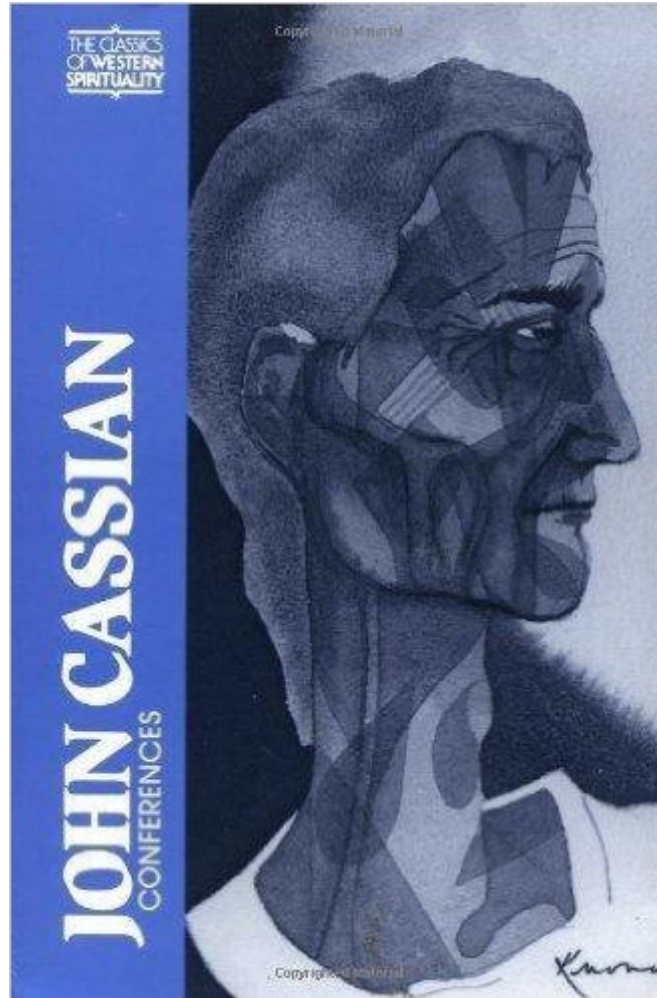


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John Cassian: Conferences (Classics Of Western Spirituality (Paperback))



Synopsis

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

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like many early Christian writers, the life of John Cassian (c. 360-c 435) remains shrouded in the mists of forgotten history. He was probably born in present day Romania (Dacia). When he was about twenty he traveled with his friend Germanus to Bethlehem where he joined a monastery. From Bethlehem Cassian and Germanus made at least two extended visits to the famous monastics down in Egypt (by some estimates they spent ten years there), and from there moved on to Constantinople. In Constantinople the bishop John Chrysostom ordained Cassian to the diaconate some time around the year 400, at which time he traveled to Rome to courier some letters and was ordained a priest by Pope Innocent I. Cassian later settled in Marseilles, where he founded two monasteries, and wrote three books. His *Conferences*, along with its much shorter companion volume entitled *Institutes*, chronicle the riches of early Egyptian monasticism based upon his considerable personal experiences and acquaintances, and in so doing transplanted that monastic influence in the West. These desert monks are so far removed from our own time, place, and Christian experience that we might well ask why one would read them today other than from a sense of historical curiosity. I suggest two reasons, one from Scripture and the other from

experience. In reading Cassian's firsthand accounts of early desert monasticism, one is humbled by the zeal of their renunciation as they explored what the "hard sayings" of Jesus might mean: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

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