Fashioning the Desert
The Relation of the Spiritual and Secular Worlds in the Lives of St. Antony and St. Martin

by

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Introduction

During the fourth-century, Christian authors began to compose lives of saints. These biographical writings produced models of life, in which the interaction of the individual with the outside world was in tension with the demands of spiritual life. The Life of St. Antony and the Life of St. Martin are each examples of the power of such writings. In the case of the former, soon after its first circulation in 357 AD it was translated into both Latin and Coptic and was dispersed across the eastern and western late antique world. In the case of the latter, the book\(^1\) received such fame, and in some instances infamy, during the lifetime of its subject that its author, Sulpicius Severus, constructed an entire career defending his depictions of Martin by writing a series of Epistles and Dialogues on the saint. These writings became highly influential propaganda for the Church. Each promoted the dictates of the Christian life: the Life of St. Antony focused on the rigors of the ascetic lifestyle, while the Life of Martin promoted the monk-bishop as an exemplary authoritative figure.

Regarding the methodology of this work, I will examine each individual saint’s life and then embark on a chapter of comparison. The first chapter will be a study of St. Antony. I will pay particular attention to his dealings with demons, the intensification of his ascetic practices, his withdrawal from the outside world, and the development of his spiritual powers. Specifically, I will attempt to discern whether there is a correlation between his continued isolation from the secular world and the evolution of his spiritual powers. In contrast, the second chapter will concentrate on

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\(^1\) The Life of St. Martin was first circulated in 393 AD, and its subject Martin died in 397 AD.
St. Martin; my research will focus on his ability to act in the capacity as bishop. I will especially examine closely his interactions with secular officials, and the manner he employs his spiritual powers in the fulfillment of his episcopal duties. In the final chapter, I will compare the two saints. I will scrutinize their different approaches to similar situations involving demons, temptations, secular society, and other ascetics, and I will attempt to explicate the reasons for these discrepancies by relating the dissimilarities to the disparate roles of the two holy men in their respective societies.

Typically the holy man removed himself from secular society. In general, saints sought sites away from the corruptions of the world. The title, *Fashioning the Desert*, highlights the saint’s need to create a space wholly dedicated to his devotion to God. The desert became the standard designation for such a retreat. In some cases, it may describe the geographical features of the land, but more frequently, the desert embodied a spiritual existence, irrespective of the actual physical features of the landscape the saint occupied. When each saint searched for the “desert,” he desired to carve out a space in which he had the freedom to immerse himself in the ascetic lifestyle. It is this phenomenon that I intend to analyze. For Antony the desert appears to be both a physical landmark and a spiritual state of being. For Martin who lived in Gaul, there was no physical desert in the modern sense. His desert seems to have been purely spiritual. This drive for separation defined Antony and Martin, as it did other saints. In summation, I intend to suggest how the holy man attempted to clear for himself such a desert, and how that process could become complicated when the secular world was unable or unwilling to leave a saint to his own devices.
In reality, while withdrawal was indeed the goal of many ascetics, many found themselves pressured by outside intrusions: visitors, supplicants, secular authorities, etc. All these disruptive individuals could endanger the “desert” that an ascetic wished to create. They brought with them the contamination of the outside world. A saint could spend his entire life attempting to counteract the intrusions of others into the world they had molded or could strike a compromise with them. Hagiographical works demonstrate how this spiritual struggle could set an ordinary man apart as a striking figure, daunting in his self-control and his charisma.
Part I
St. Antony
A Map of Roman Egypt in Late Antiquity

Introduction to St. Antony

St. Antony was born around 251 AD in Coma, a village in Middle Egypt.³ For the details of his life we are indebted to Athanasius⁴, the much-exiled Bishop of Alexandria, wrote the *Life of Antony*, the primary account of Antony’s life, shortly after Antony’s death in 356 AD. His parents were wealthy farmers and practicing Christians. He spent his youth either in his parents’ home or in his local church, often shunning the company of other youths. When he was eighteen, both his parents died, which simultaneously made him extremely wealthy, but grief-stricken and burdened with the guardianship of his young sister.⁵ As a result, he frequented his local church searching for consolation. During one of his many visits, Antony was profoundly inspired by the words of the gospel: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you to such an extent that he rid himself of most of his possessions.”⁶ The small portion he kept was allocated for his sister’s inheritance.

Eventually, Antony felt that even these smallholdings were too burdensome, and he gave away his remaining wealth and placed his sister in a convent.⁷ In this way, he made his initial steps into the ascetic lifestyle. Antony then proceeded to seek out local ascetics near his village with the intent of acquiring knowledge about their

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⁴ Athanasius was the Bishop of Alexandria from 293-373 AD. He attended the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. Throughout his stint as bishop, he was constantly speaking out against Arianism. His personal bias against Arius and his followers overtly appears in the *Life of St. Antony* in three distinct places: 68-70, 89, and 91. Athanasius, *The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press 1980), 1-11.
⁵ Cowan, *Desert Father*, 19.
manner of life. This quest came to define the remainder of his life. An older man from a nearby village began to train him in the subjugation of the body as an exercise for the soul. As the years passed, Antony wandered from village to village seeking other men engaged in this discipline, but for the majority of the next few years he resided near an old man, who became his mentor, on the outskirts of the village.

After spending many years training his body and his soul, Antony decided to strike out on his own. He left his hut at the edge of his village and took up residence in a tomb. This move was the first in a series of relocations, which parallel the development of his holiness and his withdrawal from the secular world. At this point in his narrative, Athanasius reports that Antony encountered many demons, which beat him severely. Antony’s beatings were so violent that a friend, who was delivering Antony bread, carried Antony back to his native village. But Antony, unperturbed by his injuries, left his friend’s home and traveled back to his tomb to confront the demons yet again. During this encounter, he supposedly received a vision, in which the roof of the tomb was opened and a beam of light descended toward him removing all his pain and putting to flight all the demons surrounding him, while a voice informed him that he would achieve fame. Antony then left the tomb and returned to the company of his old mentor, still unsatisfied with his ascetic progress. However, his desire to be farther removed from the world caused him to

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10 Cowan, Desert Father, 29.
quit his mentor and turned him toward the wilderness.\textsuperscript{13} Antony had to remove himself still further from the distractions of life.

Having endured much arduous travel, he arrived at Pispir, an abandoned portion of land near the Nile.\textsuperscript{14} Here, he appropriated as his residence a deserted Roman fortress, where he resided alone for about twenty years.\textsuperscript{15} Finally, a crowd of Antony’s friends and admirers, who were inspired by his holiness, broke down the door to the fortress and forced him into contact with the world again. After abandoning his self-imposed isolation, Antony is said to have performed many miracles, including healing and exorcism.\textsuperscript{16} It is worth noting that these miracles are Athanasius’ first descriptions of Antony’s powers. For a while thereafter he remained at the fortress and amassed a group of followers, who lived in nearby cells (spaces each man had carved out for the purpose of practicing asceticism).

Antony soon learned of the deaths of Christians in nearby Alexandria, in a recent persecution instigated by Maximinus Daia, the emperor of Rome, who reinitiated the persecutions after the publication of the toleration edict of Galerius, which was a decree signed by the Emperor Galerius along with Constantine and Licinius, his co-tetrarchs, and issued throughout the Roman Empire in 311 AD proclaiming toleration of all religions, including Christianity, throughout the empire. It was reputed that Maximinus had enacted the persecutions after a virtuous Christian woman spurned his lascivious advances. In response to these threats to the Church, Antony left his fortress and traveled to Alexandria, where he comforted those

\textsuperscript{13} Cowan, Desert Father, 32-33.
\textsuperscript{14} Cowan, Desert Father, 69.
\textsuperscript{15} Cowan, Desert Father, 35.
\textsuperscript{16} Athanasius, The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus, 14.
Christians condemned to death and confronted the powerful within the city.\textsuperscript{17} During his visit, he expressed the desire for martyrdom, but it was not to be and he was able to leave the city unscathed. This was the one event in Antony’s life, in which he actively confronted secular authority.

Once Antony departed from Alexandria, he became restless and decided that his spiritual journey would be better pursued in even more remote regions. He probably joined a caravan at modern-day Beni Suef on the Nile, and traveled to the Red Sea accompanied by a few Saracens.\textsuperscript{18} In 313 AD Antony arrived at Mount Colzim after approximately three days journey.\textsuperscript{19} On this mountain he spent the majority of the rest of his life. It was completely isolated from the outside world and Athanasius reveals that in this location Antony developed a second sight—the ability to see spirits. The mountain itself was surrounded by sands of the desert, but possessed a wadi, a water channel, which is usually dry except after rainfall.\textsuperscript{20} The cave on the mountain in which he resided was a thousand feet above the wadi and he inhabited this barren place until his death in 356AD.\textsuperscript{21}

**The Outskirts of the Village**

From the beginnings of Antony’s ascetic journey, the farther Antony removed himself from the secular world, the more he was indoctrinated into a world where spirits, demons, and other miraculous occurrences manifest themselves. At first, Antony remained close to his home village and continued contact with the local

\textsuperscript{17} Cowan, *Desert Father*, 62.
\textsuperscript{18} Cowan, *Desert Father*, 65.
\textsuperscript{19} Cowan, *Desert Father*, 69.
\textsuperscript{20} Cowan, *Desert Father*, 64.
\textsuperscript{21} Cowan, *Desert Father*, 64.
people there. It was there that he made his first steps toward the ascetic life, casting off most of the bonds that tied him to secular society. Nothing embodied this separation more than his abdication of his financial responsibilities. He gave away all of his worldly possessions, his inheritance, and the guardianship of his sister. The loss of these economic and social commitments signifies his initial withdrawal from the world of men. In fact, Athanasius writes that “Antony went out from the Lord’s house and gave to the townspeople the possessions he had from his forebears (three hundred fertile and very beautiful arourae\(^{22}\)), so that they would not disturb him or his sister.”\(^{23}\) Thereby, he placed himself outside the traditional system of power, which would have required him to focus on the management of land holdings and the maintenance of patron/client relationships, as well as the continuation of his family line through the production of an heir.

With the relinquishment of his lands and his wealth, he made himself socially and economically insignificant. He ensured that no one would be seeking his opinions on anything of secular importance because he existed outside that world. He had essentially enervated his status and joined the ranks of women, children, and the destitute—the voiceless in the ancient world. He abandoned all the duties that a male citizen of the ancient world believed obligatory. He even entrusted the guidance of his ward to others, for after “[p]lacing his sister in the charge of respected and trusted virgins, and giving her over to the convent for rearing, he devoted himself from then on to the discipline rather than the household, giving heed to himself and patiently

\(^{22}\) An aroura is the Egyptian measure of land, roughly equivalent to 100 square units. Athanasius, *The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, 135.

training himself."²⁴ She was no longer his concern and without her, he abdicated all need for a traditional household. Moreover, his sister would no longer be considered a desirable match in marriage because Antony had nothing of monetary value and consequently his sister had no dowry. The saint himself would no longer be considered a desirable son-in-law by prospective father-in-laws, and therefore he remained unmarried and unperturbed by the constant anxieties of daily life.

For the society around him, the holy man is the one man who can stand outside the ties of family, and of economic interest; whose attitude to food itself rejected all the ties of solidarity to kin and village that, in the peasant societies of the Near East, had always been expressed by eating."²⁵

He has been separated from and thereby is outside the normal order.

His detachment from the amenities of life was reflected in his location. He no longer lived with his fellow villagers, but inhabited a hut on the outskirts of the village. His daily contact seemed to consist of instruction from his mentor and other ascetics in nearby towns. He distanced himself in almost every manner possible and yet for him it was not enough. Despite his efforts, the villagers were able to readily contact him and he, himself, could still walk into the village and communicate with the village’s inhabitants. He may have begun to isolate himself in mind and body, but he had clearly not achieved sufficient distance from secular society in order to pursue the ascetic lifestyle to the degree he wished.

The following section in Athanasius reflects Antony’s inner conflicts as he pursued his new manner of life:

The devil, who despises and envies good, could not bear seeing such purpose in a youth, but the sort of things he had busied himself in doing in the past, he set to work to do against this

person as well. First he attempted to lead him away from the discipline, suggesting memories of his possessions, the guardianship of his sister, the bonds of kinship, love of money and of glory, the manifold pleasure of food, the relaxations of life, and, finally, the rigor of virtue, and how great the labor is that earns it, suggesting also the bodily weakness and the length of time involved. So he raised in his mind a great dust cloud of considerations, since he wished to cordon him off from righteous intention.  

His close proximity to people is reflected in his temptations. Antony is first plagued not by demons, but by memories of his past life: the bonds of his family, the companionship of friends, the leisure of the wealthy, and the luxuries inherent in wealth and power. The devil, through various avenues, proceeds to tempt him by drawing on these recollections, which are basic human desires. The devil exploits his desire for human interaction and comfort. It is his ties to the secular world, still so near to him, that make him vulnerable. The bodily pleasures of eating and leisure, the glory of prestige and power, the love of kin all call him to resume his previous manner of life. Everywhere he turns he can see the life that was bequeathed to him. These entrapments of his past life seek to blind him to the demands of his soul. It is no wonder that these images haunt him at night and prevent him from acquiring rest because these images are ones that have successfully been able to distract many men for centuries from the task of attending to his immortal soul. For example, when the devil first approaches Antony, it is in the form of a woman, for “[t]he beleaguered devil undertook one night to assume the form of a woman and to imitate her every gesture, solely in order that he might beguile Antony.” He attempts to stir in him sexual desire. The temptation is well executed because it can be satisfied rather easily: he only has to leave his hut at the edge of the village to find female companionship. This episode is indicative of his entire state. Until he can disabuse

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himself of these desires by alienating himself from others, they will continue to occupy the forefront of his mind. The demons in this section seek to blind him to his battle for the soul by appealing to Antony’s secular duties and physical passions, which he has already forgone.

However, his close proximity to secular society brought him to a crossroads: he could return to the leisure of his old life or embrace the rigors of a life devoted to God. He struggled against these constant calls to indulge in familiar comforts. The battle for his soul was so intense that it was even visible to those around him.

...But the enemy saw his own weakness in the face of Antony’s resolve, and saw that he instead was being thrown for a fall by the sturdiness of this contestant, and being overturned by his great faith and falling over Antony’s constant prayers. Then he placed his confidence in the navel of his belly, and boasting in these (for they constitute his first ambush against the young), he advanced against the youth, noisily disturbing him by night, and so troubling him in the daytime that even those who watched were aware of the bout that occupied him. The one hurled foul thoughts and the other overturned them through his prayers; the former resorted to titillation, but the latter, seeming to blush, fortified the body with faith and with prayers and fasting....

Antony responded to the wiles of the devil by fortifying himself through more diligent ascetic practices. His battle with the devil manifested itself in the body, through the conflagrations of sexual desire, i.e. the devil placing his confidence in the belly, and Antony in turn took great pains to subjugate his body. He directed his mind toward the Lord in constant prayer, as a distraction from the demands of his body and the body itself he weakened by more fervid fasting. It was Antony’s resolve and willingness to serve God that ensured the defeat of his opponent. For every time Antony embraced prayer instead of the surrounding villagers, he drew closer to God and defeated the ever-insistent Devil.

At the Tombs

Since Antony chose a life devoted to God and grew eager to enhance his ascetic practices, he left his hut in the village where there were so many amenities, such as human interaction. He ventured out on his own for the first time and traveled to nearby tombs and one of which he chose to become the battleground for his soul. These tombs were formally the grounds of pagan burial and rituals. In the tomb surrounded by the images of pagan gods, largely considered by Christians to be either false gods or demons themselves, he was no longer assaulted by the demands of people, but by the vigorous forces of demons.

Girding himself in this way, Antony went out to the tombs that were situated some distance from the village. He charged one of his friends to periodically supply him with bread, and he entered one of the tombs and remained alone within, his friend having closed the door on him. When the enemy could stand it no longer—for he was apprehensive that Antony might before long fill the desert with the discipline—approaching one night with a multitude of demons he whipped him with such force that he lay on the earth, speechless from the tortures…. He contended that the pains were so severe as to lead one to say that the blows could not have been delivered by humans, since they caused such agony.²⁹

Previously, the devil’s efforts to disrupt his devotion were restricted to impure thoughts, arguments, and apparitions, not physical violence. Now the demons have the ability to beat him, so that “when the enemy could stand it no longer…approaching one night with a multitude of demons he whipped with such force that he [Antony] lay on the earth, speechless from the tortures.”³⁰ Antony’s separation from the secular world appears to have resulted in the demons becoming more substantial. Antony appears to be entering into another world, in which the fight for the soul is manifested in the material world to such a degree that demons can inflict physical injuries. So even though he was walking on the Earth with the rest of

humanity, he encountered and perceived the demons that everyone else was too blind to discern. His earlier residence among secular society limited the accessibility of the world, where demons, spirits, miracles, and visions were ever-present. The farther Antony journeyed from men, the more Antony was able to discern the evil forces, which sought to dissuade him from his elected path.

**In an Abandoned Fort**

As a result, after Antony conquered the demons he met in the tomb, he withdrew even further from human habitations. His new abode was an abandoned Roman fortress that was filled with reptiles. No one who came to visit him was able to see him, “[s]ince he did not allow them to enter, those of his acquaintance who came to him often spent days and nights outside.”\(^{31}\) He did not communicate face to face or have the comfort of human touch. A door, a physical obstruction, shut him off from the outside physical world. Antony’s isolation was almost complete, for even the lizards abandoned this fortress.

His commitment to God is reflected in Athanasius’ description of the fortress as a shrine. Antony’s singular mission of connecting to God veritably transformed the fortress to the extent that when Antony exited it for the first time after twenty years, he “… came forth as though from some shrine, having been led into the divine mysteries and inspired by God.”\(^{32}\) It suggests that Antony had undergone some form of induction into privileged knowledge. His time spent in the fortress reflects an end to his time as just an ascetic practitioner. From the fortress, Antony emerges with the ability to conduct God’s works: healings, consolations, exorcisms, etc. According to

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Peter Brown, these miracles are not just demonstrative of personal holiness, but “…are of the sort that assume that the holy man is there to play a role in society based on his power.”\(^{33}\) He had completed the metamorphosis from wealthy farmer to poor ascetic to holy man, who now had regained a place of importance in the society under entirely different auspices than those which previously gave him power. With his transition from God’s devotee to God’s agent on earth complete, he now re-entered society under a new title—holy man. He had the power to heal, exorcise demons, and console, all of which are powers that involve interacting with another person and therefore involve the greater community.

**A Short Time in Alexandria**

With his transformation complete, Antony felt called to aid fellow Christians in peril in the city of Alexandria at a time of persecutions. His intervention in the lives of these Christians is the only instance where he confronted secular authority according to Athanasius. Antony first stirred the other ascetics living in the fortress to action with the words “Let us go also, that we may enter the combat, or look upon those who do.”\(^{34}\) The language here is a trope commonly used when describing interactions with the devil and his minions: the devil is often said to wrestle an individual for his/her soul in the manner of an athletic competition. (The devil has the ability to challenge a Christian either in person or through others.) The same language had been used on prior occasions in chapters 5 and 7, when Antony is said to be struggling with the devil and his temptations. It is repeated in several other sections of Antony’s life, as a constant reminder that man has no rest from sparring against

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\(^{33}\) Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity."

Satan, whose goal is to turn man’s soul from eternal salvation to damnation. At this juncture in Antony’s life it is particularly poignant because the persecutors in Alexandria are not just characterized as misguided secular officials, but the agents of the devil, who labor to make Christians deny their faith. The language here makes it clear that Antony is entering a competition not only for his own soul, as in the past, but also the souls of others, so that while he was in Alexandria, Antony encountered not only believers, but also the devil’s agents in the secular authorities.

Unperturbed by those working against him, Anthony exercised his powers for the good of his fellow Christians. Here,

[he] rendered service to the confessors both in the minds and in the prisons. In the law court, he showed great enthusiasm, stirring to readiness those who were called forth as contestants, and receiving them as they underwent martyrdom [execution] and remaining in their company until they were perfected [death].

Antony’s concern in all these actions is the preservation of the soul. He offered to the dying consolation in their time of need and helped them fight back the demons, which would have them renounce their devotion to God and the message He sent through Christ. For every soul that Antony helped was another soul for the Lord and his goal was to ensure that the devil had not one soul as a prize.

Even the secular officials saw the dangers of one such as Antony, whose commitment to God undermined their authority. Athanasius remarks that “when the judge saw the fearlessness of Antony and of those with him, he issued the order that none of the monks were to appear in the law court, nor were they to stay in the city at all.” The monks had the potential to become major threats instead of just minor annoyances. Antony himself was described as possessing “fearlessness.” His role as a

holy man provided him with authority derived from his spiritual life. He was completely confident in his abilities as an agent for God and therefore felt no anxiety at the orders of secular authorities. Antony capitalized on this notion of martyrdom, for he took the initiative

[to] wash his upper garment and to stand the next day in a prominent place in front, and to be clearly visible to the prefect. When, while all marveled at this, the prefect passing by with his escort, saw him, he stood there calmly, demonstrating the purposefulness that belongs to us Christians.\(^{37}\)

Antony’s actions were showy, but his statement was clear—his zeal for God gave him purposefulness unaffected by the secular authority’s intimidations. Moreover, as he stood in front of the prefect, Antony was begging for martyrdom, not literally, but figuratively through his rebellious actions. Martyrdom for Antony was the ultimate manifestation of his dedication to God and his ascetic practices. By subduing his body in death, Antony hoped to free the soul of its earthly entrapments.

Surprisingly, Antony did not receive the martyrdom he so fiercely desired. His continued life alone, according to Athanasius, showed that Antony was meant to be a teacher and exemplary model of the ascetic lifestyle. He writes that

\[ \text{….the Lord was protecting him to benefit us and the others, so that he might be a teacher to many in the discipline that he had learned from the Scriptures. For simply by seeing his conduct, many aspired to become imitators of his way of life.}^{38} \]

God made sure that Antony lived, so that he could spread the ascetic lifestyle. It was by God’s power that Antony was preserved in body and exalted in soul. Moreover, his unwavering loyalty to God was able to inspire others to take up the mantle of Christianity. God summoned Antony not to suffer martyrdom, but to become an example of holiness on Earth. He was to be the person that people aspired to emulate.


in their path to God. For Athanasius, Antony later fulfilled this expectation as the perfect model for the Christian devotee with his journey into a new frontier—the desert.

This episode in Antony’s life is quite unique because it is a departure from his usual behavior. Nowhere else in his life does he confront secular authority in such a blatant manner or seek martyrdom in such an ostentatious manner. It is the only time in his increasingly intense ascetic career that he enters into an urban area with the intent to engage with others; otherwise, most of his life is centered about withdrawal from the secular world. Whenever people including fellow ascetics invade his space, he separates himself. For example, Antony left the village for the fortress after he became disgruntled at the constant distractions of living near so many people, even though most of his contact was with his ascetic mentor. Antony above all sought space, so that he could devote himself unreservedly and without distraction to God. A bustling city, like Alexandria, was hardly quiet and mundane. It was a huge departure from his usual environment.

At no other point throughout his life did Antony travel to a city or actively seek out other Christians. Christians tended to search him out and even forced him into contact with them. For example, when he was in the fortress, people came and literally broke down the door; Antony did not seek out their company. Also, whenever in other sections of his life Antony traveled, he moved away from people not towards them. First he moved away from his village and the people within it as a means of intensifying his ascetic regime. This established the pattern that he was to follow thereafter: once people encroached on his privacy, he relocated farther away
from them. This incident in Alexandria by contrast took him toward people. Furthermore, Antony’s standard ascetic habits did not typically involve him aiding people. He only healed, exorcised, and consoled when others forced themselves upon him; he did not initiate these acts of his own volition. Antony was even said to wash himself and his garments, which is quite a departure from his normal ascetic practices. The episode in Alexandria was so uncharacteristic of Antony that all manner of questions arise: why would Antony go to Alexandria? why, if he went, was he not martyred? what is the purpose of this episode in the text? why is this the first mention of Antony’s interest in martyrdom?

On the one hand, it appears that Athanasius may in part be attempting to justify why Antony was not martyred like all the others. According to Athanasius, Antony neither was a victim of torture or martyrdom throughout the duration of his intervention in Alexandria. He arrived at Alexandria and then departed unscathed. With this evident lack of bodily sacrifice, Athanasius was left with the dilemma of explaining how Antony survived what so many other Christians did not. When he came to describe Antony’s departure from Alexandria, he related Antony’s escape to his later ascetic career:

When finally the persecution ended, and Peter the blessed bishop had made his witness, Antony departed and withdrew once again to the cell, and was there daily being martyred by his conscience, and doing battle in the contests of the faith. He subjected himself to an even greater and more strenuous asceticism, for he was always fasting, and he had clothing with hair on the interior and skin on the exterior that he kept until he died. He neither bathed his body with water for cleanliness, nor did he wash his feet at all, and he would not even consent to putting them in water unless it was necessary. Neither did anyone ever see him undressed—indeed, no one saw the body of Antony naked, except when he died and was buried.  

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This passage marks a turning point in Antony’s life. The language and theme of his *Life* shift to a focus on perpetual martyrdom. Here, Athanasius introduces new language when referring to Antony’s ascetic practice. He begins to refer to Antony’s life as a daily martyrdom. There is a subtle, but constant suggestion that Antony’s spiritual regime amounts to a lifetime of miniature deaths in the name of the Lord. Athanasius effectively creates a contrast between a true martyrdom and Antony’s pseudo-martyrdom. He draws even further attention to the difference between Antony’s practices and an actual martyrdom, by noting the death of Peter, the Bishop of Alexandria, in the Alexandrian persecutions. An important religious figure was killed in the Alexandrian persecutions, but Antony was not he. If Athanasius’ previous attempts to explain Antony’s life are persuasive, then the assumption is that Antony lives to be an example, so that his diurnal martyrdoms are to be a point of constant reference for the ascetic soul. By equaling asceticism with martyrdom, this passage is a sort of propaganda for the ascetic life.

Unfortunately, the propaganda of this passage is marred by Athanasius’ difficulty in explicating Antony’s lack of martyrdom, which is betrayed in the language. Athanasius’ shift to describing Antony’s ascetic practices as quotidian martyrdoms appears to be an act of compensation. He has already pointed out that an actual martyrdom took place, but Antony was not the man who was martyred. He seems to feel that he must legitimize Antony’s continued living, and to accomplish this goal, Athanasius draws upon his previous characterization of Antony as an exemplary model for the ascetic discipline. This move is key since it allows Athanasius a method of justifying Antony’s lack of martyrdom, for Antony did, in
fact, become for many a role model and a trailblazer, since he is said to be the first to practice asceticism in the desert. However, in order to explain why Antony lived, Athanasius uses Antony’s future, which in itself is anachronistic. At this point in Antony’s life, no one is aware that he will inhabit the desert. For Athanasius to adopt this argument reveals distress because he is inadvertently stating that Antony’s previous actions are not sufficient justification for Antony’s continued existence. Athanasius’ discomfort is clear, and though he is able to compensate for Antony’s extended life his evident uneasiness raises a very intriguing question: why is Athanasius so abashed by the event?

His previous descriptions of Antony are full of admiration and reverence, but the awkward passage following Antony’s lack of martyrdom may be a result of the oddity of the event. Notwithstanding Athanasius’ admiration, the event itself seems rather out of place in light of all the previously discussed discrepancies: entering into urban areas, interacting voluntarily with other Christians, confronting ostentatiously secular authority, and surviving while so many others are martyred. Athanasius’ embarrassment with the event, though he is usually confident in Antony’s holiness, seems justified. However, when combining Athanasius’ chagrin, the marked deviation from Antony’s customary behavior, the anomaly of the episode in Athanasius’ larger narrative, the shift in language following the event, and Antony’s continued existence while other Christians make their witness, most notably Peter, the Bishop of Alexandria, it may be that Antony never journeyed to Alexandria or had any role in the persecutions, though it was common for saints to help in the trials and tribulations of their fellow Christians. This aid often led to their being martyred or
tortured themselves along those to whom they were ministering. Antony is a victim of neither of these consequences while he is in Alexandria, though he challenges a secular officials, who has already issued an order that banned monks from the city entirely. The event is so out of place in the corpus of Antony’s life and the details are so extraordinary and somewhat bizarre, it raises the question of its historicity.

Yet, Athanasius is clearly discomforted by the event, so why would he include it if it did not happen? It would have been preferable for him to leave the occurrence completely out of Antony’s life rather than present the event in such a conflicted manner by shifting the language in a bid to equate martyrdom with ascetic practices and mentioning an actual martyrdom right next to Antony’s pseudo-martyrdom. The answer may lie in the dates of the events themselves. Athanasius is writing about Antony’s life shortly after Antony’s death in 356 AD, but the Christian persecutions in Alexandria occur in 313 AD. This period leaves a forty-year gap in which Antony’s involvement in the persecutions could have been exaggerated. Moreover, even though Athanasius has difficulties with this portion of Antony’s life, maybe he could not leave out such a major episode in the recent history of his fellow Christians, and he could not write a life of a holy man who was absent from one of the defining moments of Christian history in Alexandria, especially as all his readers would have been aware of the persecutions and Antony’s close proximity to the city of Alexandria.

On the other hand, these same arguments reinforce that the event may have occurred. The persecutions were such a major event in the lives of Christians that Antony may have felt called upon to involve himself and therefore to deviate from his
usual habits, for it was customary for holy men to aid Christians when their faith was tested by helping to bolster their strength in God. Furthermore, Antony was in the area (Alexandria is approximately 25 miles from the old Roman fort which is near modern-day Faiyum\textsuperscript{40}) and had no obligations to occupy him, so he was free to travel to Alexandria. If Antony had traveled to Alexandria and owing to the grace of God was not martyred, Athanasius may only be relating the historical events that he felt obligated to include in Antony’s life even though they do not conform to his previous characterization of the saint. Moreover, Athanasius might have elected to circumvent the whole problem by avoiding any mention of the episode in the text, but that would appear even more suspicious, as the persecutions would have been common knowledge. Whatever the truth, Anthisnus’ account of Antony’s time in Alexandria fits awkwardly into the larger context of the \textit{Life}.

However, this episode in the life could have another reading. If Antony did indeed travel to Alexandria and did prepare himself for martyrdom with such dramatic flair, the subsequent intensification of ascetic practices may betray feelings of failure and guilt. From that time on, he is said to continually fast, wear a hair shirt, and avoid cleansing his clothing, his body, and in particular, his feet. The intensification of his ascetic practices is a large shift denotive of both a feeling of personal-failure and an act of self-abasement, which may have arisen from Antony’s experiences in Alexandria. There Antony displayed no fear death or of secular authority, but as a good Christian should, he did not exhibit humbleness in his actions. He confronted the prefect of Alexandria in the middle of a crowded street,
adorned in clean clothing (ascetics rarely washed themselves or their bodies), and stood at a “prominent place in front.” He did what a saint should not: he made a theatrical display of his devotion to God with the goal of achieving his own desires. Afterwards, Antony is said to be daily “martyred by his conscience,” and in section 49, he decided to leave the fortress for fear that others would think him greater than they ought and that he would grow prideful. It is telling that conceit should become his concern after he has made a performance of his devotion to God. He seems to have fallen prey to the deadly sin of pride. He acknowledged his error by the more forcible submission of his body. Antony appears to have entered on a period of penance because he felt that God was disappointed in his behavior, which for Antony was reflected in God not allowing him to make his witness.

A New Frontier: The Desert

For the purpose of penance and to intensify still further his battle with the devil, Antony embarked on a journey into the desert, which had never been occupied by anyone in the pursuit of the ascetic lifestyle. Here Antony heightened his quotidian martyrdoms of self-mortification in a permanent outpost for God. It was in the desert, atop a mountain, that Antony became almost entirely isolated from everyone in the world. The mountain was so deep in the desert that sand storms obscured him frequently, so that he could neither see out nor could anyone see in. His contacts with the outside world appear to be nomadic Bedouin tribes, which passed through the area until eventually a monastery was founded at the foot of the mountain, even though the saint always remained on the top of the mountain. Additionally, the story as narrated by Athanasius focuses not on a shift in location, but is more of a compilation of
anecdotes that happen while Antony resides on the mountain, indicating a close to Antony’s search for the perfect quiet space.

On this mountain, Antony transcended his past level of holiness, which is reflected in his inner calm.

So he was alone in the inner mountain devoting himself to prayers and the discipline. And the brothers who served him asked if when they came every month they might bring him olives and pulse and oil, for he was at this point an old man. Furthermore, we know from those who visited him how many wrestlings he endured while dwelling there, not against flesh and blood, but against demons…And it was truly amazing that being alone in the desert he was neither distracted by the demons who confronted him, nor was he frightened of their ferocity when so many beasts and reptiles were there. But truly he was one like the Scripture says, having trusted in the Lord, was like Mount Zion, keeping his mind unshaken and unruffled; so instead the demons fled and the wild beasts, as it is written, made peace with him.41

Antony had reached a point in his spiritual relationship with God in which his mental state was entirely undisturbed. He was said to be immune from agitation and well in control of the space that he had demarcated for his own worship. The demons, which vainly attempted to distract him from his path, were dismissed as if they were errant children. Antony is described as a man who has truly invested himself in God without any regrets. He wanted nothing that God had not already given to him and trusted God to provide all he needed because he was like “Mount Zion.” In this manner, he found a peace unparalleled by the other ascetics. He possessed spiritual calm acquired through the devotions of his soul and the subjugation of his body, so that he has peace within himself, a peace so soothing that it tamed the wild beasts. His mind was “unshaken” and “unruffled” to such a degree that the demons fled. The demons understood that in Antony there existed no place for them to creep into his soul because he had already given it over to God. His fight remained the same, against forces not of the material world, but those that attack the soul.

This peace marked him as a man of God, so that his joy in the Lord was apparent to all, for

[it was not his physical dimensions that distinguished him from the rest, but the stability of character and the purity of the soul. His soul being free of confusion, he held his outer senses also undisturbed, so that from the soul’s joy his face was cheerful as well, and from the movements of the body it was possible to sense and perceive the stable condition of the soul, as it is written, When the heart rejoices, the countenance is cheerful; but when it is in sorrow, the countenance is sad. So Jacob realized that Laban was planning treachery, and said to his wives, the face of your father is not the same toward me as it was yesterday and the day before. So Samuel recognized David, for he had eyes that brought joy, and teeth white as milk. And so Antony was recognized, for he was never troubled, his soul being calm, and he never looked gloomy, his mind being joyous.]

Now his body was reflective of the peace in his inner soul. His spiritual state manifested such a change in his physical body that he was imbued with joy. Antony had shrugged off the burdens of man by embracing God and in return was freed from “confusion.” He was granted “stability of character,” “purity of soul,” and emotional balance. These characteristics distinguished him from his fellow monks. The condition of the soul left a mark on the body just as much as daily toil. Since Antony had undergone daily martyrdoms for many years, his soul was chaste and this was reflected in the movements and his cheerful manner.

Athanasius records that the brothers were confounded by his lonely endurance, but it was precisely his isolation from other people, monks and laymen alike, which permitted him to connect so closely with God. The longer he was in greater proximity with people, the more often he was distracted from his practices. It was in the fortress where other ascetics had surrounded him that he lectured as to inferiors. It was within the city, a place filled with people, that he surrendered himself in a rather flamboyant display of pride. The constant interaction with people disrupted

[42 Athanasius, The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus, 67.]
his peace of mind and challenged his spiritual security, thus he retreated into the
desert to an inner mountain. It was there in that place of silence that he could find
equilibrium and set aside emotions and passions. Without the influence and
diversions of other people, Antony battled against the demons constantly until they
abandoned the hope of defeating him; even the animals had no inclination to harm
him. His separation from humans empowered him and raised him above the normal
banalities of life into a state free from the constant psychological turmoil of ordinary
humans.

Others, distressed by the uncertainty of their own lives, invaded Antony’s
seemingly peaceful life. According to Athanasius, “…some came just to see him, and
some because of sickness, and others because they suffered from demons. And all
considered the effort of the journey neither an annoyance nor a loss, for each went
home feeling the benefit.”⁴³ People sought him out, but they did not remain with him:
they returned to their homes. Nevertheless, for Antony they were disruptions that he
had to regularly endure. After withdrawing from society, he had simultaneously
become the intercessor for man and the servant of God and therefore had to fulfill
certain capacities in the society he had ironically ceded from. Antony’s serenity
coupled with his supernatural abilities to heal and exorcise signaled to others that he
had gained privileges, which they had not. Antony’s serenity coupled with his
supernatural abilities to heal and exorcise set him apart as someone capable of
relieving some of the strain of their existences. His abilities were evidence to these
people that they were not alone in the world, and that their God was accessible in a

world of tumult, so they sought him out. Secular authorities too began to defer to him; “Antony’s fame spread even to rulers. When Constantine Augustus and his sons Constantius Augustus and Constans Augustus learned of these things, they wrote to him as a father and begged to receive responses from him.” Their inquiries mirrored re-scripts to the emperor, in which subjects would write requesting the emperor’s aid. Their letters signified the acknowledgement of another hierarchy, in which God and his servants out rank secular rulers. At the same time, they were intrusions into Antony’s world. He had left behind all the etiquette of the society, but in writing to Antony, the emperors were expecting him to conform to social and political constraints that he had left behind. They imposed on his space because they still expected him to entertain their questions through letter writing, which stole time out of his devotional schedule. Antony, while in a place of peace, was not freed from outside interruptions.

So the people visited and communicated with him, but his interactions with them on the mountain were quite in contrast with those in his previous residences. Though he received perpetual contact from those seeking healing, advice, and consolation, he was able to control the manner in which he interacted with these people. He knew who was coming in advance, so that “[w]ith regards to the ones who visited him, he often predicted days in advance—and at times even months—the reason why they were coming.” He was never blindsided by visitors because he had foreknowledge, and as a consequence his visitors were sent home quickly and without


extended stay because he could attend to their needs faster, as he was already aware of their problems. For instance, in the case of the young woman from Busiris:

A certain young woman from Busiris in Tripoli had a terrible and altogether hideous ailment…. The parents of this girl, learning about monks who went out to Antony, and having faith in the Lord . . .pleaded to travel with them, taking their daughter, and they consented. The parents with their child stayed outside the mountain with Paphnutius, the confessor and the monk. But the rest went in, and just when they wished to tell him about the young woman, he began to speak to them, describing the child’s ailment and how she had traveled with them. And yet when they asked that these people be allowed to come to him, he would not allow this, but replied, “Go away, and you will find that she has been healed, unless she is dead . . . .”

He was able to sequester the secular people, who he knew were coming, so that he was not imposed upon in any physical manner, so that his sanctuary remained peaceful. This incident is in marked contrast with another sick daughter whose father sought his help, which occurred at the fortress before he left for the desert.

Now when he withdrew and decided to spend a time in which he neither went out nor received any visitor, a certain military officer named Martinianus became a nuisance to Antony. He had a daughter who was disturbed by a demon, so that he stayed a long while, rapping on the door and asking him to come out and to pray to God on his daughter’s behalf.

In this scenario, a visitor who would not go away annoyed Antony and Antony was essentially powerless to make him leave. He was unable to define his own private space with the result that another could force him to break his own vow of solitude. At the fortress, people broke in and forced him into contact with themselves, but Antony lacked the authority to ensure that they were only a fleeting presence, so he fled. His flight is described as a withdrawal from the immutable noise of the secular world:

But when he saw that he was disturbed by many people and was not allowed to retire as he intended and wished, apprehensive that, because of the things of the Lord was doing through him, either he might become too prideful or someone else might think more of him than was warranted, he considered carefully and struck out… in the direction of people who did not know him.

The people and their influence crippled him. Antony was forced to remove himself from the environment of the fort, so that he would not be influenced by their image of him. On the mountain, he enjoyed a perennial retreat from society. He had the authority to maintain the autonomy that was so desperately lacking at his other residences. He did not have to flee to find the peace he desired, and he was able to set boundaries which his visitors abided by.

His newfound authority was linked to his progressive relationship with God, for as Antony’s relationship with God became more extensive, so do his powers. His powers developed from a more physical nature to a more incorporeal one. In the beginning, his abilities necessitated interaction with another human. Case in point, when he first exited the fort, Antony was gifted with the power to heal, exorcise, and console. All of these powers are exercised upon a human being, and are tied very intimately with the corporeal. These powers contrast significantly with the ones that he acquired after his arrival on the mountain. He attained the ability to see events that happen in far off distances at the time that they were happening. He could even see the souls of the dead rising to heaven. For example,

On another occasion he was sitting in the mountain, and looking up he saw someone being led up into the air, and great joy emanating from those who met him. Filled with wonder, and blessing such a great chorus, he prayed to learn what this might mean. And immediately a voice came to him, telling him that this was the soul of Amun, the monk in Nitria.49

He could now see with the eye of his heart rather than just his physical eyes, which was characteristically different than his previous powers. Of Antony’s new powers it

is said that “he kept his heart alert and the Lord showed him distant happenings” and “asked that no one marvel at him on this account, but rather they marvel at the Lord, for he has shown favor to us in the measure of our capacity to now him.”

Antony’s pursuit of the ascetic lifestyle resulted in the gift of heightened senses. After a lifetime of struggling with demons, Antony possessed the ability to glimpse a world he had believed in, but not truly seen. Antony saw the spirits of the righteous lifted into heaven. Antony was willing to leave the secular world and seek a place for the sole purpose of daily martyrdom. He gained powers in direct correlation to the amount of devotion to God. Antony knew God because he subjugated his body through daily martyrdoms, by which he simultaneously subdued his own will and embraced God’s will. It was his willingness to do so for decades that resulted in him possessing a class of powers which were directly integrated with his openness to God.

Even in preparing for death, Antony still feared the contamination of others, which was manifested in his preparations for death.

He came as he customarily did, to inspect the monks who resided in the outer mountain, and when he learned from providence about his death he spoke to the brothers, … [and] when the brothers pressed him to stay with them and die there, he refused for a number of reasons, …but because of one in particular. The Egyptians love to honor with burial rites and to wrap in linens the bodies of their worthy dead, and especially the holy martyrs, not burying them in the earth…But Antony aware of this practice and afraid that they might perform it for his body, pressed on, departed from the monks in the outer mountain. He entered in the inner mountain to stay there as usual and in a few months became ill… [so] he died and was taken to the fathers.

Antony insisted in dying alone. His main fear was that the others in the act of honoring his body would in fact desecrate his remains. To ensure that this crime did

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50 Athanasius, The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus, 60.
not occur, he withdrew. As he met death, no one was there to aid him or distract him from his fate. He sought quiet in his last moments, just as he did throughout his life. He wanted no interference from the outside world in any way, even from the monks who resided at the base of the mountain. In 313 AD, as he prepared for death, Antony wished to leave this world as he had elected to live in it, completely focused on his ascetic lifestyle. He waited to make his witness and bring an end to his circadian martyrdoms, which freed his soul and mortified his body.

**Conclusion**

From the beginnings of Antony’s ascetic journey, the farther Antony removed himself from the secular world, the more he was indoctrinated into a world where spirits, demons, and other miraculous occurrences manifested themselves. At the start of his ascetic journey, the Devil and his minions attempted to blind him to his battle for the soul by appealing to Antony’s secular duties and physical passions, which he has already forgone. He overcame these challenges, but then was later confronted by more subtle temptation—pride. Then this pitfall too he conquered. Eventually, the demons left him because they realized that tempting Antony was a lost cause. However, he was not totally undisturbed. Throughout his life, people continuously intruded upon Antony’s space. They begged for him to heal, exercise, and console them. To escape the constant diversions presented by people, Antony retreated until he arrived alone on a mountain in the desert. Here, he gained the space necessary to completely devote himself to God. He achieved peace, and it was his serenity coupled with his supernatural abilities to heal and exorcise that attracted people to him even in the desert. Yet, Antony had acquired a new authority on the mountain, which allowed
him to maintain his distance from the secular world. He was not set upon and forced into contact with anyone, as he had been in the past; instead, people were sequestered outside his inner sanctuary and received aid without ever necessarily interacting with him in person. Antony transcended the limits of this world. He was able to see through time and space, and to behold souls ascending into heaven. As he intensified his ascetic practices, Antony withdrew from the human world, and entered into another where his soul would be at peace for all eternity.
Bibliography


Part II
St. Martin
A Map of Late Antique Gaul

This map is of southwest Gaul from c.380—400.

A Map of Martin’s Gaul\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{54} Stancliffe, St. Martin and His Hagiographer, 397.
Introduction to a New Saint

Athanasius’ *Life of Antony* heralded a new genre of writing. Its popularity was such that it was translated into Latin and Coptic within years of its first circulation in 357 AD, and it was disseminated throughout the Western and Eastern world. The most influential of these translations was by Evagrius, Bishop of Antioch, shortly after Athanasius’ death in 373 AD. This Latin version in particular was widely circulated and resulted in the life of Antony being accessible in the West to non-Greek readers. In one form or another, the *Life* was known throughout the Mediterranean and Eastern Empire, and generated an almost unmatched following in subsequent years. It was a life that many Christian believers found attractive, and its brilliant propaganda fostered the conversion of many ascetics. (St. Augustine in his *Confessions* cites the *Life of St. Antony* as one of the major influences on his conversion.) The story created an archetype for hagiography, as well as a mini-instruction manual for the ascetic life. As the number of holy men and women multiplied, other authors were inspired to write biographies of their revered figures and they looked to the *Life of St. Antony* as a guide.

In no place is this more evident than in the construction of the life of St. Martin of Tours, whose special spiritual qualities derived from years of self-denial and ascetic practices. His years of ascetic exercises had allowed him a special relationship to God in the vein of the patron-client relationship, so that Martin acted

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56 The Life of St. Antony became wildly popular. It was said that after its dissemination that the whole of the desert was populated with monks.
as a broker for God, whom he petitioned in the form of prayers. Severus depicted Martin as an intercessor, who had cultivated a special relationship with God through self-discipline and prayer. When Sulpicius Severus penned his *Life of St. Martin* in 393 AD\textsuperscript{58}, the *Life of Antony* had become so synonymous with a saint’s life that he referenced Athanasius’ work from the very beginning. Severus announced to his readers that St. Martin of Tours already at the tender “age of twelve longed for the desert.”\textsuperscript{59} In this way, the *Life of St. Antony* had become a staple in the creation of hagiographical work, and in the dialogue on monasticism and asceticism. There is a clear link in the framing of the tale—spiritual purity since boyhood, employment of ascetic practices during life, and spiritual peace accompanied by outward calm throughout the elderly years\textsuperscript{60}—as well as the content. Severus describes the contests with demons, conversations with angels, and numerous healings. He also maintains this connection by referencing the language present in Athanasius. For example, when Martin took up residence at his monastery called Marmoutier, Severus described the space as “so secluded and remote that it had all the solitude of the desert.”\textsuperscript{61} These references clearly invoked St. Antony, and would not have been lost on the audiences of antiquity.

While Severus is well acquainted with and respectful of Athanasius’ work, he also competes with his predecessor to make his life more convincing and detailed. While Athanasius limits Antony’s early life giving little or no detail of his early life,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer*, 71.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Not an unusual progression of a hagiography. It became fairly standard practice for a saint to be depicted as a holy at youth as a mark of distinction.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 10.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Severus spends three entire sections describing Martin’s life before he had the ability to freely follow God. Readers learned of his early fascination with the ascetic life, his years of servitude in the army, and even his baptism. There is a detailed account of a young man becoming a monk, much unlike Athanasius brief words on Antony’s early life.

Though both religious figures became synonymous with asceticism and monasticism in the West, their lives bear more in common than just a shared genre. Both saints are said to be marked out from others from youth. Both develop a special spiritual charisma due to their religious devotion. But, most importantly, both must contend with a world that impedes their religious life and development. It is this world that forces Antony into the desert to find the peace and silence of his inner mountain, and Martin out of his monastery and into the banquet halls of secular rulers. Their common foe is the disruptions of secular society; however, their approaches to resolving the conflict between secular disturbances and religious devotion are different in each case. St. Antony ventures into the wilderness of the desert to create a space untainted by the temptations of the secular world. St. Martin takes a different approach tied to cenobitic living, and creates a retreat from his life as a bishop.

The bulk of St. Martin’s life is described in Sulpicius Severus’ works, which included *The Life of St. Martin* itself, three letters concerning St. Martin, and two dialogues. Needless to say, Sulpicius made a career of recounting Martin’s life. *The Life of St. Martin* was actually written before Martin’s death in 397 AD. The Dialogues were written about eight years after Martin’s death, and contain additional
miracles and episodes from his life.\textsuperscript{62} It is noted that the timeline presented by Severus in his \textit{Life of St. Martin} shows some chronological discrepancies, in particular in the amount of time Martin spent in the army. The account claims that he was conscripted at 15 years of age (not the common practice, which was conscription at 18) and served under both Constantius and Julian, but was released by age 22. He was born in 316 AD and died at the age of 81 in 397 AD, which would mean that he was well in his thirties during the reign of Julian. This timeline either means that Martin was conscripted at a much older age than Severus presents to us, or, the more accepted assumption, that Severus manipulated the dates to conceal the amount of time Martin was in military service. The following is an outline of Martin’s life using the chronology of Sulpicius Severus

Martin was born in Sabaria, Pannonia (modern-day Hungary) around 316 AD, but spent his childhood in Ticinum (modern-day Pavia), Italy.\textsuperscript{63} His father was a tribune in the army, and both his father and his mother were from undistinguished pagan backgrounds.\textsuperscript{64} He seems to have served in the cavalry of the Imperial Guard under Emperor Constantius (337-361 AD), son of Constantine the Great, and eventually under Caesar Julian (caesar, 355-360 AD) following an edict which conscripted all sons of veterans into military service.\textsuperscript{65} Severus, however, claims that

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\item \textsuperscript{62} Stancliffe, \textit{St. Martin and His Hagiographer}, 114.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Christopher Donaldson, \textit{Martin of Tours: Parish Priest, Mystic, and Exorcist} (London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1980), 12,17.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," II.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Constantius and Julian’s dates give us a timeframe for when Martin was in the army, but unfortunately, the amount of time does not correspond with the timeline of Martin’s Life on the whole. It appears that Severus manipulated the time that Martin was in the army. Though he had to know the discrepancy would be clear considering
\end{itemize}
Martin served in the military for only three years before his baptism at eighteen, and after two more years of service, he left the army and went to Poitiers, where he stayed with St. Hilary, the Bishop of Poitiers. There he was ordained as an exorcist after refusing the diaconate several times. He subsequently received a dream that said he should visit his pagan parents. During his journey back home, he met with a few unfortunate incidents, including traveling remote paths through the Alps and being attacked by brigands. As he passed through Milan, he was said to have encountered a demon, which he dispelled with his faith in God. Finally reaching his parent’s home in Pavia, he proceeded to convert his mother, but his father remained unimpressed by his son’s religion.

Thereafter he moved from place to place, often persecuted for his outspoken opposition to Arianism. In Illyricum, he was flogged for resisting that heresy. Upon learning of trouble in the Church of Gaul, as exemplified by Bishop Hilary’s flight from his bishop seat, Martin decided to travel to Milan and take up the life of a hermit. However, he did not find peace, as he was forced once more to leave the city for his anti-Arian views by the Arian Bishop of Milan, Auxentius, in 358 AD. As a result, he retired to Gallinaria, a small island not far from modern-day Albenga, with one companion for a year and nourished himself on roots, including hellebore. Somehow he learned of Constantius forsaking his Arian ways and his reappointment
of Hilary to his seat in 360 AD. Martin traveled to Rome in hopes that he would meet him, but Hilary had already passed through the city. When, Martin finally met up with a reinstated Hilary in 361 AD, he settled in Poitiers in a site that became his first monastery, which he inhabited for ten years, called Ligugé. While there, he received his first devoted followers among whom there was a young catechumen, who fell ill. The young man died from a fever before there was even time to baptize him, and Martin laid upon the man’s body for two hours to bring him back to life. He was said to be the first subject of Martin’s miracles and to have lived a long time thereafter. He claimed that Martin’s prayers for him had been heard in heaven, and that the Judge about to sentence him ordered that he be restored back to his mortal body. Martin then went on to bring back to life a serf who had committed suicide while passing the farm of a wealthy man not long after.

After such miraculous healings, Martin was sought as the Bishop of Tours in 371 AD, since the current bishop had died. Martin from all accounts seems to have possessed little if any interest in the post, but a man named Rusticus fabricated a tale about his wife being ill to lure Martin out of his hermitage. He was then “escorted” to Tours. Once in the city, crowds of people eager that the bishops of the province would vote Martin the Bishop of Tours, greeted him. He was elected and for a short time lived in a cell next to the cathedral. However, amid the constant interruptions he became discontented, and so he removed himself to about two miles from the city in a

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71 Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer*, 113.
72 Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," IX., and Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer*, 113. This occurred during the reign of the Emperor Valentinian I, who reigned from 364-375 AD.
place that was soon known as Marmoutier, which became his spiritual retreat.\textsuperscript{73} He lived in this area with eighty other ascetics, who only left their cells for worship and spiritual guidance.

Following his withdrawal into the wilderness, he began to tend to the souls of the various inhabitants of the region, pagan and Christian alike. For the Christians, he stopped the mistaken worship of a false martyr.\textsuperscript{74} The pagans received a round of military-like campaigns that rid them of their false idols and temples. On one such campaign, a tree is said to literally twist in another direction rather than fall on Martin. On another occasion, flames changed course when he stood in their path. Among the Aedui, a tribe who lived quite far from Tours, a pagan who sought to strike him was laid onto his back by an invisible force.\textsuperscript{75} The pagan then immediately asked for God’s forgiveness. Around this time, he was also involved in a series of healings/exorcisms, as well as various political duties. Most notably a dinner with the Emperor Maximus, in which he chastised the Emperor and other prestigious attendants by passing the wine chalice to a priest instead of Maximus.\textsuperscript{76} These interactions continued throughout his time as bishop.

Yet, Martin was not only set upon by secular rulers, pagans, and distressed Christians, but also the devil and his minions constantly attempted to lead him astray. In one such incident, he prevented the followers of Clarus, a former follower of Martin, from believing a ruse by the devil. The devil had convinced Anatolius, a

\textsuperscript{73} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 10.
\textsuperscript{74} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 11.
\textsuperscript{75} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 12-15. These sections recount Martin’s time as a “soldier” for God.
\textsuperscript{76} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 20.
young follower of Clarus that he was a prophet of God and had given him a splendid tunic as a gesture of this promise, made of unknown material. Clarus asked the other monks to pray to God to be shown what the tunic consisted of. Clarus decided to take Anatolius to Martin. Upon learning that his superior wished him to be conveyed to Martin, he fought and protested saying that he had been forbidden to show himself to Martin. As Anatolius was being dragged to him, the garment between his fingers disappeared. Later, the devil even disguised himself and asked Martin to call him Christ, but Martin knew that he was false because he came in purple robes and a shining diadem. The portion of his life following his election to the diocese involves a combination of his dealings with the devil and the secular world. Eventually after years of dealing with the plagues of the secular world and the scourge of the devil, Martin passed on in 397 AD, while attempting to make his rounds to various parishes in Candes at eighty-one years of age.

His life became the next installment in a tradition that would fill the world with tales of saints’ miracles and religious triumphs. Martin had a two-fold problem, his parishioners needed an advocate capable of attending to their needs on a local and imperial level, but Martin himself desired to maintain an ascetic lifestyle while interacting with secular society. He had to compromise the constant peace he sought in the desert, in the interests of his see. It was his position that resulted in Martin abandoning Marmoutier, a place described by Severus as “so secluded and remote that it had all the solitude of the desert,” throughout his episcopal career. The

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77 Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 23.
78 Donaldson, *Martin of Tours: Parish Priest, Mystic, and Exorcist*, 129.
tension between Martin’s desires and the pressures of the larger world resonated from his youth well into adulthood. He must reconcile the demands of his seat with his ascetic leanings. However, it was exactly his desire to become an ascetic and his religious practices that created such a unique figure. He had the power of the holy man with the authority of a bishop. Martin was conscripted to deal with the workings of a region. As much as he attempted to flee the world, he became ingrained in the functioning of the larger community. The Martin described by Severus is multifaceted: the bishop, who derives his power from his intense spirituality, and the monk, who is able to fraternize with the secular world while retaining his religious fortitude.

**St. Martin’s Beginnings**

Like St. Antony, Martin longed for the desert. This sentiment is the first we learn of Martin’s ascetic leanings.

At the age of ten, against the wishes of his parents, he took himself off to a church and asked to be made into a catechumen. He was soon in the most wonderful way taken up with the work of God and at the age of twelve longed for the desert. His tender age prevented him from fulfilling his desire, but his mind, ever fixed on the hermitages and the Church, continued to dream, even in these boyhood years, of the life to which he was afterwards consecrated.

These statements lay the foundation for the bishop that Martin was to become. He would not be a bishop who derived his power from his social status or his amassed wealth, but from his spiritual relationship with God. The life he wished to pursue was one that was focused on stringent ascetic practices, which require self-discipline and devotion. It is indicative of the kind of religiosity he would wield. His interest in the

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80 The desert does not necessarily have to be a physical desert, but can be any region that allows separation from the secular world. The desert was also a common metaphor for a state of mind.

Church was not in the illustrious trappings, but in the relationship that he could forge with God. Yet, even at this early juncture was thwarted from the path he truly desired. His parents opposed him and his age hinders him. At the age of twelve, he is forced to concede that the dream he wished for was not the dream he could attain at the moment. This compromise too set the tone for Martin’s life. He later had to find a balance between his spiritual leanings and fulfilling his duty as a bishop, which required him to travel throughout his diocese and interact with secular and religious officials alike.

During Martin’s stint in the military, he displayed an impeccable character. Even before his baptism he was said to act in the most Christian manner, “though not yet born in Christ, he acted as one already robed in the good works of baptism—caring for the suffering, succoring the unfortunate, feeding the needy, clothing the naked, keeping nothing for himself out of his army pay beyond his daily food.”  

Here, he had taken on the duties of a bishop before his election to the episcopate. The only money he kept was for basic necessities. The rest he gave to the poor. Martin never indulged in lewd acts whether they be drinking or lascivious women. Martin had no desire for wealth or power, but seemed only interested in fulfilling the gospel. He embodied a sort of monk-bishop long before he possessed the official title.

Nothing more explicitly depicts him as enacting the gospel, than the episode with the beggar.  

Martin met at the city gate of Amiens a coatless beggar. This beggar had been asking the passers-by to take pity on him but all had gone past the unfortunate creature. Then the God-filled man

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83 This moment in St. Martin’s life became representative of the saint. In many subsequent depictions of him, he is depicted cutting a cloak in half and bestowing it upon a beggar. This deed became synonymous with Martin’s identification as a saint.
understood…He had nothing with him but his cape he had on, for he had already used up what else he had, in similar good works. So he took the sword he was wearing and cut the cape in two and gave one half to the beggar, putting on the rest himself.\textsuperscript{84}

He then, has his first mystical experience:

And that night, in his sleep, Martin saw Christ wearing the half of his cape with which he had clothed the beggar. He was told to look carefully at Our Lord and take note that it was the garment that he had given away. Then he heard Jesus say aloud to the throng of angels that surrounded Him: “Martin is still a catechumen but he has cloaked Me with this garment.”\textsuperscript{85}

Martin had virtually nothing, yet he proceeded to aid a man in need. He did what no one else was willing to do. His willingness to give to others defines him in the best possible light. At a young age, he sacrificed even at the detriment to himself. Furthermore, when Christ appeared to him in a vision following this incident informing him of the good work he had done, Martin “was not puffed up with vainglory by the vision but saw God’s goodness in his own good deed.”\textsuperscript{86} Martin did not seek acclamation from others upon receiving this vision or even from the act itself. His desire was to be a good Christian. For Severus, this act is just one among many that herald the greatness of Martin. Even as an impecunious soldier he had empathy for others, and sought to relieve their suffering at the expense of his own. As a soldier, he behaved in the manner of bishop by attending to those in need. If he acted with such virtues in this state, then he would certainly bring such virtue to his episcopate. These first sections intimate the type of life that Martin will lead later on. His personal enterprise would be a devotion to God, which would influence the management of episcopal duties.

Moreover, he would be privy to mystical experiences. The vision emphasizes Martin status as a neophyte in the Christian religion. The idea is that if he is so

\textsuperscript{84} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 3.
\textsuperscript{85} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 3.
\textsuperscript{86} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 3.
attuned to the Gospel before being inducted fully into the Christian community, how much more attuned would he be once he had been baptized. This vision looks forward to the bishop that Martin will become in the future. He will have access to God as a reward for his ascetic practices in a way that complements his lifestyle. The vision also marks the commencement of a progression to life more integrated in the Christian community, for it is after this vision that he feels inspired to become baptized. His baptism reveals the path to the office of exorcism, and eventually to bishop. It is established from the beginning that he will draw his power and authority from a different place. Martin’s focus will be on God and following the dictates of the gospel, rather than any other means of assuming authority. This scene lays the foundation for his career as a bishop and his commitment to his monastic community.

A Good Bishop

Throughout the *Life of Martin* and Sulpicius’ other works, Martin’s episcopal actions are compared to other bishops’ actions. Martin is upheld as the good bishop, whose love of the Lord and dedication to the ascetic lifestyle is unsurpassed, while the other bishops are marginalized for their numerous flaws. In particular, Severus faults these bishops on their subservience to secular authority [Chapter 20], their obsession with outward appearance [Chapter 9], their disbelief in power derived from ascetic practices [Dialogue 1.6-7,16], and their tendency to quarrel amongst themselves [Letter 3, To Bassula]. In this way, Sulpicius draws a distinction between the characteristics inherent in a worthy bishop, and those traits discerned in less meritorious bishops.
The most crucial part of Martin’s repertoire for Severus is Martin’s connection to God, which other bishops lack. For example, when the people of Tours called for Martin’s election to the episcopate, various bishops remarked that he was unworthy because of his appearance.

There was but one purpose among them; all had the same desire and the same opinion, which was that Martin was the fittest bishop and that the Church would be fortunate to get such a priest. There were a few, however, including some of the bishops who had been summoned to consecrate the new prelate, who were so abandoned as to oppose. They said, if you please, that Martin was a despicable individual and quite unfit to be a bishop, what with his insignificant appearance, his sordid garments and his disgraceful hair. But the folly of these men, who in their very efforts to vilify this remarkable man were singing his praises, was laughed at by the people, whose judgment was sounder than theirs.\textsuperscript{87}

The other bishops mentioned in this passage appear petty and inconsequential. They concerned themselves with secular distinguishers of status—expensive cloth and overly exquisite adornments—instead of religious commitment. Martin, however, displayed himself in a way befitting a man of his station. He was garbed humbly and with no evidence of ambition or desire for the office. He remained the best choice because his concern was not for his countenance, but for his continued devotion to God through his ascetic practice. The lack of clean clothing, the insignificant appearance, and the unkempt hair were markers of his ascetic lifestyle, as well as a disapproval of superficiality. The bishops who despised his appearance in turn viewed his asceticism in a pejorative manner. They saw no need to pursue a similar lifestyle because they assumed that they had all the authority needed, a authority derived from their status as bishop, rather than their role as holy men. Thus, Martin had surpassed the various bishops who criticized him. His occupation with ascetic devotion was the distinguishing factor. Already, he had acquired the ability to heal and to enliven the dead. Martin even had experienced a vision of Christ and the angels. The bishops

\textsuperscript{87} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 9.
presented in this section showed their ineptitude by placing such stock in secular frivolities rather than in the greatness of God. Martin embodied the best candidate for the job because of his involvement in the religious world.

Unfortunately for Martin’s religious brethren, this would not be the last time that they were represented with such shortsightedness. These issues occurred in various situations, such as Martin refusing to join in communion with other bishops [Dialogue 3.11], reserving fiscal gifts for episcopal duties [Dialogues 3.14], accepting embarrassing ministrations [Dialogue 2.6], and promoting religious authority over secular authority [Chapter 20]. One striking occasion, in particular, occurred while at the table of Emperor Maximus in the *Life*.

Towards the middle of the meal a servant, in accordance with custom, brought a goblet to the emperor. He ordered it to be given instead to our most holy bishop and waited expectantly to receive it from the bishop’s own hands. But Martin, after drinking himself, passed the goblet to his priest, holding that no one had a better right to drink immediately after himself and that it would not be honest of him to give precedence over the priest either to the emperor or to those who ranked next to him. ...And the news went all around the palace that Martin had done at the Emperor’s table what no other bishop would have done even when dining with the least of magistrates.  

Clearly, in this anecdote, there is a tension between secular and religious authority. Martin, in turn, addressed this issue by preferring religious authority to lay authority. He did what no other bishop would do with the most low ranked magistrate. Martin set himself apart by heralding spiritual precedence above all. The Emperor, according to Martin, was not above God. He tended to the souls of everyone in his flock, even those who felt they were above the scope of the Church. It is said of Martin that “[he] alone retained apostolic authority. For even when he had to petition the Emperor on

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89 A common religious trope is that the Bishop or priest tends to his flock ie. parishoners.
somebody’s behalf, he commanded rather than requested.**90** His confidence in these situations hardly astounds, as it is consistent with Martin’s characterization. However, his seemingly crass manner of interacting with the emperor indicates who one should to respect: not someone with secular trappings of authority, but men with religious authority, who have devoted their lives to a higher power—God. For Martin, the authority he exercised stemmed from his ascetic practices. It was a competency which he could only derive from God. Even when he was confronted with the threat of invasion, he relied on his “customary weapons”—prayer, the sign of the cross, etc, not relationships with secular authority.**91**

Where many other bishops seemed unworthy of their office, Severus upholds Martin as the epitome of the episcopate. On the surface, there seems to be a critique of ostentatious displays of power based on ecclesiastical authority. Yet, it is more than just a critique of over-indulgent scions of the Church. Severus holds St. Martin as the perfect bishop, one who derives his authority not from family prestige, wealth, or secular connections, but from his relationship with God. It is this relationship that gives St. Martin the power to perform miracles and the authority to act as a competent vessel for the Church. Later in Severus’ letter to the Priest Eusebius, Martin, while fulfilling his priestly duties accidentally started a fire because he refused to sleep on a bed of straw that the monks had prepared for him because the straw was too much of

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**90** Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 17.
**91** In chapter 18 of the *Life of Martin*, when a rumor that Trier is going to be invaded by barbarians reaches Martin’s ears. Martin asked one of the rumor spreaders to be brought forward and ascertains that he is a demoniac. The demon then informs Martin in a cathedral that he along with ten others had been sent to spread chaos in order to drive Martin from the city.
an indulgence. It is his commitment to an ascetic lifestyle which makes him the perfect candidate for the episcopate of Tours and the best ambassador for God.

The beginnings of this sentiment are clear from his life leading up to him being elected to the episcopate. His first aspiration was not to be ordained as a bishop, but the desert and therefore the ascetic lifestyle. When the Bishop Hilary offered him a deaconate at the age of twenty-one, he refused it and elected to become an exorcist instead. Finally, his most fantastical healing and first vision occurred before he ever became a bishop. In the former, he healed a young follower after he had lain dead for three days. In the latter, he divided his cloak while in the military to clothe a poor man and later that night received a vision, in which Jesus informed him that Martin himself has covered him in the cloak. He established himself as a holy man well before he entered into the see of Tours. It is as if he had to meet various criteria before taking up the mantle of an entire diocese. His ascetic practices and spiritual powers marked him as a holy leader long before the Catholic Church recognized him with the seat of bishop.

_Militia Christi_

Martin used his spiritual powers to inform his episcopal decisions, which in turn shaped the spiritual landscape of his see. The most prominent examples of shaping the spiritual landscape were his missionary campaigns [Chapter 8-15].

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94 In the Service of Christ
95 For the purposes of this paper, the spiritual landscape refers to the spiritual happenings of an area, including but not limited to the various pilgrimage destinations, missionary work, and the general upkeep of his diocese and various monasteries.
During Martin’s time as bishop, he took keen interest in the souls of everyone in his diocese. This concern led him into a series of “conversion campaigns,” in which he addressed the pagan populations in a wide region of Gaul. He traveled as far as the territory of the Aedui, which is modern-day Autun, and quite a distance from the city of Tours. His goal was to bring the message of God to every provincial, pagan inhabitant he could find, so that there was “no district there not filled with crowded churches or monasteries. For he immediately built a church or a monastery in every place where he destroyed a pagan shrine.”  

His vocation was in the service of Christ as a messenger of the gospel. Much of his work involved the expunging of pagan religious sites in a bid to promote his God.

During this time, Martin frequently encountered potential danger to his person, which was averted through his holiness. At one point, some pagans tied him down in the path of a falling tree, which was spun in the opposite direction rather than land on Martin and damage his person. All in attendance were converted. A similar occurrence happened among the Aedui, where he was almost stabbed when a frenzied mob of rustic pagans made a rush at him and one of them, more audacious than the rest, drew his sword and went for him. Throwing back his cloak, Martin offered his bare neck to the stroke. Nor was the pagan slow to strike, but when his hand was well above his head he fell flat on his back. Stricken with the fear of God, he asked for pardon.

Here, Martin possessed such faith in the Lord that he did not bother to attempt to protect himself. In this way, Martin proceeded across the Gallic countryside. He attacked his missions with forthrightness and a confidence derived from his devotion

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to God. Martin held no fear of injury or worry of failure. For him, he was commissioned by God to ensure that the pagans in his region became good Christians.

While Martin proceeded to dismantle various temples and to extirpate pagan iconography, he used fairly unorthodox weapons: prayer, preaching, the sign of the cross, his faith in the Lord, etc. In fact, when Severus refers to Martin’s “customary weapons,” he almost always means prayer. In one particular instance, Martin was driven off by the pagans and responded by the intensification of his ascetic practices.

In a village named Levroux, however, when he wished to demolish in the same way a temple, which had been made very rich by a superstitious cult, he met with resistance from a crowd of pagans and was driven off with some injuries to himself. He withdrew, therefore, to a place in the neighborhood where for three days in sackcloth and ashes, continuously fasting and praying…[t]hen suddenly two angels stood before him, looking like heavenly warriors, with spears and shields. They said that the Lord had sent them to rout the rustic host and give Martin protection…So he returned to the village and, while crowds of pagans watched in silence, the heathen sanctuary was razed to its foundations and all its altars and images reduced to powder.99

Even, when beaten back, Martin sought not sword or blade, but God. He ventured on a period of intensified ascetic practices. He employed prayer and fasting, which are seemingly passive actions. Yet, these actions were quite dynamic because prayer tapped straight into the source, from which Martin derived his agency. His trust in the power of God was more effective than a horde of soldiers in his missionary duties. Moreover, the fantastic display of his spiritual power, according to Severus, was a minor tool of conversion, for “[m]ore often, however, when the rustics were protesting against the destruction of their shrines, he so subdued their pagan hearts by his holy preaching that the light of the truth penetrated to them and they themselves

threw down their own temples.” Martin’s virtue was the most efficient inspiration for conversion.

**Spiritual Powers Inform the Episcopate**

Severus presented Martin as a monk-bishop who derived his authority from his ascetic practices, but Martin also used his spiritual powers to enlighten his duties as bishop. In particular, he engaged his powers in his duty to the ill of his community and to shaping the spiritual landscape of his see, which included conversion of pagans, establishment of pilgrimage sites, and denunciation of false prophets. Martin possessed the ability to draw on spiritual powers for aid in his decisions. The powers that he had accumulated through ascetic practices permitted him to attack his duties as bishop from a different perspective. His connection to God encouraged him to look to God in every situation, and negated the necessity of connecting with secular authority.

Martin’s usual weapon of prayer extends into the various descriptions of Martin’s healings. At one point while he was healing a paralyzed girl from Trier, “first he resorted to his usual weapons in cases of this kind and prostrated himself on the ground in prayer.” The healings themselves range from the revival of the dead [Chapter 7, 8] to the curing of blindness [Chapter 19], not to mention an abundance of exorcisms. The most interesting aspect of Martin’s healings was that his most miraculous, i.e. the re-animation of the dead, occurred before he was voted into the

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100 Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 15.
102 It is important to note that there was no clearly defined line separating healing and exorcism, as many illnesses were considered to involve being possessed by a demon. The healing of Tetradius in 17 is one such healing.
bishop’s seat of Tours. The relationship between his healings and his progressing spiritual powers was exceptional. In the beginning, Martin had to lay on the dead for hours in order to bring them back to life, but eventually he only had to lie for a short time in prayer to enliven the dead (the difference between the story in chapter 7 and 8). Martin’s healing in one sense embodied just a manifestation of his duties as bishop, since a good bishop tended to the sick in his see. Moreover, his healings were also demonstrative of his connection to God through his asceticism.

The manner in which Martin was able to administer to the ill was particularly novel. Martin did not provide food or healing treatments, like balms and poultices, but he brought the possibility of complete *salus*. He healed one woman through the dispensation of oil [Chapter 16], another through a letter, which he had touched [Chapter 19]. In fact, when administering to the sick his first course of action was prayer, so that when he healed a girl suffering from paralysis:

First he resorted to his usual weapons in cases of this kind and prostrated himself on the ground in prayer. Then, after looking at the sick girl, he asked to be given some oil. This he blessed, then poured the hallowed liquid, now a powerful remedy, into the girl’s mouth. At once her voice came back to her. Then, at his touch, little by little each of her limbs began to recover its life. Finally in the sight of all, she rose and stood firmly on her feet.

Martin embraced prayer. His blessings were such that he transformed ordinary oil into a powerful remedy, which had the ability to cure the child of her malady. Only through God were these transformations possible, and Martin becomes a vessel through which God has the ability to channel his power and tend to people.

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103 Salvation or health, which Martin has the ability to offer simultaneously.

104 Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 17. This episode is also referenced in the Dialogue II, part II. Here Severus names the bishops who were present during this healing. Also, this episode shares similarities with an episode in Dialogue 2.3, in which Martin blesses oil for the Wife of Count Avitianus. The vial containing the oil magically filled to the brim with oil.
In this way, Severus differentiated Martin from the other bishops, for Martin had the ability to use powers derived from God in his capacity as bishop. During a visit to Trier, Martin simultaneously expelled a demon and converted a pagan.

...a serf of a man of proconsular rank named Tetradius, having been entered by a demon, was dying in pitiably agonies. Martin was therefore asked to lay his hands on him. He ordered the man be brought to him, but it proved impossible to get the wicked spirit out of the hut where he was, such frenzied attacks did he make with his teeth on anyone who approached. Tetradius then came and knelt at the knees of the man of blessings and begged him to come himself to the house where the demoniac. Martin, however, protested that he could not go to the unhallowed house of a pagan. ...He [Tetradius] therefore promised that, if the demon was expelled from the boy, he would become a Christian. Martin then laid his hands on the boy and drove the evil spirit out of him. Tetradius, on seeing this, made profession of faith in the Lord Jesus. 105

Here, Martin performed his office by ensuring the conversion of a pagan and the healing of the ill in his diocese. Martin accomplished these daunting tasks by laying hands upon the boy, not by forcible violence or calling in the best exorcist. He could mitigate the change through his own capacities as he had done in similar situations previously.

The same connections are made during his other capacities as bishop. When Martin determined whether or not a pilgrimage site adhered to religious dictums, he looked not to the history of a region, but to his spiritual powers. Case in point, a pilgrimage site near his monastery in Tours.

There was even an altar there, erected by previous bishops. But Martin did not lightly give credence to uncertainties, and made constant efforts to get from older priests and clerics the name of the martyr and the occasion when he suffered. He explained that he felt grave doubts of conscience, seeing that no certain and settled tradition had come down to them. For some time, he kept away from the place, not condemning the cultus, since he was not sure of his ground, but at the same time not lending his authority to popular opinion, in case he should be strengthening a superstition. Then one day he took with him a few of the brethren and went to the place. Standing on the grave itself, he prayed to Our Lord to make it known who was buried there and what his character had been. Then, turning to the left, he saw a ghost close by, foul and grim. He ordered him to give his name and character. He gave his name and confessed to a guilty past. He had been a robber, and had been executed for his crimes, but had become an object of devotion through a mistake of the common people. 106

He conversed with the spirit of the dead after his inquiries were unfruitful. Martin used his clairvoyance to reshape the spiritual environment for his parishioners. The cult that had arisen near Marmoutier resulted in Martin yet again evoking prayer, prayer that he exercised as a weapon to protect his flock from being misguided. Yet again, he wielded it with skill, so that by focusing on the Lord for his answer, he was able to find a solution to the issue. The ghost, who was an executed thief, Martin envisioned as a result was both foul and grim. He debunked popular opinion, so that he could uncover the veracity of the martyr. The official change, which was the derogation of the pilgrimage site, he executed in the capacity of bishop. Yet, the authority and reasoning behind the decision all derived from his ascetic practices. Prayer, which was such a key component in his quotidian ministrations, was applied in order to ascertain valuable insight to a predicament that was altering the spiritual landscape of his diocese.

Determining the validity of pilgrimage locales coincided with the deflation of false prophets. These pretenders included: a young man, Anatolius, in the hermitage of Clarus, a former follower of Martin [Chapter 23], a youth in Spain purporting to be Elijah [Chapter 24], and the devil himself masquerading as Christ [Chapter 24]. Each of these individuals posed a threat to the community that Martin was attempting to build. All were focused on the corruption of the souls in his diocese, which Martin was sworn to protect. They acted as deceivers, and Martin because of his holiness, which arose from his asceticism, had the capacity to expose them as frauds. For example, Anatolius

…who used the monastic way of life to make a false display of humility and innocence, and for a time shared the common life with the others…began to speak of angels that were in the
habit of conversing with him. As nobody would credit this, he produced certain manifestations that did induce a number to believe. Eventually he reached the point of asserting that angelic messengers passed between himself and God; and it was now his ambition to be regarded as one of the prophets. But nothing could persuade Clarus to believe in him with the wrath of God and immediate chastisement for not believing in a saint...[a]t daybreak he [Clarus] took Anatolius by the hand with the intention of taking him to Martin, being well aware that Martin could not be taken in by a trick of the devil. At this the wretched man began to resist and protest loudly, saying that he had been forbidden to show himself to Martin. And when he was being forced to go against his will, between the hands of those who were dragging him the [manifestation] disappeared.107

Anatolius had no desire to encounter Martin because Martin could see through his charade. Just the threat of Martin was enough to discredit the faux prophet and his sham evidence. Martin’s appearance did not even come to fruition, for the simulation to be terminated. Moreover, Martin’s inability to be corrupted led the devil to seek out the weak for corruption. Martin “could not be taken in by a trick of the devil” to believe that Anatolius was the perfect monk because of the traits he possessed. He made a false display of humility and innocence. Later, he had ambitions to be named a prophet. This description directly contrasted with Martin, who embraced humility before he was a monk, and never desired to be of a higher station. Even, when he was elected bishop, Martin had to be dragged to Tours. Martin was the epitome of an ascetic, who assumed responsibilities and the mantles of office, but he never aspired to positions of grandeur. After many healings and various other miracles, Martin never demanded the title prophet. Anatolius pursued the ascetic lifestyle under false pretenses, which the devil was able to manipulate to his advantage. A true, devoted ascetic could not be manipulated by the promise of fame.

Furthermore, Martin’s encounters with the devil in the guise of Christ reinforced the values of asceticism and the incorruptibility of Martin’s character.

One day [the devil] announcing himself by a salutation, he came and stood before Martin as he was praying in his cell. He was enveloped in a bright red light, thinking to deceive more easily if shone with borrowed splendor. He wore, too, a royal robe and was crowned with a diadem of gems and gold, and gold gleamed upon his shoes. His face was serene and his expression joyful, so that he should be thought anything rather than the devil… ‘Martin,’ he said, ‘you see me. Acknowledge me. I am Christ. I am about to come down upon the earth and I wished first to manifest myself to you.’… Then enlightened by the Holy Spirit, Martin knew that it was the devil and not our Lord. ‘The Lord Jesus’, said he, ‘did not say that he would come in purple robe and glittering diadem. I will only believe in a Christ who comes in the garments and lineaments of His Passion, who comes bearing upon Him the wounds of the Cross.’

Ostentation distinguished the devil from Christ in this tale. Martin, having been instructed in the tenets of asceticism, took exception to the amount of finery present. Martin following the dictums of Christ clothed himself simply and expected Christ to do the same. While this faux Christ descended in gold, gems, and purple robes demanding to be called Christ, the Holy Spirit enlightened Martin because he had opened himself to it. Through his ascetic practices, he had allowed himself the ability to communicate with God in a different manner. His years of devotion found expression in his duty as bishop. As the head of the diocese, any mistake that he made in a spiritual capacity could influence his parishioners to the detriment of all. Martin by necessity needed to remain untouchable by the ills of the devil. Here, he blocked the devil and ensured the religious sanctity of his see. In this way, he performed his duty to his parishioners by evoking his ascetic knowledge and embracing the Holy Spirit.

The Reception of the Vita

St. Martin had the rather unique experience of his hagiography being released during his lifetime. Within the Vita, Severus exclaimed:

Indeed, I have come across some who were so envious of his spiritual powers and his life as actually to hate in him what they missed in themselves but had not the strength to imitate

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And—oh, grievous and lamentable scandal!—nearly all his calumniators—there were not a great many—...were bishops.109

Such an outburst was hardly evidence of an uncontroversial reception. In fact, the publication of the *Vita* had several implications for Martin’s episcopate, as well as for its author’s budding episcopal career. On the one hand, it was widely disseminated and embraced by hordes of people. On the other hand, it housed lots of controversial material: the discussion of miracles, the criticism of other bishops, and the characterization of Martin himself. In fact, the book became such a controversial work that Sulpicius Severus aimed much of his time at addressing naysayers. He even described Martin himself as “constantly weeping...for the sins of those whom he believed to be his calumniators—men who, with poisoned tongues and the bites of adders, used to pick him to pieces in his retired and peaceful life.”110 This contentiousness resulted in Severus composing three letters on Martin and the Dialogues, in particular Dialogue 2 and 3.111 In Dialogue II, especially, Severus took up a rousing defense of Martin. He defends Martins against allegations of heresy [Chapter 11-12] and false spiritual powers [Chapter 5-6]. He made a career out of his defense.

Letter I to the Priest Eusebius sheds light on the readership of the *Life*, and its reception. It begins:

Yesterday a number of monks came to see me, and there was continual story-telling and prolonged conversation. In the course of it, mention was made of a little book I have

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111 Dialogue I also contains some commentary on Marin, but its main focus was on some of the issues arising in the East over Origen, as well as the constant bickering between the monks and bishops in the East over various religious issues. While interesting, it generally does not shed much light on Martin, other than to argue that he is a good bishop.
published on the life of that saintly man Martin and I was very pleased to hear that it is being eagerly and widely read. At the same time I was informed of a remark made by someone prompted by a malicious demon: how was it that (he had asked) that Martin, who had raised the dead and averted flames from houses, was liable himself to dangerous accidents and had recently been badly burnt in a fire.\footnote{Severus, "Three Letters of Sulpicius Severus." These letters are also known as the epistles.}

Within the first section of the letter the reader was bombarded with some striking information: the readership of the \textit{Vita}, the aspersions on the veracity of its content and the characterization of Martin, and the defense that Severus felt obligated to mount. The letter revealed that Martin had undergone criticism with regards to the exercising of his spiritual powers. His abilities to heal and to avert disaster were called into question by many. Its wide distribution left it open to critique since anyone and everyone could have some form of contact with it. Moreover, as in the epistle it was made clear that the \textit{Life of Martin} seemed aimed at the religious community—the readers displayed here were monks. The addressee of the letter was a priest and the second letter was sent to a deacon. Severus intended for his “libellum”\footnote{“Little book”} not only to spread the fame of Martin, but also to act as a didactic tool, which illuminated how others could be holy men in the midst of a secular world. While it seems that the monks that congratulated Severus in the letter were quite enthralled by the character presented in the \textit{Vita}, others appeared not to have been so convinced and Severus took much time to respond to these insults to the saintliness of Martin.

\textbf{Conclusion}

St. Martin cut a unique figure among the bishops of his day. By embracing the tenets of the ascetic lifestyle long before he had the freedom to pursue the life and ascetic, Martin established himself as a monk among soldiers. Once released from his
military duties, he assumed others, and as the elected bishop of Tours derived his authority not from secular rulers, or Church titles, but from the asceticism, which he practiced until his death. The spiritual powers derived from his lifestyle informed his decisions as bishop whether he was converting pagans or establishing the legitimacy of pilgrimage sites. He was able to fulfill his duties in an extraordinary manner. Martin cared for the sick by healing them himself. He converted pagans by prayer, preaching, and the exercising of spiritual powers. Martin had the special vocation of monk-bishop in the late antique world.

Sulpicius Severus used the Life of Martin to foster his depiction of the good bishop. It was written during Martin’s life. All the criticism and negative feedback Martin encountered while still alive, and as a result Severus made a career out of counteracting the negative backlash that surfaced after he published the Vita. He emphasized Martin’s ascetic lifestyle and the authority that he derived from it in each of his works. While Severus intentionally connected Martin to St. Antony by referencing the desert and Martin’s desire for asceticism, he distinguished Martin from Antony by depicting him as a “social” monk. Where Antony withdrew from the world in every manner possible, even from his fellow monks. Martin engaged with the world whether it was with fellow monks or with his hordes of parishioners. Severus, having been raised in a traditional Roman home, searched for a figure that could combine the mores of Roman aristocracy with the simplicity of Christian asceticism. Martin embodied that figure for Severus. He even had the ability to meet with Martin and receive instruction from him. He depicted Martin as a monk, who engaged in the official capacity of a bishop, but had the ability to balance his ascetic
practices with his episcopal duties. More importantly, Martin possessed a spiritual authority that made him an efficient bishop. The power he derived from years of aesthetic practices informed his actions as bishop, and often while in commission of his duties he turned to these powers and his spiritual weapons chest to fulfill his tasks.
Bibliography


Part III
The Individual and the Community
Introduction to a Comparison

While St. Antony and St. Martin were distinguished as holy men, their approach to holiness though fundamentally similar, i.e. a devotion to asceticism, manifested itself quite differently in practice. Severus represents St. Martin as a “social monk,” an individual who despite his interactions with the secular world maintained his ascetic and religious values. Severus insisted that Martin “…remained the same man as before. There was the same humble heart and the same poverty-stricken clothing; and, amply endowed with authority and tact, he fully sustained the dignity of the episcopate without forsaking the life or the virtues of the monk.”\(^{114}\) Athanasius focuses on St. Antony’s desire to withdraw from the world, even from people who practiced asceticism similarly. Their different characterizations created two models for the pursuit of the ascetic way of life: one for the life of an anchorite and the other for the life of a bishop-monk, with heavy emphasis on the fulfillment of episcopal duties. The result was essentially two hagiographical texts that served as didactic manuals, propaganda, inspiration, and spiritual guides.

In particular, the didactic component demonstrated how to approach various situations while performing different functions. For instance, the manner in which Martin and Antony respond to the letters of emperors. Antony refused to answer until hassled by a monk to address the correspondence. Martin accepted as it constituted part of his duties to his diocese and asserted ecclesiastical authority in the secular world, while Antony took pains to avoid it completely. This episode represents one of many, in which Martin was forced to interact with the secular world. Antony, on the

other hand, showcased humility. In this way, Antony epitomized an independent entity with the autonomy to adhere to his personal ascetic journey. Martin, however, embodied an independent agent working within the confines of an established system, the Church. He used somewhat novel methods to fulfill his role as bishop, which obligated him to have continuous contact with the world outside of Marmoutier.

Withdrawal

St. Antony spent the majority of his adult life attempting to avoid people as much as possible. Whenever anyone intruded on his space, he fled. At the edge of the village, he felt too accessible, so he withdrew to the tombs nearby. After a time at the tombs, he secluded himself in an abandoned fort where “[h]e remained alone in the place, neither going out himself nor seeing any of those who visited.”\(^\text{115}\) Once people broke down the door and decided to stay, he retreated to a mountain in the middle of a desert since “…he saw that he was disturbed by many people and was not allowed to retire as he intended and wished.”\(^\text{116}\) St. Martin, however, did not do the same. He withdrew from contact with the world on two occasions: after he had been driven from Milan to the island of Gallinaria and after his election to the episcopate of Tours. Severus stated that “[f]or a time he occupied a cell next to the cathedral. Then, when he could no longer endure the disturbance from his many visitors, he made himself a hermitage about two miles from the city.”\(^\text{117}\) Here St. Martin actively

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avoided the hordes of people who invaded his space. In this act, they were similar. They required calm and silence to pursue their ascetic practices.

Solitude was crucial for their devotions, especially for Antony. It allowed him time for meditation, so that

… withdrawing by himself, as was his custom, to his own cell, [he] intensified his discipline and sighed daily, reflecting on the dwellings in heaven, both longing for these and contemplating the ephemeral life of human beings. For also when he was about to eat or sleep or to attend to the other bodily necessities, he was ashamed as he thought about the intellectual part of the soul.  

The seclusion allowed Antony to re-evaluate his practices. For Antony removing himself from the secular world was not enough, he had to limit contact with any humans. His cell on the mountain permitted him to avoid any human interaction and focus on intensifying his ascetic practices. Humans, no matter their vocation, for Antony represented distractions. Indeed, at the eve of his death the monks begged for him to remain at the base of the mountain, but he would not. He refused citing that “[t]he Egyptians love to honor with burial rites and to wrap in linens the bodies of their worthy dead, and especially of the holy martyrs, not burying them in the earth…[and was] afraid that they might perform it for his body.”  

Antony feared that the locals would override the monks and fail to give him proper burial. His desire for inhumation notwithstanding, it is his persistent fear that others will taint his spiritual purity that possessed significance. His primary disquiet stemmed from this obsession with separation. He concentrated on the salvation offered through God, which would be granted through self-discipline. Solitude provided him with clarity.

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Personal reflection was key to advancing his asceticism and his detachment from the world instituted a crucial part of his ritual.

The monastery at Marmoutier for Martin played the same role as the desert for Antony. From the beginning Severus informed his readers that he “was soon in the most wonderful way wholly taken up with the work of God and at the age of twelve longed for the desert.” Martin’s desert, however, consisted not of sand and sun, but of a community of monks, for “[t]he place was so secluded and remote that it had all the solitude of the desert.” Marmoutier gave him spiritual succor, which was much needed after his constant contact with the outer world, as Martin often returned to the monastic life as a means of recharging his spiritual reserves after prolonged contact with the dealings of the outside world. After a particularly intense confrontation with other bishops, he mourned the loss of his power, saying, “…that because of that evil act of participation he felt a diminution of spiritual power….” Here, he participated in communal meals, masses, and prayer. In fact, the monastery was completely geared toward the discipline of asceticism where “[h]is own cell was built of wood, as were those of many of the brethren; but most of them had hollowed out for themselves in the rock of the overhanging mountain. There were about eighty disciples there, being trained in the pattern of their most blessed master.” Martin helped fashion a world where the disruptions of the secular world could not impact him, so “…that the grace of God that had been temporarily diminished in him was

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restored to him with interest."\textsuperscript{124} The community offered him respite from the strain of his episcopal duties and his secular connections.

**Interaction with Other Ascetics**

Yet, while Antony desired or rather insisted on seclusion even from fellow ascetics, Martin engaged more readily with his religious brethren. Antony spent the remaining years of his life at the top of a mountain and those who wished to follow him settled at the base. He would travel down for brief visits and the monks themselves would visit once a month. Prolonged contact with his monks was minimal though “[h]e came…customarily, to inspect the monks who resided in the outer mountain….”\textsuperscript{125} The monks themselves would receive the advice he followed in his own life from Antony: “to have faith in the Lord and love; to guard themselves from lewd thoughts and pleasures of the flesh, and as it is written in Proverbs, not to be deceived by the feeding of the belly; to flee vanity, and to pray constantly….”\textsuperscript{126} His contact was brief. Martin, however, engaged in prolonged contact. Twice, he settled in communities with numerous ascetics: Ligugé and Marmoutier. Marmoutier became his prime residence once he became bishop of Tours. Everything in this community was shared in a way lacking in Antony’s life.\textsuperscript{127} When he was with his monks, he shared everything in kind. Isolation from the secular world sufficed for Martin, but for Antony only total reclusion from everyone, including his fellow ascetics, was enough.

\textsuperscript{125} Athanasius, *The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, 89.
\textsuperscript{126} Athanasius, *The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, 55.
\textsuperscript{127} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 23.
Antony, even on those rare occasions when surrounded by those with common interests, found interactions with other ascetics disturbing. During those times when Antony willingly communicated with the other monks, he appeared “…as if bringing provisions from the mountain, he entertained them with his words, and lent his assistance.”\textsuperscript{128} He offered aid and consolation. Yet, Antony was reluctant to prolong such meetings, fearing in particular pride, “apprehensive that, because of the things the Lord was doing through him, either he might become pridelful or someone else might think more of him than was warranted….”\textsuperscript{129} He worried that others would see him as powerful in his own right and worship him instead of the Lord. He feared the impact such status would have on his own soul as well as those of others. Antony’s solution to this dilemma was the reduction of any personal contacts. During his stint in the fort, after he had amassed a following, “[f]requently when he was about to have a meal in the company of many other monks, recalling the spiritual food, he would excuse himself and go some distance from them, thinking he would blush if he were seen eating by others.”\textsuperscript{130} He did not seem comfortable with a simple meal in the company of his brothers. Antony appeared self-consciousness at the thought of performing a bodily function in public, even thought it was not out of the ordinary.\textsuperscript{131} The community at the base of the mountain was loosely organized, but communal meals and the performance of mass were standard practice. His self-inflicted isolation resulted in a detachment from his brothers. Though they sought his company and

\textsuperscript{128} Athanasius, \textit{The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus}, 54.
\textsuperscript{129} Athanasius, \textit{The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus}, 49.
\textsuperscript{130} Athanasius, \textit{The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus}, 45.
\textsuperscript{131} “And the brothers who served him asked him if when they came every month…” Athanasius, \textit{The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus}, 51.
wisdom, he could never truly be at ease for long periods of time or at social events in
general.

On the other hand, though Martin lived in his cell alone, he was quite
comfortable engaging with his fellow ascetics. In his early years, after being driven
out of Milan, he “retired to an island named Gallinaria, with a priest of many virtues
as his companion,” and while he was in residence at Ligugé, a “catechumen joined
him, who wished to be trained by this most holy man.” Once Marmoutier was
established, Martin often participated in common activities, so that “[i]t was seldom
that anyone left his cell except when they assembled at the place of worship. All
received their food together after the fast was ended.” He lived by community
standards, which he helped to implement and enforce. Martin exemplified the perfect
monk, one who could both fulfill his duties to his Church and exercise a strict self-
discipline. In addition, Marmoutier spawned other communities, such as the one
founded by Clarus. Clarus was of noble birth, who “…had left all and gone to join
Martin and very soon was a shining example of the highest degree of faith and of all
virtues. He had established himself in a hut not far from the Bishop’s monastery and
had many brethren living round him.” He continuously communicated with other
monks, even with those who had left his community. In fact, when Clarus had trouble
with an upstart named Anatolius, it was from Martin whom he sought clarification,
for “[a]t daybreak he [Clarus] took Anatolius by the hand with the intention of taking
him to Martin, being well aware that Martin could not be taken in by a trick of the

devil.”

Carris, even after leaving Martin’s community at Marmoutier, continued to defer to his opinion. Clarus had no qualms about reaching out to him because Martin made no attempt to elude him or the other brothers in any way. The communities he built at Marmoutier and Ligugé offered support and retreat. Martin considered the brothers as his colleagues and comrades, not hindrances.

Martin and Antony interacted with the ascetics in their communities quite differently. Martin was pleased to live with those who had the same spiritual goals. He used them to recuperate after his jaunts into the outside world and often found himself participating in mass and meals with them. His monastery served as a retreat in which he could freely devote himself to his ascetic practices. Antony had an odd relationship with the monks who were near him. At times, he was never fully comfortable in their presence; though they shared similar aims of self-discipline and devotion, he felt self-conscious when engaging in communal life, blushing at the thought of sharing a common meal. Once he relocated to the mountain, he often used the monks at the base as a sort of buffer to protect him from the rest of the world. He had them intercept visitors and even correspondence. Yet, when he learned of his death, he chose to face it alone. His need to withdraw forced him to separate himself even from his fellow monks. Antony directly contrasted with Martin in his desire to minimize any type of social contact even among his brothers. Antony epitomized the anti-social ascetic, who found human interaction on any level a threat. Martin embodied a social monk in the sense that he could maintain relationships with his brethren without fear that he was corrupting his ascetic practice. Each offered an

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alternative for following the ascetic lifestyle—the independent ascetic could chose to live alone and the ascetic who desired a community that would provide support and order, could chose the monastery.

**Temptations**

A marked difference between Martin and Antony was the presence of temptation in their journeys to become holy men. Martin had a unique absence of temptations in his life. During his time as a soldier, he was said to have the demeanor of a monk. Once elected bishop, Martin had secured the foundations of asceticism and monasticism, so that he assumed the role of exemplary monk-bishop, whose major concern was completion of his duties. Antony, however, presented a less single-minded figure, who had more frequent struggles with temptation. In the beginning, he wrestled with the blandishments of comfort\textsuperscript{137}, leisure, companionship, and later on pride. His perseverance was all the more impressive because he had countered all the threats to his self-discipline. These different depictions of the saint’s experience of temptation present alternate versions of holy men: Antony, who was constantly reasserting his devotion to asceticism and Martin, who from the beginning fulfilled his religious duties with a daunting self-control.

Antony constantly was confronted with snares, which he summarily overcame. In the beginning, the devil’s lures struck at the heart of what men of Antony’s rank were taught to value: glory, posterity, wealth, family ties, and involvement in the community coupled with well-deserved leisure. All of these items

\textsuperscript{137} The devil attempted to mislead Antony by suggesting that asceticism was an intense way of life and that he was abdicating enjoyment of well-prepared food, comfortable furniture, and companionship.
would link Antony to the secular society from which he desired to withdraw. Antony responded by evoking prayer and maintaining his resolve. After Anthony overcame these allurements, the devil resorted to the temptation of lust:

\[\text{…[the devil] placed his confidence in the weapons in the navel of his belly, and boasting in these (for they constitute his first ambush against the young), he advanced against the youth…one hurled foul thoughts and the other overturned them through his prayers; the former resorted to titillation, but the latter, seeming to blush, fortified the body with faith and with prayers and fasting.}\]

Antony resisted by intensifying his ascetic practices. He subjugated his body through fasting and prayer. While the devil attacked the saint again and again, “more and more then he [Antony] mortified the body and kept it under subjection, so that he would not, after conquering some challenges, trip up in others.”

Antony offered a method for addressing the temptations of the world—amplification of his asceticism. Years later his first confrontation with temptation, after a fairly ostentatious display in Alexandria [Antony 46], Antony having been enticed by pride turned to this coping skill, therefore “[h]e subjected himself to an even greater and more strenuous asceticism, for he was always fasting, and he had clothing with hair on the interior and skin on the exterior that he kept until he died.”

He persistently intensified his ascetic practices in an effort to keep the devil at bay. Antony’s life stressed his role as an ascetic, and made it clear that even after decades of devotion temptation remained an obstacle that he had to actively combat. For those men with the determination to pursue the ascetic lifestyle, Antony gave them instruction and solutions to a bevy of spiritual conundrums. The numerous references to temptation and daily exercises made his life a manual for the aspiring ascetic.

140 Athanasius, The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus, 47.
Martin, on the other hand, never was subject to vice. He seemed immune to women from the beginning, even as a lowly soldier. Severus described him as a model of virtue never affected by banal human vices:

Great was his kindness towards his fellow-soldiers, and wonderful his charity, while his patience and humility were more than human. As for abstinence, it is superfluous to praise it in him. He practiced it to such an extent that even at that time he was regarded as a monk rather than as a soldier.¹⁴¹

The usual pursuits of soldiers, i.e. liquor and women, never touched Martin. He lived as a monk within the secular world to such an extent that the temptation of a different way of living never swayed him. In the latter part of his life, no inveiglements induced him to abandon his asceticism,

[as for vanity and boastfulness, he met them with such indomitable spirit that no one ever trampled on those vices more vigorously than he, and yet he was constantly curing at a distance those possessed by evil spirits and was obeyed not only by counts and governors but even by emperors.]¹⁴²

He wielded extensive power, but arrogance tainted none of his actions. Severus presented him as the reverse of a braggart, and unlike Antony, he was did not fear that pride would influence his actions. Martin “trampled on” this vice even while exercising his spiritual power and religious authority. He worked effortlessly for his flock because they were his largest concern as a bishop. Temptations would have been an unwelcome distraction from his official tasks.

While both Athanasius and Severus wish to present their subjects as paragons of virtue, Severus represents Martin as a virtuous and most exemplary bishop. The asceticism that formed the basis of his spiritual powers was essentially taken for granted in Martin’s life. Though there are various situations in which Martin called upon his ascetic practices, there was a notable absence of personal spiritual conflict in

¹⁴² Severus, "The Dialogues," 1.25.
his life. Those times when he evoked his ascetic practices were during his fulfillment of his ecclesiastical obligations. In contrast, Athanasius used Antony’s endurance as propaganda for asceticism, insisting that such discipline was the product of the ascetic life. Antony did not bypass the personal spiritual conflict. He warred with personal duty, women, and even pride. In this way, Antony counteracted the snares that distracted people daily. He offered a more realistic view of the lures that needed to be refused. Antony exemplified the perfect ascetic, who counteracted the devil with the tools he had cultivated through years of devotional practices.

**Communicating with Emperors and Other Secular Authorities**

Another factor on which the saints differed was their manner of interaction with secular rulers. Martin attended feasts and maintained communication with an Emperor. Severus wrote with reverence that even when Martin “…had to petition the Emperor on somebody’s behalf, he commanded rather than requested…”\(^\text{143}\) Martin insisted that the Church’s authority superceded any secular authority, even that of the emperor. In his relations with secular power, he used his interactions to promote the agenda of the Church. Antony took an entirely different stance, just as he tried to avoid visitors, so too he avoided engaging in correspondence with emperors:

\[\text{\textit{w}}\text{hen Constantine Augustus and his sons Constantius Augustus and Constans Augustus learned of these things [fame], they wrote to him as to a father and begged to receive responses from him. He did not, however, make a great deal of the writings, nor did he rejoice at the letters, rather he was just as he had been before the emperor wrote to him…. He preferred not to receive the letters, saying that he did not know how to respond to such things. But urged on by the monks, on the grounds that the rulers were Christians, and in order that they not to take offense at being rebuffed, he permitted them to be read. And he wrote in response, acknowledging them for their worship of Christ, and he offered counsel on things pertaining to salvation…}\(^\text{144}\)

\(^{143}\) Severus, "The Life of St. Martin." 20.

Like Martin, he found such letters intrusive telling his monks to “…not consider it marvelous if a ruler writes to us for he is a man. Marvel, instead, that God wrote the law for mankind, and has spoken to us through his own Son,”¹⁴⁵ but unlike Martin he had the ability to evade such contacts for a time. The saints employed different tactics in similar situations because of their vocations.

Antony’s aim throughout his life was withdrawal from society. The letter from the emperor highlighted how his status as a holy man might come into conflict with this goal. As a result of the spirituality authority derived from his ascetic practices, he had assumed a new place in society. For that reason, people sought Antony out as an intermediary to God on their behalf. This new vocation even inspired the emperor to write, thus Antony was confronted with the writings of a major official. Antony only permitted the letters to be read at the urgings of his monks. Once read, he responded to them only concerning religious matters and their Christian duty imploring them “…not to count present realities as great, but rather to consider the coming judgment, and to recognize that Christ alone is true and eternal ruler,”¹⁴⁶ and “to be men of human concern, and to give attention to justice and to the poor.”¹⁴⁷ His instruction was based on his status as a holy man. He did not veer outside of his religious duty. In fact, one could argue that he gave them fairly commonplace advice, which would be applicable to any Christian. He possessed no desire to become a personal religious guru to the emperors, and the lack of advice specific to their position in the letters was indicative of that wish. As an autonomous spiritual figure, he could perpetuate

his detachment from society even when courted by the most influential and powerful of correspondents.

Martin cultivated a much different relationship with the Emperor Maximus, based on his role as bishop. Martin had various episcopal responsibilities including, but not limited to, providing for the poor in his diocese; interceding for members of his see, in particular prisoners; promoting the Church’s doctrine; and fostering a working relationship with secular authority. Within Martin’s correspondence with the emperor, “he commanded rather than requested and, though frequently invited to his banquets, he kept away.”

Finally having accepted an invitation, he used the dinner to assert the position of the Church to the surprise of all, for

[t]owards the middle of the meal a servant, in accordance with custom, brought a goblet to the Emperor. He ordered it to be given instead to our most holy Bishop and waited expectantly to receive it from the Bishop’s own hands. But Martin, after drinking himself, passed the goblet to his priest, holding that no one had a better right to drink immediately after himself and that it would not be honest of him to give precedence over the priest either to the Emperor or to those who ranked next to him. The Emperor and all who were present were so struck by this action that the very gesture by which they had been humiliated became for them a source of pleasure.

Martin’s attendance at the banquet represented another opportunity for him to assert Church authority. Martin’s response to the Emperor was heavily influenced by the social nature of his vocation. He could not very well hide within his monastery.

He had duties that required him to travel and required him to petition secular authorities. For example, when a horrid disease struck the house of a Christian deputy praetorian prefect, Lycontius, Martin was sought:

…and Lycontius wrote to Martin imploring him to help… [and so] he [Martin] persevered with prayers and fasts for seven whole days and as many nights, until he had obtained what he had been asked to pray for. As soon as Lycontius found that God had granted this boon, he traveled at full speed to bring Martin the news…[and] he also brought as an offering a hundred pounds’ weight of silver. The man of blessing neither refused it or accepted it, but


before the load of silver had reached the threshold of the monastery he had already allocated it for redeeming captives.\textsuperscript{150}

Martin answered the letter by resorting to his ascetic practices, which was common. This episode reiterated Martin’s devotion to those who lived in his see, so that even a senior official could receive aid from Martin. Moreover, when Lycontius attempted to reward Martin, he automatically assigned the money to help in the performance of another duty—freeing prisoners. He constantly had to consider his ongoing responsibilities to his parish, even at the detriment to his own lifestyle. Martin was said to assert, “…that since he had been a bishop he had not possessed the gift of working miracles in anything like the same degree as he could remember possessing previously.”\textsuperscript{151} Clearly, the interaction with this broader world was quite draining, but he was unable to escape the duties allotted to him, even when supremely embarrassed, as an episode with the empress demonstrated [Dialogue 2.6]. The empress insisted on cooking him a meal, washing his hands, pouring his drink, cleaning his leavings, and attending to his stool and table, for “[i]ndeed, she matched the woman in the Gospels by watering the feet of the holy man with her tears and wiping them with her hair. Martin, whom no woman had ever touched, could not escape her constant presence, not to say, her menial service.”\textsuperscript{152} Martin, having disdain for female attention, had to submit to the interference of a woman. In some respects, this scene was indicative of the Church’s belief that secular authority should be subject to ecclesiastical authority at all times. In others, it was indicative of the incessant compromises that Martin had to make while interacting with the secular

\textsuperscript{150} Severus, "The Dialogues." 3.14.
\textsuperscript{151} Severus, "The Dialogues." 2.4.
\textsuperscript{152} Severus, "The Dialogues." 2.6.
world. A similar situation occurred in Dialogue 3.11, in which Martin was forced to take communion with a faction of bishops in order to procure the safety of prisoners. In the end, distraught after having joined in this act, only an angel could quiet his soul:

‘Martin,’ said he, ‘you have reason to feel compunction, but you had no other way out of your predicament. Rebuild your courage, get back your equanimity; or you will soon be imperiling not only your renown but your salvation.’

Martin was forced to reconcile his religious sentiments to his episcopal tasks. In the end, he made decisions for the good of his parish, even when it conflicted with his spiritual leanings.

The different approaches to communicating with the emperor stemmed from disparate careers. Antony’s sole occupation was holy man, while Martin enjoyed the title of monk-bishop. Antony could afford to avoid the letters of secular figures, and when he decided to answer their letters, he had recourse to generalities. He granted the secular authorities no special treatment. In fact, it appeared that he only replied to ensure that he could continue in his chosen solitude. Martin did not have the autonomy to ignore the emperor’s requests since he had to interact with him frequently. His meal with the emperor highlighted the various roles he had to assume. Martin had to maintain his ascetic virtues, and fulfill the role of bishop simultaneously. His interaction with secular authority and even religious factions caused him to compromise his spiritual commitments, and left him bereft. Martin’s rise to bishop came at the expense of his personal autonomy and resulted in him engaging with the world against his will.

Dates with Demons

Demons often appear in both saints’ lives. For Martin, demons either attempt to challenge his belief in God or cause chaos in his see. In order to bring confusion to Tours, the devil murdered a rustic bringing wood to his monastery [Chapter 21], disseminated rumors of a barbarian invasion [Chapter 18], possessed a cow [Dialogue 2.9], spurred discontent [Dialogue 3.15], fostered false prophets [Chapter 23, 24], and brought diseases [Chapter 17, Dialogue 2.8, Dialogue 3.6]. If those acts were not enough, the devil often by various acts attempted to dissuade Martin from his belief in God: he assumed various pagan forms [Chapter 22], appeared as Christ [Chapter 24], and berated Martin about the admittance to his monastery [Chapter 22].

Antony’s contact with demons consisted of similar experiences. In the beginning, the devil’s primary goal was to hinder Antony from traveling into the desert, so he manifested himself in different forms [Chapter 5, 6, 9], imposed physical torment [Chapter 8], and verbal abuse, as well as, employing persuasion and deceit [Chapter 13, 16, 41]. Once in the desert, the devil and his minions tried to discomfort Antony as much as possible by possessing humans and animals alike [Chapter 51, 52, 53, 63, 64, 71]. Both saints counteracted the devil’s persistent disruptions by having recourse to prayer or the sign of the cross. Not only did these confrontations with demons reflect the power of God; they also reflected the on-going struggle for the soul that every Christian had to endure. Antony presented a life in which asceticism was a tool

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Martin had admitted monks after their repentance into his community at Marmoutier, who had previously dishonored their vows of baptism. The devil supposedly took great pains to accuse Martin of sullying his monastery with unworthy individuals.
for salvation while Martin demonstrated the importance of a committed religious figure in sheltering the souls of his flock.

For Antony, this link between asceticism as a tool of salvation and the perpetual nature of spiritual struggle appeared in the language used to describe the various demon scenes. Athanasius repeatedly employs the language of competition and regularly refers to Antony’s conflicts as wrestling with the devil. After being attacked by the demons in the tomb, Athanasius writes that ‘the Lord did not forget the wrestling of Antony, but came to his aid,”155 and later whilst Antony was alone in the abandoned fort, he was said to have “…remained and suffered no injury from the demons, and neither did he grow tired of the contest.”156 Moreover, these competitions of will continued even after he had withdrawn to the desert and defeated the devil on several occasions. In one particularly striking scene, Antony perceived a beast that was half-man and half-donkey:

And rising he saw a beast resembling a man as far as the thigh, and having legs and feet like those of an ass. But Antony merely signed himself and said, ‘I am a servant of Christ. If you have been sent out against me—look, here I am!’ But the beasts with his demons fled with such haste that he fell and died. And the death of the beast was the downfall of the demons, for they were eager to do everything to drive him from the wilderness, and they were powerless to do so.157

Here, the demons failed yet again and seemed to have accepted that they would never be able to drive Antony from the desert. But even after acknowledging defeat, they did not end their intrusion into Antony’s solitude. They shifted their activities from Antony to other individuals in the area. At one point, when Antony was speaking with monks in a boat, “a certain demon-possessed young man who, entering earlier, had

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hidden himself in the boat, suddenly cried out.”\textsuperscript{158} When they had understood that Antony could not be driven from the desert, the demons entered on a series of harassments, which aimed at least to disturb Antony’s peace and calm. Antony persevered because of his continual self-discipline.

In Martin’s case, the sole goal of the demons seems to be the corruption of the entire see of Tours. If the devil and his demons could not influence Martin directly, they sought to trouble his constituents by fostering discord. Prime examples of this purpose were the rumors they spread concerning barbarian invasion and their propagation of false prophets. After Martin had dispelled them from two different households [Chapter 17], the demons decided to promote disorder throughout the city of Trier:

Meanwhile the city had been alarmed by a sudden rumor of a movement and inroad of the barbarians, so Martin ordered one of the demoniacs to be brought to him and told him to say whether the report was true. He admitted that there had been ten demons besides himself who had spread this rumor through the population, in the hope that by the ensuing panic, if by nothing else, Martin might be driven from the town; there was nothing further from the minds of the barbarians than an invasion.\textsuperscript{159}

The intent of the demons in this action was to remove Martin and therefore have a freer path for their activities. The threat of invasion in this time period was a very real one, which the demons used to inspire panic. Martin contended with these strokes by confronting the situation at its source: the demons, themselves. Martin as bishop had to ensure that he continued to be vigilant, but the laymen of his see were often more

\textsuperscript{158} Athanasius, \textit{The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus}, 63.  
\textsuperscript{159} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 18.
susceptible. Failing in this aim, the demons shifted to undermine the religious life of the congregation. In chapter 23, a monk named Anatolius\textsuperscript{160}…began to speak of angels that were in the habit of conversing with him. As nobody would credit this, he produced certain manifestations that did induce a number to believe. Eventually he reached the point of asserting that angelic messengers passed between himself and God; and it was now his ambition to be regarded as one of the Prophets.\textsuperscript{161}

Anatolius’ assertions that he should be considered a prophet and that he communed with angels were disruptive to the religious community. The demons looked to disrupt satellite religious communities, but the demons failed even in this attempt because Clarus chose to defer to Martin’s judgment by bringing Anatolius before the saint.

The presence of demons in the lives of the saints reiterated the daily contest for the soul. The demons in Antony’s life assaulted him personally. They targeted him for long periods of time with the express aim of discouraging his move into the desert; when they were incapable of seducing him, they settled for tactics of harassment. For Martin, the demons seemed determined to corrupt his entire see. They attempted to accomplish this task by manipulating Martin into naming a false Christ. Yet, when Martin held strong, they sought to achieve their purpose through contaminating his constituents and other religious communities. Martin demonstrated the need for a strong bishop, who could maintain vigilance. He acted as a spiritual buffer for those in his see. Antony illustrated how an ascetic could counteract the individual assaults of the devil. Both Martin and Antony exemplified how men could subdue the chaos that would arise in the routine of secular life but on different levels:

\textsuperscript{160} Anatolius joined the monastic community of Clarus, a former monk of Martin who had created his own community, under false pretenses.

\textsuperscript{161} Severus, "The Life of St. Martin," 18.
macro and micro. For Antony, his struggle was personal and centered wholly on the individual, while Martin had the responsibility for a throng of parishioners, whom he had to protect from the ills of the secular world and demons.

**Conclusion**

While Martin and Antony lived in different eras and parts of the empire, they were both inextricably linked by the practice of asceticism. Their asceticism resulted in the gift of various powers, which simultaneously served them in this world while proclaiming their loyalty to the next. Their lives were such that they inspired readers from the ancient world to the present day not only as manuals for asceticism, but also as examples of religious devotion. They differed in their fundamentally distinct approaches. Antony withdrew from the world as much as possible. Martin worked within it, as he had no other choice, as bishop.

Antony as an anchorite in the middle of the desert had the autonomy to pursue a lifestyle of self-imposed alienation. He even opted to die alone for fear that he would otherwise be embalmed in a manner not befitting a Christian. His entire life was a constant battle between intrusions and retreat. The more people encroached upon his privacy, the farther he fled from their presence, until he ended on a mountain in the desert. As his powers developed, he used them to erect even more barriers. He would send the monks at the base of the mountain to intercept visitors who he knew were coming weeks or months before. He responded to correspondence as a means to maintain his autonomy, and he avoided letters for long periods of time. Among his brethren, he appeared just as distant. His social skills were minimal at best, and he even blushed at meals with fellow ascetics, preferring to eat alone than be seen
engaging in a bodily function in public. Antony’s devotion to seclusion was extraordinary.

In contrast, Martin was one who was in the world, but not of it. He established himself early on as a monk, and later wasted no effort in fusing his monastic manners with his episcopal duties. The powers he had developed from years of ascetic practices were employed in his duties as bishop, including healing the sick and protecting his flock. He did not have the luxury of complete withdrawal from the secular world, so that Marmoutier became a retreat and location for him to recharge his spiritual reserves. Within his monastery, Martin found the peace of living with a community that shared a common aim—the cultivation of self-discipline. He felt at ease in the community, even helping to found similar communities elsewhere. In his dealings with the secular world, there he remained a true servant of the Church and a charismatic figure as a holy man. He communicated with emperors and other bishops frequently, and had no qualms about voicing his opinion on the relation between secular and ecclesiastical authority. Martin fostered long term relationships with his fellow-monks and a few bishops, which he nurtured throughout his life while holding fast to ascetic ideals. In this way, Martin distinguished himself as a “social” monk, a monk who could move fluidly through the secular and religious world, and maintain customary interactions with people.

Though both saints represented a path of salvation by the ascetic way of life, each had a shared obstacle to overcome—evil. In particular, they were perpetually confronted with the snares of the devil and his minions. They counteracted these manifestations of evil by constant prayer and fasting. Their lives served as a reminder
of the daily struggle for the soul. Martin demonstrated the importance of a strong leader, who ensured his congregation’s safety by combating demons at every turn. He reminded others of the power that one man could yield on behalf of others. Antony emphasized the importance of individual vigilance. He routed the enemy in tombs, abandoned forts, and desolate mountains, showing that any location could be a battleground for the soul. His devotion to these practices resulted in him not only conquering those sent against him, but also witnessing the rewards of the afterlife through the ascension of others. Their lives complemented each other for Martin showed the impact of a well-qualified religious leader on a larger community, Antony demonstrated what a dedicated individual could achieve through cultivating self-discipline.
Bibliography


Part IV
A Brief Summation
Conclusion

As we have seen, the depictions of Antony and Martin differed in emphasis. Athanasius promotes Antony as a self-isolating monk, who was unable to be comfortable even around other ascetics. In contrast, Severus presents Martin as a “social monk,” who maintains communication with other ascetics, even after they leave his community. For Severus, Martin’s career must be tied to the world of Antony, where monasticism first arose. He, therefore, speaks of Martin’s desire for the desert from an early age, and describes Marmoutier itself as a desert later in Martin’s life. Severus even has his text sent to the East, knowing that it will be especially prestigious if Martin can find a following in a region where the monastic lifestyle had been in existence long before it had become popular in the West. Each saint longed for the desert, but only Antony possessed the ability to live there continuously. Although, like his Eastern forefather, Martin found his “desert,” he was constantly forced to leave it in order to perform his ecclesiastical responsibilities. Thus, it was their differing roles in society that resulted in the dissimilar focuses of their lives.

In Antony’s case, his Life is primarily concerned with his personal spiritual journey. His readers often observe his wrestling with demons and temptations during his wanderings. As he attempts to flee the secular world, it is made clear that seclusion holds the key of salvation for Antony. His biography is able to be read as a spiritual progression that correlates to physical movement: the farther Antony withdraws into ever more isolated locations, the more he becomes a part of another world, in which he possesses mystical powers and special sight. Antony first
withdraws to the edge of his village, then to nearby tombs, next to an abandoned fort, and finally to a mountain in the middle of the desert with a monastery at its base. He experiences the power of healing either by healing others or being healed himself, and often perceives the assaults of demons, which become increasingly futile as Antony fortifies himself by the intensification of ascetic practices. Later in his life, once he had removed himself to a mountain, he is endowed with the ability to predict the appearance of visitors weeks in advance, and witnesses the ascension of souls into heaven. Moreover, his interactions with people become increasingly brief. The more people attempt contact him, the more he is repelled, until he sequesters himself on the mountain with the desert as a physical barrier and a monastery as a human buffer. Even, the monks who live at the base have only perfunctory dealings with him. The major motivation for his constant relocations is solitude. He desires the space for constant introspection. In this way, Antony’s life promotes the anchoritic life for those with the determination and self-discipline to abandon the comforts of the secular world for the promise of eternal salvation.

Martin’s life, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of effective religious leadership. Martin’s asceticism is often taken for granted. The Life advocates for a model bishop, who derives his authority from his spiritual resources. Unlike Antony, who had the ability to withdraw from the world, Martin was forced to engage with secular society in the fulfillment of his duties as bishop. Having been charged with the spiritual guidance of a see, he communicated with everyone from peasants to emperors; advocated for prisoners; founded a religious community, Marmoutier; healed the sick; converted many pagans; and preserved religious
orthodoxy. To fulfill these duties, he drew on his spiritual powers, such as his special
sight, which allowed him to perceive spirits and demons, and his ability to heal,
which he used to foster conversion on more than one occasion. Unfortunately, his
interaction with the wider world came at a price—the diminishment of his spiritual
potency. In an effort to counteract this effect, he took up residence in Marmoutier,
where he frequently returned to recharge his inner reserves. Here, he participated in a
religious community that provided him with the peace he could not attain in the
outside world. However, the fix was only temporary, because he could not shirk his
episcopal responsibilities. As he completed his obligations to his office, he repeatedly
had to put aside his personal spiritual aspirations for the greater good of his diocese,
so that his life became a model of how a religious leader should employ spiritual
authority for the benefit of his constituents.

For both saints withdrawal formed a crucial aspect of their ascetic practices.
Antony made his life a continual exercise in ascetic ideals, in which seclusion figured
prominently. He spent most of his life in search of new locales where he would be
uninterrupted in his self-reflection and daily practices. Martin, according to Severus,
yearned for the same type of life, but because of his position in the Church was forced
constantly into the world. In the end, both Martin and Antony were exemplary holy
men. Each possessed a spiritual power that elevated them in their respective societies,
with the result that both the powerful and the weak of late antiquity flocked to them
for healing, consolation, and spiritual guidance.