long time by theology, the mysteries of Christ and of the Church as they appeared in Scripture.47 It should be noted that there were three other levels of exegesis (more properly termed hermeneutics): the historical/literal, the tropological (moral application), and the typological (“types” or “signs” representing certain truths or prophecies). Allegory as the fourth in the hermeneutical tradition is the focus of those like de Lubac and many of the fathers: the other methods were thought as secondary to the importance of allegory. Frans van Liere says that it is through the modern times that this term “allegory” has gained many negative connotations which has been due partly to modern scholarship’s lack of knowledge of the methods of the true understanding of patristic allegory.48 Allegory went beyond the literal interpretation of the Scriptures and has been viewed as arbitrary to the real meaning.49 With this distinction, de Lubac wants to return to the originality of the Fathers yet avoid calling it allegory because of the complications the word causes. Thus, when de Lubac talks about the spiritual, he is really trying to reach the heart of the nature of monastic allegory which was, even in the patristic-monastic tradition, sometimes termed the spiritual interpretation as a synonym. St. Jerome, St. Augustin, and St. Gregory the Great (three of some of the most revered Fathers) all held the assumption

47 de Lubac. Sources. Pg. 12. Transposition of Biblical exegesis is describing the movement from the word to the spirit.
49 de Lubac. Sources. 14.
that Scripture contained as its true meaning the *spiritual* sense “only perceptible to those who were initiated into the mysteries of faith.”\(^5\) This is the goal of Scriptural exegesis: that we must understand the spiritual meaning behind what the Scriptures have offered to us as words to listen to done through the partaking of the *lectio* as was explained earlier.

This duality between the literal interpretation and the spiritual interpretation has actually been played out in the establishment of Scriptures in the Christian tradition. The literal historical tradition was called the Antiochene tradition (the spiritual/allegorical being the Alexandrian) and had Chrysostom (349 A.D. – 407) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (392 A.D. – 428) as more prominent authors. Taking the Antiochene tradition of exegesis of the Scriptures, the text teaches us its historical and religious aspects regarding the story of the Israelites. With the Alexandrian tradition (represented largely by Origen), the Old Testament is seen in light of the New Testament as the Old is a preparation for Christ and many prayers in some part passed on to Christianity from the Old to the New. The New is complementary to the Old (in the sense that it finishes it and completes it), yet it still needs the Old in order to have full meaning. Since the Scriptures are viewed as the living Word and not just a historical document, the Old Testament is an integral component of the Scriptures for exegesis. The monk must seek the Bible pertaining to its religious significance as an activity whereby he comes to deeper knowledge of the Scriptures through the *lectio* that gives us the ability to listen to the Word. We do not question it, but it questions us through the progression of the spiritual life.\(^5\) Taking this idea even further, however, the unification of both the Old Testament and the New Testament is what makes for a constant renewal of the spiritual exegesis that de Lubac has pointed out to us.

\(^5\) van Liere. pg. 159.
\(^5\) de Lubac. *Sources*. Pg. 73.
The spiritual meaning allows us to unite the two Testaments, and as the spiritual is always connected to the truth, we are able to objectively find truth of Scriptures while at the same time gain fruits of the spiritual life as we subjectively understand it through the *lectio*.\(^{52}\)

“The Word of God, a living and effective word, acquires true fulfillment and total significance only by the transformation which it effects in the one who receives it.”\(^{53}\) Christ is the goal of the Scriptures, and if the conformity of our lives to Scripture’s word is to occur, it must entail a total conversion to Christ. However, as we are humans and Christ is the perfect man, the God-Man, our conversion will remain incomplete and thus we must continuously be striving for a deeper spiritual understanding of the Scriptures. This movement towards Christ falls under the *Quaerere Deum* and we can see how it is that the monastic life was able to invigorate itself with this idea as it was designed finally in Benedict’s *Rule*. Although the literal sense is important, it is really the spiritual sense of Scriptures that gives life and allows mankind to continue one with a constant renewal of understanding of the truth. The modern scientific methodologies of the historical/literal sense in exegesis although it offering much meaning to the text cannot exclusively give full force of what is revealed in Scripture.\(^{54}\) This is how exegesis is designed to get to the heart of the spiritual meaning in Scriptures: for de Lubac, this meaning “strictly understood, is none other than that of the New Testament. It is the New Testament itself.”\(^{55}\)

By uniting the Old Testament with the New Testament to create the Bible, we are able to unify these two exegetical traditions. In the letter of the Bible, the Old Testament specifically, lies the account of God’s Word, His Law, His Actions in the world, and the revelation of the structure of Salvation (i.e. prophecy), yet it is through the New Testament that we can come to

\(^{52}\) de Lubac. *Sources*. Pg. 20.
\(^{53}\) de Lubac. *Sources*. Pg. 21.
\(^{55}\) de Lubac. *Sources*. Pg. 31.
see the truth of that revelation in its entirety. The Old is always looking forward and preparing for the New, and this would rightly be called looking forward to Christ. It is within the New Testament Scriptures that Christ comes to us in the Gospels (and even more appropriately that he is the Gospel, the good news). Christ is the consummation of the Old Testament, yet even in the New Testament we are awaiting Christ’s second coming. Although Christ opened up to us the spiritual meaning of Scripture, we must still attain to the fulness of Christ in our awaiting of his second coming. We can even add here that we look to the New Testament for Christ’s second coming in us: “Until Christ be formed in you.” There is thus some sense of a continuation of the Old Testament into the New looking forward to Christ, and as such the total allegory of Christ through exegesis is still in continuation. This is why the monk is obsessed with the Quaerere Deum through the lectio. This continuous task is an integral part in the call of the monk, and he seeks God through the Scriptures even as they give him his cause. The Word of God has been given to the monk in the Bible and allows the monk to be able to find the meaning of Christ through his lectio. The lectio allows for the monk’s journey in exegesis to understand God’s Word in his spiritual life of which Christ is at the center.

Christ has become the center of the monk’s life and the rest of Christianity. As Christ is God, the monk has come to see the whole of Scriptures not only as His Word, but also as His work as they recount His deeds, God’s action in the world. There is a certain sense of history here (not in the literal but figurative sense) to be taken if the Scriptures are to be seen as God’s work. Christ has become the culmination of Scripture and thereby its meaning: “Then Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said to them: Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man” (Luke 18:31).

---

56 de Lubac. Sources. Pg. 98.
57 Gal. 4:19
However, Christ is not just the meaning of Scripture but is also its exegete: without Christ there could have been no meaning given to the Old Testament and therefore true exegesis is really God’s *act.*

de Lubac takes this idea out of the Apocalypse:

And he that sat on the throne, said: behold, I make all things new. And he said to me: Write, for these words are most faithful and true. And he said to me: It is done. I am Alpha and Omega; the beginning and the end. To him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely (Apocalypse 21:5-6).

Christ has made anew the Old Testament and it is from the flowing side of Christ, the Word of God flowing to us, that we receive the nourishment necessary for our spiritual journey beginning and ending with him. Christ was consummated on the Cross, and from his side flowed blood and water from which Christians receive their spiritual nourishment.

Through proper exegesis, Scripture is transformed just as Christ was transfigured with Moses, the Lawgiver, and Elias, the Prophet (Matt 17). These two figures from the Old Testament represent in some ways its entirety as we have discussed above with de Lubac: the *law* is the literal sense of Scripture that is combined with the *prophetic* passages which await Christ the Savior. Christ is transfigured before the eyes of the first Christians, the Apostles (who are to spread the meaning and message of the Christ), and holds conversation with Moses and Elias. This passage signifies Christ who is bringing the Old Testament (Moses and Elias) to its full glory with Himself, the New Testament, but also gives the spiritual meaning which the law and the prophecies lack. The Old Testament is God’s inspiration but it is lacking of full meaning. Christ needs to consummate it and bring full

---

58 de Lubac. *Sources.* Pg. 107.

59 Even the consideration of the times when the New Testament Scriptures were written compared to Christ’s life is solved through this view of Christian tradition. Christ is the Word and already the consummation of the Old Testament and all its laws and prophecies on the Cross even before the New Testament was written. The Scriptures (constituting the written texts of both the Old and New Testaments) would be then unified by Christianity to produce the Bible.
meaning to it. We shall now turn towards how this monastic exegesis was exemplified by two of the most prominent authors in the patristic tradition.
CHAPTER 4: Cassian and Augustine: Examples of the Monastic Exegesis of the Psalms

What I will now present is how monastic exegesis played itself out through the examples of two of the monastic fathers, St. John Cassian and St. Augustine, and their expositions of the Psalms. Why I have chosen the Psalms, I hope will be made clear especially from Cassian’s *Conference Ten*, but to give a more general explanation, the Psalms are a source of the spiritual life for the monk. Dedicated to prayer and meditation, the Benedictine monk sings the Psalms with his community throughout the whole week according to the structure laid out by St. Benedict’s *Rule*. Therefore, it is expected that the Psalms will, out of all the Scriptures, provide for the spiritual life of the monk the most as well as providing a proper source to realize the unification of the Old and New Testaments. Cassian and Augustine also followed in the Alexandrian tradition, as was established by Origen, in his approach to exegesis of the Psalms for the life of the monk: a spiritual interpretation that de Lubac would find to be characteristic of proper Scriptural exegesis. Cassian’s interpretation revolves around what is to be considered “pure prayer” which is important for the monk as we shall see and shows how it is that a monk is to pray based primarily on this spiritual interpretation of the Book of Psalms of Scripture.

St. Cassian

Within Cassian’s time, the heresy of anthropomorphism was a prevalent idea that Cassian regarded as dangerous to the soul’s spiritual journey towards God through prayer. Cassian dealt with this heresy in his *Conference Ten* on prayer with the story of how certain monks of Scete, Egypt, represented by Sarapion, had fallen into the anthropomorphic heresy that reduced God to
This idea was taken on an incorrect interpretation of the book of Genesis when God creates man: “And he said: Let us make man to our image and likeness.”

Anthropomorphism was a pagan idea according to Cassian and did not follow Catholic doctrine. The story goes according to Cassian that the bishop of Alexandria had sent out a letter to all monks and priests to level out this heresy, but these monks refused to give up this belief that God must be like a human since we are made in His image. However, Cassian stresses through the story that what is forgotten by these monks is the understanding of the spirit within humans. Rather than being made like unto God in a physical way, God has made man to His image and likeness in a spiritual way, and we must pray to God in a spiritual way, not to specific idols or to images of God that reflect the physical human characteristics. The monk Sarapion had fallen so much into anthropomorphism that he did not realize the mistake he made in praying to his own empty images of God in a pagan way as Cassian recounts Sarapion’s words: “Ah the misfortune! They’ve taken my God away from me. I have no one to hold on to, and I don’t know whom to adore or to address.”

Here from this introduction into the subject of prayer, Cassian is presenting the mistake of the monks and hermits around Scete in reducing their view of God taken in a more literal sense from Scriptures and the result in your prayer life that this can have. Cassian excellently relates that there must be a more spiritual interpretation of Scriptures (and the Scriptures taken as a whole in its spiritual sense) so that there will be no room for wrong interpretations of the

---

60 For example, the Catholic Church uses various images and statues within its churches and homes, but these are not considered images that are prayed to but rather images that give us different representations of God or things pertaining to God. However, it should be clearly understood that these are images and not idols. We are allowed to have images, but we cannot reduce these images to idols like Sarapion had done.
61 Genesis 1:26.
63 Cassian. Pg. 127.
Scriptures. If the anthropomorphic view took precedence in the prayer life of monks, just like Sarapion, the monk would be lead to the wrong sense of prayer which is one of his foundations of his life and which is heavily affected by the other side of monastic culture: the Lectio.

After Cassian’s introduction, he relates the dialogue that is had between Isaac, bishop of Alexandria, and another monk named Germanus regarding the subject of prayer relating to this idea of the spiritual direction of prayer to God who is not merely anthropomorphic. This spiritual direction in prayer is talked about by Isaac as being that which “loses sight of earthly and material things in proportion to the inspiration of its purity, so that it [the soul] sees Jesus either in his [the soul’s] lowly creaturehood or else, with the inner gaze of the soul, it sees the glorified Jesus coming in the splendor of His majesty.”\(^6^4\) By saying this, Isaac is distinguishing the right kind of prayer from the errors one can fall into which are of a pagan nature. Prayer is something to be regarded as a spiritual act of the soul, not directed towards the things of this world, but purified in the sense that it looks to Christ in his Divinity. We do not know Christ as the Apostles and Disciples knew him in the flesh, but we must look to Christ of the Gospels in the spiritual sense. Christ, possessing the fulness of purity of heart, could walk among people of the world without being stained by its sins, but we in our imperfections are in need of reaching this purity of heart through prayer which Christ gave to us when he goes alone to pray in the mountains.\(^6^5\) This gives the monk the example needed in order to attain this purity of prayer that Cassian hopes to show to us, his readers. When we get caught up with the things of the body, we lose this purity of our soul to reach towards God in prayer, and thus the anthropomorphists were wrong in their understanding that prayer is directed in a bodily way to an image of God rather than using those images to turn their attention heaven-wards. The monk through striving towards God with

\(^{6^4}\) Cassian. Pg. 128. [Emphasis mine].

\(^{6^5}\) Cassian. pg. 129.
his pure heart and soul will attain his goal set out by Christ’s words: “That they may all be one as we are one, as I am in them and you in me so that they are utterly one.”

What is of concern in this *Conference* is really the way in which one may reach towards this purity in prayer, and it is tied closely with contemplation and meditation. The central mystery of prayer is that it is a state of being where we are continuously holding firmly onto the spiritual things. But, as Germanus said, it is difficult to do this since the things of the spirit are constantly being taken out of our reach and pass by along with the many other thoughts that come up in our minds. Germanus is searching for some “formula” that will allow him to return to the spiritual things once he has grasped them but lost them so that it is easier to return to them. For prayer to be fulfilled, the monk has to continuously meditate on God banishing all other thoughts, but this is only done without the bodily cares and concerns. Psalm 1:2 says: “But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night,” but in order to do so, Isaac tells Germanus that he must keep to the formula found in Psalm 69:2: “O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make hast to help me.” Although this passage of the Psalms reflects one who is persecuted, Cassian makes use of this Scriptural passage in a spiritual sense, not taking it out of the context of its literal, physical meaning for David who is being persecuted but rather from a spiritual sense as it can apply *presently* to the Christian/monk who can undergo all the feelings of humanity. The soul undergoing temptation cries to God with this verse to help him in his time of need. It is a request to God to help us in times of temptation as well as a warning for the monk not to be too proud in his good circumstances since distractions often come during times of good things.

---

66 John 17:22-23.
67 Cassian. Pg. 131.
68 Cassian. Pg. 132.
69 Cassian. Pg. 133.
The formula is simple for Cassian: we become distracted from things of the spirit by losing ourselves within the things of the body, whether it be that we are looking forward to our next meal, not participating in the lectio due to tiredness or headaches, recoiling from consuming undesirable food, etc., and we need to appeal to God for help to return to our continuous meditation of the things that are spiritual. Cassian draws the spiritual meaning out of the literal understanding of the Psalms. We can become afraid of the things that will turn us away from our end through arrogance or sin (Ps 35:12). Through the repetition of Psalm 69:2, we can return to God in a way that does not require traveling again through the steps of the spiritual life already taken and waste our time progressing to a total purity of heart in accordance with Christ.  

Cassian points out in his Conference that when we turn towards God with this Psalm-verse, we are poor in spirit when we do so, for the Christian monk acknowledges his own weakness and simplicity but becomes like unto the deer of the mountain-tops who through his zeal stamps Satan underfoot and the hedgehog who makes his home amid the rocks protected from the enemies.  

Being fed by this spiritual nourishment, the monk is able to pray, to sing the words of the Psalmist, not as a repetition of the words, but as through the experience of the monk’s own spiritual life recognizing that these words are for him being fulfilled within himself. To exemplify this further, Cassian’s Conference Ten says:

Then indeed the Scriptures lie ever more clearly open to us. They are revealed, heart and sinew. Our experience not only brings us to know them but actually anticipates what they convey. The meaning of the words comes through to us not just by way of commentaries but by what we ourselves have gone through. Seized of the identical feelings in which the Psalm was composed or sung we become, as it were, its author. We anticipate its idea instead of following it. We have a sense of it even before we make out the meaning of the words. The sacred words stir memories within us, memories of the daily attacks which we have endured and are enduring, the cost of our negligence or the profits of our zeal, the good things of providence and the deceits of the enemy, the slippery subtle tricks of

---

70 Cassian. Pg. 135.
71 Psalm 103:18
72 Cassian. Pg. 137.
memory the blemishes of human frailty, the improvidence of ignorance. As we sing we are reminded of all this. We find all these sentiments expressed in the psalms. We see very clearly, as in a mirror, what is being said to us and we have a deeper understanding of it. Instructed by our own experiences we are not really learning through hearsay but have a feeling for these sentiments as things that we have already seen. They are not like things confided to our capacity for remembrance but, rather, we bring them to birth in the depths of our hearts as if they were feelings naturally there and part of our being. We enter into their meaning not because of what we read but because of what we have experienced earlier.73

This is the meaning that Cassian has given to prayer: it is not only a tradition but something that occurs within our own souls in the present moment if the monk allows the Psalms to become for him not only a prayer of the Psalmist, but also of his own experience. We take the Psalms as a whole of our human experience in regard to our purity of heart and souls directed towards God. But there is still a struggle to keep our wandering minds in place and this can be remedied by vigils, meditation, and prayer.74 Cassian hopes to show that this is the sure way for the monk to turn himself towards God: through constant meditation, prayer, and singing of the Psalms, the monk will be able to reach in the levels of the spiritual life a prayer that is pure. If one is merely participating in prayer when he bends his knees or takes part in the community singing of the Psalms, there is lost this pure prayer which envelops the whole of the spiritual experience of the monk throughout his whole life, from every moment of the day to the end of his life. This Conference shows us how it is that the Psalms are to be taken in their spiritual sense regarding the idea of prayer. Since Cassian was a huge influence for St. Benedict, we can find this idea rooted firmly within the Rule. To be taken more seriously by the Benedictines as a Father of Christianity than others, Cassian’s influence in regard to the Psalms as a serious foundation of the monastic life cannot be disregarded.

73 Cassian. Pg. 137-138.
74 Cassian. Pg. 139.
St. Augustine

While Cassian gives us allegory in its more practical applications to prayer, Augustine’s methods of allegory gives us more of the deeper meaning of the Psalms. Augustine wrote the *Expositions on the Psalms*, and it took thirty years for him to complete this work through numerous times of revisiting and revising the work periodically throughout that time as well as using various sermons over the years to add to it and its ideas. The *Expositions* also holds the bulwark of the ideas of theology that Augustine included in his *Confessions* which has been said to be an amplified Psalter because of its reliance in the allegorical interpretation of the Psalms. Undoubtedly the Psalms were important in the Old Testament Scriptures for Augustine. The *Expositions* themselves allow for one to understand the spirituality that Augustine held in regard to the Psalms as a source of his spiritual life. As this is the most extensive work, it embodies in the best way possible the wholeness of Augustine’s theological considerations as they are taken in the patristic exegetical tradition:

As the foremost exegete of the early Church, Augustine created a complete commentary on this biblical book. Thanks to his skill in expounding them, he succeeded in extracting from the psalms depths of meaning never attained before. The proper goal of his exegesis was to make the depth of meaning accessible.

This deeper meaning as a sort of spiritual mystery can be approached using varying levels of the understanding, yet the understanding will never grasp the meaning completely. To further clarify the concepts found in the *Expositions*, Maria Boulding expounds upon how it is that the Scriptures’, in Augustine’s case the Psalms’, deepest meaning when Scripture is seen as a spiritual mystery is reached only through a series of investigations and is not satisfied by an

---

initial, literal reading of the Word. Augustine follows within the line of the patristic tradition of exegesis which arises out of the classical Grammar as has been discussed above in Chapter Two. Augustine approached Scriptures as literary texts with the grammatica but adapted it to the search for the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures which take on the goal of the Quaerere Deum.

Augustine’s approach through the Grammatica opened-up the way for his use of the hermeneutics using principles that for him combined an understanding of the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, i.e. Christ. This combination of the whole of Scriptures both Old and New is the first principle for Augustine and it arose as a response to the Manichean heresy which was prominent in Augustine’s life. This heresy made a distinction between an Old Testament and New Testament “god” which Augustine sought to fight against after his conversion to Christianity. Augustine’s attempt at the unification of the Old and New Testaments shows more clearly de Lubac’s interpretation of the patristic tradition of exegesis as was explained in Chapter Three. Secondly as a principle there is an emphasis on dedication to Christian Doctrine since one must now interpret Scriptures as a complete whole with Christ kept at the center and focus. A third principle from St. Augustine is his relating or actualizing the meaning of the Psalm for the common man through both the personal and communal experience of the present-day Christians. These three main principles in Augustine determined what kind of hermeneutics he would use summed up in the figurative sense of hermeneutics in which is contained typology, simile, metaphor, and allegory. Augustine’s attempt at uncovering the true sense of Scripture made use of these hermeneutics according to these three principles. However, Augustine did not forego the methods of the literal hermeneutics, but that Augustine chose to interpret Scripture in

---

80 Boulding. Expositions. Pg. 23.
the more figurative sense follows from the goal of the exposition determined primarily by the truth of Christianity and when the literal interpretation contradicted Christianity, it was proper for Augustine to allow only the allegorical exegesis. Augustine remains flexible according to the biblical terrain he is traveling upon, but in any case, it is made clear that Augustine is searching for the true meaning of Scripture, i.e. Christ and His truth for Christ is the way, the truth and the life, and whatever way that is best suited to realizing this goal will be taken by Augustine.

I have chosen to include Augustine’s exposition on Psalm 1, first because I have relied on its second verse in my explanation of the Lectio. Since each verse of each Psalm is taken individually by Augustine, I will follow his format as I hope to show how it is that Augustine follows what was outlined above in the last two paragraphs as his method of exegesis. It must be mentioned that although Augustine follows each verse individually, there is nevertheless a sense of unity where we can see Augustine develop his thoughts around the idea of Christ as the central meaning of this Psalm.

Verse 1: “Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence.” According to St. Augustine, this phrase blessed is the man should be taken primarily in reference to Christ, the Lord-Man. It is from this verse that the stage is set for Augustine in the interpretation of the Psalms and this already shows the first principle which contains the idea of the New Testament found within the Old. The rest of the verse is shown by Augustine to exemplify Christ who has not given over to the path of the sinners nor of the ungodly: Christ is born into the world of sinners but does not

---

82 Boulding. Expositions. Pg. 27.
84 Augustine. Expositions. Pg. 67.
partake of their ways. However, it is through Christ that those sinners who have walked in the councels of the ungodly and who sit in the seat of pestilence come out of the depths of their sins onto the correct way.

Verse 2: “But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night.” The imagery carries on from the previous verse where Christ is the perfect man and thus his will is also always in the law of the Lord, but Christ is also the Lord who makes the law (Christ as divine law-giver). However, Augustine also induces a more moral application to mankind than just interpreting Christ as this man. If one is to follow Christ forging a way out of the path of the sinners as was expounded upon in the first verse of this Psalm, one must follow the laws Christ gives to us. By following the blessed one, Christ, we become free through our wills since our wills are conformed to Christ’s law. In order to do this, we must meditate on Christ’s law day and night (i.e. continuously) and in monasticism this is accomplished through the daily lectio as we learn to ruminate on the Scriptures. Through unceasing meditation, the law becomes the life of the monk in a moral sense and one does not gain the imposition of the law but rather we are free to live our lives accordingly as becomes the good person. Following along the idea of a continuous meditation, Augustine also gives the interpretation that day and night are not just literal, but also stand as a metaphor for the states of mind and feeling which we undergo. The man who is in the law is not always joyful but can be joyful (day) and also at other times undergo tribulation (night). The man who meditates continuously cannot meditate while sleeping. Therefore there needs to be a different interpretation for “night.” This exposition is especially critical to a life of the monk since there are times when tribulation comes and he is tempted to go back to the way of the sinner rather than to follow the laws of Christ. It is vital for

---

85 Augustine. Expositions. Pg. 67.
86 Augustine. Expositions. Pg. 68.
the monk in the moral life to understand the passage in this way since if he does not, then he will fall out of the grace of God.

Verse 3: “And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit, in due season. And his leaf shall not fall off: and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.” This passage needs only a figurative interpretation due to the nature of the metaphorical language of this passage. Augustine views the tree as being Wisdom, i.e. Christ Himself, “who deigned to assume humanity for our salvation.”87 Being planted by the running waters, the roots of the tree of Christ are reaching into the waters (into the way of sinners) and drawing out of these waters the sinners who are flowing by Him. Drawing the sinner up through the roots, Christ’s discipline of the law forms the sinner to Him who walks outside the path of sinners. But it is through this formation that the fruits of the law of the Lord is cultivated. In other words, through Christ, the sinner becomes partaker of the law of Christ and stands in the right path as good fruits stay strong on the branches. The words and deeds of the sinner are reformed within the law: whatever is done through Christ will prosper and bring forth the fruit.88 Although there is this moral aspect which is applied to our lives, nevertheless Augustine keeps to the idea that Christ is still at the center of the Psalms whether we interpret through a more Christological method of allegory or a method that follows a moral interpretation.

Verse 4: “Not so the wicked, not so: but like the dust, which the wind driveth from the face of the earth.” In following the moral law of Christ, we must be cautious about the danger of pride. Unlike those who are drawn up into and are nourished in the tree of Christ, the wicked or ungodly man, the man who does not follow Christ and his laws, will never be rooted in the rich, nourishing fields of the earth. The ungodly, through the pride of standing alone apart from the

87 Augustine. *Expositions*. Pg. 69.
laws of Christ do not take root to bring forth good fruit but become dry and are blown around the face of the earth without the stability of Christ. The ungodly do not follow the laws of the Lord whereby they can be nourished spiritually but they lose their spiritual connection with God (i.e. they lose their inner life which allows them to be close to God since they do not have the humility to follow the laws of God but rather partake of their own counsels).

Verse 5: “Therefore the wicked shall not rise again in judgment: nor sinners in the council of the just.” What Augustine sees with this verse of the Psalm concerns primarily the previous passage and the problem of pride. The ungodly, the wicked, shall not rise in the places of judgement because through their pride they are cut off from the nourishment of Christ and are already consigned “to most sure and certain punishment.” The ungodly do not make it to any place of judgment, but sinners themselves have a chance to be judged. There arises a distinction of the sinner and the ungodly for Augustine since he realizes that all men are sinners: “For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God.” All ungodly people are therefore sinners, but not all sinners are ungodly. There is still a chance for the sinner to do his best to follow Christ and although they do not reach the council, the assembly, of the just, they are nevertheless allowed to partake of judgement of which the ungodly are not even allowed participation. The sinner is not cut off from the discipline of Christ and becoming eventually part of the fruits of His tree and is still able to progress on his spiritual journey which is why he needs the discipline of Christ. This is why there is a focus on Christ within the monastery: without Christ, the monk will lose his way in his spiritual journey towards the truth.

Verse 6: “For the Lord knoweth the way of the just: and the way of the wicked shall perish.” This verse completes Psalm 1, but it is in this verse that Augustine shows how it is that

---

89 Augustine. Expositions. Pg. 70.
90 Romans 3:23.
God will react to those who are ungodly compared to those who follow the way of the just. Christ is the way and those who follow within this path, even though they may stumble as sinners, will not perish, i.e. that they will remain known by the Lord, and those who perish will cease to be known, or cease to exist for the Lord.\textsuperscript{91} This is to say that to be known by the Lord is to exist, and not to be known by the Lord is not to exist. In a more Christian tradition, those who are unknown by the Lord will be lost in Hell, but those who follow Christ and are drawn up by Him from the waters and become fruitful through his discipline finally reaching Heaven. By being known by the Lord, we have achieved the spiritual fruits of being known by Christ.

What can be understood by Augustine’s exegesis of Psalm One? As Boulding said, Augustine’s goal was to make the Psalm’s inner meaning reachable by the common man who has no literary knowledge of the Psalms nor has been spiritually inclined to the level of understanding where the mystery can be made clear. Augustine does not necessarily follow the literal interpretations in every passage, though some of them such as verse two of Psalm one can be taken in such a way. However, the main idea of Augustine is that he unites the New Testament, Christ, with the meaning of the Old Testament. Exegesis of this sort is achieved through the Christian outlook of the monastic fathers and allows the Old Testament to be re-invigorated with Christ in a way that is \textit{spiritual}. This is attractive to the monastic movement and this is why Augustine is considered one of the most foremost of the patristic exegetes for the monastic culture. This work of Augustine is also extremely important to the life of the monk since the monks sing the Psalms as a community of Christians and by a deeper meditation through the \textit{lectio} come to enter an understanding of the Psalms that is Christ centered and not

\textsuperscript{91} Augustine. \textit{Expositions}. Pg. 70.
just in a way that is moral. The spiritual life is directed according to the *Quaerere Deum* because of the emphasis on Christ.

Cassian and Augustine:

Cassian’s and Augustine’s dedication to the Christian doctrine allow them to take such an allegorical approach to interpreting Scripture not just in a literal interpretation as is easily done in modern research, but also in the allegorical way as the Scriptures concern the spiritual life of the Christian monk. Cassian’s understanding of the Psalms in his Tenth *Conference* is that when you are praying and singing the Psalms, you are praying for and understanding the whole of the Christian life since one is following Christ as the meaning of the Old Testament. Augustine makes possible this approach by use of the allegorical in allowing one to see that the Old Testament must be interpreted in light of the New, i.e. Christ. Both patristic authors make use of the spiritual exegesis and not just the literal/historical interpretations which allow one to see his relationship with God.
CHAPTER 5: Where Exegesis Stands in Modern Scholarship

The discussion about Cassian and Augustine shows what exegesis of the Psalms was like in the patristic age of the Church. Now I turn towards exegesis in modern scholarship and its problem of having too much of the historical critical approach. I touched earlier upon the points of the Ressourcement authors in Chapter Three regarding the state of modern scholarship; here I will discuss this topic more in depth. Beginning with de Lubac, we find that there is in modern scholarship a total obsession with the accuracy of the Bible and its historical context according to its literature.\textsuperscript{92} Spiritual interpretation has been forgotten. Dom Charlier says that modern man does not read the Bible when he reads the Bible.\textsuperscript{93} In some senses, the modern man does not even open up the pages of the Bible, but when the modern scholar does, it is in the context of the historical criticism. Before scholasticism, the monks were heavily engaged within the patristic tradition, but with the scholarly sciences coming into prevalence near the end of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, the whole idea of proper exegesis was forgotten. Henri de Lubac, Jean Leclercq, and the other Ressourcement authors bring back the traditional monastic exegesis by integrating it within their scholarship and not just using historical criticism of the texts they focus on. Such authors as Robert Wilken and Benedict XVI also want to show that this exegesis is not restricted to a time and place in the monasteries of the past, but is also to be employed as the best and the highest tradition of scriptural scholarship.

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Sources of Revelation}, pg. 3.
\textsuperscript{93} Charlier. Pg. 12. That is to say, modern scholarship does not look at the Bible in terms of spiritual nourishment but try to engage with the text in a way that provides a historical criticism rather than the traditional understanding of Christians that Christ gives the Bible its meaning as a unity. Modern scholarship has uncovered many tensions between Biblical passages and has gone to great lengths to reconcile these differences, but in order to reconcile them completely they need the meaning of allegory.
Why must this exegesis continue? Reflecting the discussion in Chapter Three, on exegesis, we can re-evaluate the vigor of the patristic-monastic exegesis: what was said in that chapter was that there is a sense of continuation of the Old Testament in that we are looking for Christ in the New Testament as we await His second coming. The full sense of allegory of the New Testament still requires complete allegory and this will be achievable only when Christ comes a second time. We can only understand the New Testament fully when Christ comes again to fulfill all its prophecies (e.g. the book of Revelations). In the meantime, the task is set before the exegete to follow along in this tradition of Christianity to look forward to Christ’s second coming but also to try to reach the fullness of the meaning of Scriptures. In some ways, the fullness of the scriptural meaning has at least part of its fulfillment in our own life experience “until Christ be formed in you.” The Ressourcement authors in some sense put aside the historical criticism in the tradition of interpretation which, in their thoughts as well as the patristic fathers such as Cassian and Augustine, restricted the fullness of the meaning of the Bible. This plays out in their emphasis on what must be accomplished in Christian exegesis. This is important since the Scriptures are not to be just for those at a certain place and time as Cassian’s story of Isaac and Germanus readily shows above. Psalm 69:2 is a common cry to God heard in the chant of the Divine Office and the Psalter of the monks, and as such even though it was written about King David of the Old Testament, it has more significance in our present relationship with Christ the Lord who is to bring us to Heaven through his aid if we ask for it. Like Aristotle’s Ethics we can also study the Bible for its relevance in our own lives.

---

94 Galatians 4:19.
95 When Germanus is given the Psalm verse 69:2, “Oh Lord, make haste to help me,” the idea is that the Psalm becomes for him a part of his own life, his own experience, and allows him to progress on the spiritual journey following Christ. The Psalm is not just to be looked at as a mere object of study as it pertained to King David’s distress, but it is to allow for an appropriation to the monk’s life of Scriptures that were written long before his time.
However, unlike just a moral/topological study, the Christian Scriptures allow us to live the moral life with an unbreakable tie to the Spirit, Christ, and the meaning He gives to our lives. This is the experience of the monk: Christ comes to the monk through spiritual exegesis of the Scriptures so that the monk may live a life completely following Christ.

Robert Louis Wilken’s article follows along this idea that there must be a renewal of the allegorical exegesis of the patristic-monastic culture. Similar to Dom Charlier, he says that although the modern historical criticisms of the Bible has led to very insightful understandings, modern scholarship nevertheless lacks the fullness of scriptural meaning. He even cites how allegory, the proper method of coming to know and understand this full Scriptural meaning, has been completely rejected by modern scholarship to the point that “Harper’s Bible Dictionary, for example, published in the 1980s by leading scholars of the Society of Biblical Literature, does not even have an entry under the word.” What are the consequences of such a view that disregards the whole tradition of Biblical scholarship for the sake of a scientific historical approach to reading the Bible? The result is a stifling of the full meaning of the Bible. By reducing everything to the objective scientific point of view, verifying facts of the Old and New Testament, verifying Christ’s actions, and understanding passages only in the context they were written and at that in a literal way, the possibility of seeing the spiritual and thereby mystical meaning which Augustine or Cassian and the rest of monasticism were familiar with would be removed. Scholarship will run the risk of restricting itself in its breadth of reason which Benedict XVI would claim as dangerous. Further bolstering his argument, Wilken said, “In truth, the abandonment of allegory was a revolt against the Church’s tradition, including the tradition that

---

97 Wilken. Pg. 1.
is found in the New Testament itself.” Benedict XVI and Wilken both understand the benefits that come from the historical critical method, but they want to avoid an exclusive use of this method because as is the case in the New Testament, especially with the works of Paul, the task of allegorical interpretation is already present in the tradition of interpretation in the Scriptures themselves.

To make Wilken’s claim clear, it must be noted that he gives examples from Origen and St. Paul. Origen is pointed out by Wilken to be the first major interpreter of the Bible in the Church’s history who said that it is from St. Paul that we obtain this understanding of how to interpret the Bible in an allegorical way. Paul’s letters are filled with references to the Old Testament with Christ always at the center of the method. “Following St. Paul, the Church Fathers argued that a surface reading of the Old Testament, what Origen calls the ‘plain’ meaning, missed what was most important in the Bible: Jesus Christ.” Wilken shows St. Paul’s own use of allegory to understand the Old Testament in relation to Christ. The New Testament can truly be said to be that which gives the Old Testament its full and complete meaning because it fulfills all its prophecies and abolishes the old law because Christ has come into the world: de Lubac’s description of allegory as said above in Chapter Three holds true since the patristic exegesis beginning with the New Testament as the Word of Christ Himself and St. Paul specifically interpreted the Old Testament in Christ’s light. The important thing to keep in mind with Wilken is that allegory properly understood seeks to find the more spiritual and deeper senses of the words it explores:

Once a deeper significance of a word or phrase or image is discerned, texts from the Old Testament resonate with a fullness that could be found only in Christ. The Bible becomes a vast field of interrelated words, all speaking about the same reality: the one God.

---

99 Wilken. Pg. 1.
100 Wilken. Pg. 2.
101 Wilken. Pg. 2.
revealed in Christ, whose work was confirmed by the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.\textsuperscript{102}

This idea that there is a unity of both the Old and the New does not get rid of the fact that modern scholarship has found tensions between Biblical passages of the two testaments, but it is one of the tasks of Scriptural exegesis to ascertain and re-interpret those tensions in a way that allows for a stronger unification to occur.

According to Benedict XVI, the tensions that are found within the Sacred Scriptures need rectification if there is to be the Bible as a whole.\textsuperscript{103} To give us the allegorical method appropriate, Benedict XVI then interprets the words of St. Paul much like Origen that the Spirit is Christ: “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”\textsuperscript{104} and “The Lord is the Spirit. Where the Spirit is… there is freedom.”\textsuperscript{105} Christ is the way of back to God and this allegory which searches for the Spirit and ultimately God is necessary for Christ Himself said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me.”\textsuperscript{106} This whole of the allegorical tradition comes through readily in the Ressourcement authors and before them the patristic authors. There is freedom to find Christ, but where there is freedom, there is also the obligation to love others and this is a higher obligation than what is expressed in the letter. Thus the Scriptures must also be interpreted within a renewal of exegesis that also goes back to a communal structure. There is a binding limit placed upon pure arbitrariness coming out of a subjective view of the objective text which could easily be mistaken to be the meaning in the passage regarding freedom. The limit prevents the monk from moving too much into a subjective randomness which, without the correct knowledge of spiritual interpretation, may be dangerous.

\textsuperscript{102} Wilken. Pg. 6.
\textsuperscript{103} Benedict XVI. Bernardins Lecture.
\textsuperscript{104} 2 Cor 3:6.
\textsuperscript{105} 2 Cor 3:17.
\textsuperscript{106} John 14:6.
This boundary binds the individual to a community. There is also a risk that may arise in the
exegete that gives over to a fanaticism that foregoes the things that are of the spiritual: it is a
mindset that disregards the things of the past and the constructions of the traditions for the sake
of something more founded in a scientific approach. According to Benedict XVI in his
Bernardins Lecture, the modern culture is now struggling with a subjective arbitrariness and
fundamentalist fanaticism which the monastic culture can and must address again to allow for
allegory to function properly.

The monastic life had already rectified this tendency of modernity in two ways as can be
seen first in the discussion of the Logos and secondly in the discussion of the community. The
Logos provides us with the idea of the living tradition of scriptural exegesis. The purpose of the
allegory is to allow one to take in the bountiful things of God and find Him in surprising places
within Scriptures as the triune God. While focusing on the revelation of God to man through the
Word, the Logos, which came into our world as the Christ, we see that God continues to work as
a living Spirit in His church. The task of the interpreter, then, is to look beyond the surface
meaning of the text unlike historical criticism and “to highlight a word here, an image there, to
find Christ unexpectedly, to drink at the bountiful spring whose water is ever fresh.” 107 Wilken
closes his article with a call to return to the bountiful meaning of the Scriptures that go into the
spiritual life so that one may understand not only the historical importance of the text, but also
understand its unity as it relates to Christ and to realize that the Word is for all men for all times.
It is not just a thing of the past to sit down and read the Bible to find God through His Word,
through His Christ. Rather it is something that we may all experience within our own lives and
extensively for all men as Benedict XVI would say. In his Bernardins Address, Benedict XIV

107 Wilken. Pg. 7.
put forward a question regarding the place where he was giving his speech. This was an old
monastic setting built by the monks of St. Bernard, the Cistercian order closely tied to the
Benedictine monks. His question was put forward as follows:

It is in fact a place tied to monastic culture, insofar as young monks came to live here in
order to learn about their vocation more deeply and to be more faithful to their
mission…. Does this still have something to say to us today, or are we merely
encountering the world of the past?¹⁰⁸

The monk for Benedict XVI is eschatologically oriented in the Quaerere Deum, a distinct
vocation and path, and this path was God’s Word, a culture of the Logos. In order to engage in
the Logos, however, the monk needs to have the grammatica in order to know, and by extension
to have Scientia, and this led to the presence of the libraries within monasteries, one of the
results of this culture of the Word, the Logos.

The second discussion regarding the rectification of the words of Scripture deals with the
presence of the community. The monastic life turned from the hermitage to the cenobium and
finally the total community life of St. Benedict’s Rule as the culture of the Word grew. Benedict
XVI shows us the need for community:

“But the use of this plural¹⁰⁹ makes it quite clear that the word of God only comes to us
through the human word and through human words, that God only speaks to us through
the humanity of human agents, through their words and their history.”¹¹⁰

There is a historical element as is seen in the multiplicity of humanity over the ages which can be
taken as a whole. Allegory provides the understanding for each age and for each time, it is not to
be left in the past since the allegorical meaning can be re-interpreted age after age. On a more
personal level, the Lectio engages both a reader and a listener for the reader reads aloud and it
was expected that there was someone, either the reader himself or an audience, to hear the words

¹⁰⁸ Benedict XVI. Bernardins Lecture.
¹⁰⁹ i.e. the Scriptures vs. Scripture
¹¹⁰ Benedict XVI. Bernardins Lecture.
that were spoken. Although the *lectio* was explained above more in a subjective light in Chapter Two, there nevertheless are times when the word had to be read aloud to other listener and not just to the self. This brings the monks together, and in the past it was especially necessary for those who were uneducated within the monastery to be able to hear the Word of God when they could not read themselves. Most importantly, we come into direct conversation with God through the speaking of His Scriptures since we are able to listen to God speaking to us through the figurative sense of Scriptures as Augustine puts forward, and then we are able to pray the Psalms as Cassian would have us do. Coming into conversation with God, “He gives us the words with which we can address him, with which we can bring our life, with all its highpoints and lowpoints, into conversation with him, so that life itself thereby becomes a movement towards him.”  

The Psalms are not just sung individually but as a community since it is within the community that the Word of God comes to live. Thus the Psalms become important not only because they are something to be interpreted in an allegorical way, but they give us the formula for, and become our prayer to God, to Christ. Through allegory of the Psalms, we are able to see Christ, to understand Him, and to pray to Him as Christians.

However, the modern world lost this vital monastic tradition as the 13th century came and brought in the age of scholasticism and its more scientific approach to the Bible. We need to now understand how the previous monastic culture, the culture of the Word, the *Logos*, as it is used to search for God can be related to our own world. What needs to be considered is how we are to bring back modernity into opening itself to the question of God which it has rejected. The Ressourcement authors have tried to bring it back, but perhaps this can be strengthened by Benedict XVI’s argument regarding the culture of the *Logos* as it relates to monasticism. Taking

---

111 Benedict XVI, *Bernardins Lecture*. 
Benedict XVI’s Regensburg lecture of 2006 (although not specifically on monasticism) can provide the proper amount of insight into how the monastic culture of the Logos and its allegory may become for the contemporary age an issue that must be addressed.

For Benedict XVI, there must be a return to the Logos which brings along with it an approach to reason of the Greek sense. In Christianity and in monasticism especially there is a unification of Faith and of reason. Benedict XVI said,

John began the prologue of his Gospel with the words: ‘In the beginning was the Logos’ … God acts, with logos. Logos means both reason and word – a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason. John thus spoke the final word on the biblical concept of God…

This final word Benedict XVI refers to is the Logos, the God that seems to be above our reasoning and our understanding and known through Faith. Being the Logos, God is understood also through reason. The Logos, the Word, became man. The Logos has become a living word, a word that reconciles not only the two Testaments, but also two important traditions within the Western World. Christ, as the Logos, came to man to re-open our reason to the contemplation of God. Because the Logos is God, mankind can now venture above the literary understanding of the sacred texts and go towards the spiritual. The Logos is now revealed to us, both in humanity and as Christ as the meaning of Scriptures as its unity. We cannot reduce God’s word to a merely logical study and separate the Logos from the divine thereby pushing God away as too far above the confines of reason as the Kantian tradition would say. Rather, relegating God’s place outside one’s reason will disable the function of our ability to search for God through the Scriptures. Grammatica, the study of the written text and by extension of the logos, is wrapped up completely within the Quaerere Deum, the task of the monk. But this task of the monk becomes

112 Benedict XVI. Regensburg Address.
113 Benedict, Regensburg Address.
114 John 1:14.
a continuous experience of God since through the *Lectio* the *Logos* can be experienced repeatedly for the monk “shall meditate day and night.” God has revealed Himself to us and is reachable by us through the use of our reasoning of the written word.

The breadth of reason has been closed by the modern world in rejecting the possibility of the question of God since God as Christ comes to us as the *Logos*. The divine, spiritual sense of Scripture is made possible again through the understanding of Benedict XVI and modern historical criticism needs to be restored with its incorporation into the patristic allegory. Through Benedict XVI’s view, we are allowed to taste the spiritual fruits of understanding God not just in a literal/historical interpretation as modernity would want to reduce reason to. Greek reason unified with Faith because of the *Logos* adds the element that allows us to enter into a life that reaches beyond scientific objectivity as the life of Christ. We are able to become Christians again. However, this breadth of reason is not restricted to just Christians, but as God reveals Himself through the word as the *Logos*, we are meant to share with this life of Christ as an obligation following His words: “A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” This will give us the most freedom since we share in the life of the ultimate reason. Spiritual exegesis is not just to understand the Bible in relation to Christ, but it is also meant as an exercise of our life in regard to each other as we are all under one God. All men are bound by reason, not just the Western Christianity. God revealed Himself through that reason as *Logos* and to sever the *Logos* from the rest of the world would restrict mankind in the possibilities of reason, what Benedict XVI would say is a dangerous thing since it would negate the necessity of Christ’s commandment to love

---

115 Psalm 1:2.
116 John 13:34.
one another.\textsuperscript{117} This is why spiritual allegory taken in the monastic sense must continue.

Monastic life is a culture that can be applied to all men if we are to live up to reason which governs all men. By living in reason, we must also live in the \textit{Quaerere Deum} which we profess with Faith so that we may live a life that allows us to live towards one another.

\textsuperscript{117} Benedict XVI, \textit{Regensburg Address}.


Leclercq, Jean, O.S.B. *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic


