

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: NUMBER TWO HUNDRED

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Rule for Solitaries

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Translated with Introduction and Notes by
Andrew Thornton, OSB



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Abbreviations

- CC *Corpus Christianorum: series latina*. Brepols: Turnhout.
- CCCM *Corpus Christianorum: continuatio mediaevalis*. Brepols: Turnhout.
- Defensor *Defensor Locociagensis monachi Scintillarum Liber*. PL 88:597–718. See also: *Defensoris Locogiacensis monachi Liber Scintillarum*, ed. D. Henricus Rochais, O.S.B. CC vol. 117. Turnhout: Brepols, 1957. Since chapter 32 of this critical edition is not in PL, the chapter numbers thereafter are higher by one.
- Ep(p) *Epistula/ae*
- MGH *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
- PL *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J-P. Migne.
- RB The Rule of Saint Benedict
- SCh *Sources Chrétiennes. Les Éditions du Cerf*: Paris.

Introduction¹

This volume presents the first English translation of the *Regula solitariorum* of Grimlaicus, the first rule for people who live as cenobitic solitaries, that is, who live enclosed in a solitary area but within the context of a monastic community.²

There are a number of reasons for introducing Grimlaicus to those who read English. First, Grimlaicus' rule is far more than a list of regulations meant to govern an extreme form of the ascetical life. It contains a balanced theology of the contemplative life and a rationale for living this life in a way that fosters spiritual, psychological, and physical health. Second, Grimlaicus' rule is a splendid witness to the vitality of the patristic and monastic tradition between the Carolingian reform and the flowering of Cluniac and Cistercian monasticism. Grimlaicus is thoroughly familiar with the Rule of Saint Benedict and uses it as the foundation for a style of life quite different from that for which the Rule was intended. Third, through the rule of Grimlaicus, we meet its author. He acts as a conduit for a great tradition that reaches back to New Testament

¹ Portions of this introduction appeared as an article in the *American Benedictine Review*, 59, no. 2 (June 2008): 198–212. This material is used here by permission of the *American Benedictine Review*.

² This translation uses the Latin text of *Grimlaici presbyteri regula solitariorum* in *Codex Regularum Monasticarum et Canoniarum*, ed. Lucas Holstenius, vol. 1, critico-historical notes by Marianus Brockie (Augsburg: Adam & Veith, 1759), 291–344. (1957 repr. Vienna: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt). Holstenius' edition is reprinted in PL 103:574–664.

times, yet he also intends that readers hear his own voice, the voice of a man conscious of his fallibility yet confident in his authority; moderate and realistic in assessing situations and persons yet uncompromising in his pursuit of ideals; deeply troubled at laxity and abuses yet eager to have others discover the joy he has found.

Because Grimlaicus' rule has a clear message framed in straightforward language, it needs no lengthy introduction. Consequently these remarks simply provide some biographical, historical, and literary context.

The Author

In the opening lines of his preface, the author of the *Regula solitariorum* says that he is writing the rule at the request of one Grimlaicus and that he himself also has that name. Who was this person, and where and when did he live?

Brockie³ notes that Mabillon, in his *Annalibus Benedictinis*, mentions a certain Grimlaicus who lived around the year 900 and was a close associate of Pope Formosus and a worthy bishop. Mabillon suggests that this man could have been either the author of the rule or the one to whom it was dedicated. Mabillon also thought that Grimlaicus might have originally come from Rheims, since the history of that city shows a Grimlaicus, a priest, toward the end of the ninth century.⁴ As Gougauud points out, however, the name was a common one.

Brockie thought that Grimlaicus lived at Metz or nearby.⁵ Metz seems a likely location, since Grimlaicus several times praises Arnulf, bishop of Metz (d. 640)⁶ and twice cites the *Rule for Canons* of Amalarius of Metz (d. 850).⁷ Grimlaicus' remarks in the prologue to his rule, as well as his complete familiarity with the physical and

³ Holstenius-Brockie, 292.

⁴ L. Gougauud, OSB, "Étude sur la réclusion religieuse," *Revue Mabillon* 8 (1923): 26–39 and 77–102.

⁵ Holstenius-Brockie, 292.

⁶ Chaps. 1 and 63.

⁷ Chap. 41.

spiritual circumstances of the life of an *inclusus*, make it clear that he had lived such a life himself for a good while. Just as clear is Grimlaicus' remarkable familiarity with the Rule of Benedict, now citing it nearly verbatim, now modifying it to fit the situation of enclosed solitaries, but always drawing on its good sense, moderation, and adaptability.⁸ This sort of familiarity was surely the fruit of years lived in a community that observed Benedict's Rule. Thus Grégoire's suggestion that Grimlaicus might have been associated with the monastery of Gorze in the diocese of Metz seems reasonable.⁹ Karl Suso Frank agrees with this line of reasoning, further conjecturing that Grimlaicus may have written his rule after the time of Robert, bishop of Metz and abbot of Gorze, who died in 917.¹⁰

Even though Frank admits that "the author has eluded all attempts to identify him,"¹¹ this series of informed guesses leads us to assume that Grimlaicus was a monk who lived around the year 900, very likely at Gorze or, at any rate, in or near Metz.

Enclosed Solitaries before Grimlaicus

In order to appreciate the unique features of Grimlaicus' rule, it would be well to get some idea of how solitaries who dwelled within monastic communities lived in late Roman and early medieval times.¹² Against what historical background did Grimlaicus

⁸ Not counting the liturgical and disciplinary codes of RB (chaps. 8–15 and 23–28), Grimlaicus cites or refers to roughly 35% of the text of Benedict's Rule.

⁹ Réginald Grégoire, "Grimlaic," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité acétique et mystique*, M. Viller et al., (Paris: Beauchesne, 1967), vol. 6, cols. 1042–43.

¹⁰ Karl Suso Frank, "Grimlaicus, 'Regula solitariorum,'" in *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Kaspar Elm*, ed. F. J. Felten and N. Jaspert, 21–35 (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1999), 22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹² Needless to say, the much larger category of solitaries who lived apart, often in the wasteland or in tombs, cannot be dealt with here. The list of primary sources is enormous: the lives of the fathers and mothers of the deserts of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Cappadocia, as well as the lives of ascetics in the West, including Sulpicius Severus' life of Saint Martin and Gregory the Great's life of Saint Benedict.

write? What sorts of usages or abuses might his rule have been addressing?

In the West, the first legislation for solitaries who live within a monastery occurs in the *acta* of the local council of Vannes, which took place between 461 and 491.

The following is to be observed concerning monks: they are not to be permitted to withdraw from the community into solitary cells, except in the case of those who have been proven after prolonged labors or [the case in which], because of the needs imposed by weakness, the rigor of the rule is relaxed by abbots. This is to be done such that they remain within the enclosure of the monastery yet are permitted to have separate cells under the abbot's authority.¹³

This very early legislation contains some elements that will be prominent in Grimlaicus' rule: only after prolonged testing are monks allowed to live as solitaries; even then the cells are to be inside the enclosure, and the enclosed monks are to remain under the abbot's authority. Yet the legislation of Vannes does not seem to be addressing precisely the sort of life later envisaged by Grimlaicus. There is no mention of permanent reclusion or of the cell's being sealed. If there were arrangements for food and access to the Divine Office and Mass, they are not mentioned. In fact, the council recognizes that certain monks who may dwell in solitary cells are those for whom the strictness of the common rule has to be mitigated.

The works of Gregory of Tours,¹⁴ who wrote a century after the Council of Vannes, fairly burst with solitaries. Gregory was writing about the Merovingian domain, chiefly Tours and its environs, in the latter half of the sixth century. Even at several centuries' remove, the glimpses he gives of solitaries, especially those who lived in the midst of monastic groups, can perhaps give some idea of the background against which Grimlaicus, shortly after the year 900, for-

¹³ "*Concilium Veneticum*," in *Concilia Galliae*, SL 148, ed. Charles Munier, (Brepols: Turnhout, 1963), 153.

¹⁴ Bishop of Tours, b. 538(?), d. 594(?).

mulated his rule. In Gregory's accounts, we can at least sense some of the excesses and problems with which Grimlaicus had to deal.

There is Leobard, who took up residence in a solitary cell in the monastery of Saint Majorus near Tours. As his work, he prepares vellum for writing. He memorizes the Psalms, the better to understand the Scriptures. Leobard's conduct in his cell epitomizes the solitary's ideal: "He delighted in fasts, in prayer, in saying the Psalms, and in reading. He never stopped praying the divine offices and private prayer. Sometimes he wrote, to keep himself from indulging in harmful thoughts."¹⁵ Because of a conflict that had arisen in the monastery, Leobard had thought of moving on, but Gregory himself remonstrated with him and, in order to teach him how an enclosed monk should behave, loaned him "books and the lives of the fathers and the institute of monks."¹⁶ Leobard was much sought after as a guide for laypeople and rulers, and he constantly prayed for ecclesiastics. He cut his hair and beard at set times and did not pride himself on the length of his hair or beard. Many miracles of healing were performed through him. He had an attendant who looked after his needs.¹⁷

All of the features of Leobard's life are later dealt with in Grimlaicus' rule. Constant prayer, holy reading, manual work, stability, giving counsel—these are the staples of any monastic life, whether communal or solitary. But even the seemingly less central elements are of concern to Grimlaicus. He makes sure that solitaries shave and cut their hair fairly often, and he stipulates how the enclosed person is to act toward the disciple who acts as attendant and toward people who come seeking advice.¹⁸ He is extremely wary of those who perform cures.¹⁹

¹⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Vitae patrum*, 20; PL 71:1092–93.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1094. *Librosque ei et vitas patrum ac institutionem monachorum*. The first item may refer to some part of the collections that have come down to us as *Vitae patrum*. The second may refer to Cassian's work, *De institutis coenobiorum*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1095.

¹⁸ Chaps. 16 and 52–53.

¹⁹ See chap. 67 and the story of Senoch, below.

Not all the stories Gregory relates are as edifying as that of Leobard, and most are not about solitaries in a cenobitic environment. Nonetheless, many of the accounts present a foil against which we can appreciate the stipulations that Grimlaicus puts into his rule. Anatolius, a twelve-year-old, persuaded his master to let him be enclosed. In the corner of an ancient crypt, there was a “little cell fashioned out of squared stones, in which one person, standing upright, could hardly fit.” The boy stayed there for more than eight years, finally going mad. He pushed out through the wall of cut stones, screaming that he was being burned by God’s saints. People took him to Tours where, by the help of Saint Martin, he seems to have been cured. But Anatolius went back to his cell and slipped back into madness.²⁰ One is reminded of Grimlaicus insistence that only a person who has been proven in cenobitic life and by prudent guides is to be allowed to enter a cell of reclusion.

Some solitaries thought up bizarre ascetical practices for themselves. Lupicinus lived in a cell near a village and used to sing psalms day and night. He kept himself awake during the day by tying a large stone around his neck. At night, he fixed two thorns to the top of the staff he leaned on, so that they would prick his chin if he dozed off. Eventually Lupicinus ruins his health and dies spitting up blood.²¹ It is against the background of just such excesses that Grimlaicus stipulates a healthy daily regimen for solitaries. They are to get fresh air, decent food, and adequate clothing and bedding. For him, sickness or exceptional behavior are not signs of sanctity.

Grimlaicus’ insistence that reclusion is a permanent commitment²² can be set against the story of Senoch, a cleric who founded a monastery for himself, eventually being joined by three others. He closed himself up in a cell, chained by hands, feet, and neck.²³

²⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, 8.34; PL 71:474.

²¹ Gregory of Tours, *Vitae patrum*, 13; PL 71:1064–65.

²² See, e.g., chap. 69.

²³ Gregory of Tours, *Vitae patrum*, 15; PL 71:1071–72. See Benedict’s words, related in Grimlaicus’ chapter 48, that the chain holding the enclosed person is love for Christ.

With donations given him, Senoch helped the poor, buying more than two hundred people out of slavery. Senoch left his cell to speak with Gregory. Eventually he became proud of his holiness and began visiting his relatives. Gregory scolds him, and Senoch is duly chastened. Since he cured people and yet also wanted to live the enclosed life, Gregory advises him to stay in his cell from the feast of Saint Martin, November 11, until Christmas and also during Lent. At other times he should go about and heal people. Gregory has an illuminating comment about performing signs to which Grimlaicus would subscribe: “He practiced rigorous abstinence and cured of their diseases those who were sick. But, just as holiness starts to encroach upon abstinence, so vanity starts to encroach upon holiness.”²⁴

Occasionally we read of monks who ruled their monasteries from reclusion. Salvius, after living many years under a rule in a monastery, became its abbot. After some time he concluded that it would be better to be “hidden among the monks than to be called abbot among the people.” He bid the brothers farewell and had himself enclosed. He ministered to whomever sought him out and was generous with prayers and healing.²⁵ In the light of what Grimlaicus has to say about solitaries assuming ecclesial office, it is interesting to note that, after many years, Salvius was drawn out of his cell and made a bishop against his will.²⁶

One final account from the works of Gregory is included here because nearly every element of the narrative occurs, more than three hundred years later, in the procedure detailed in the rule of Grimlaicus for receiving into reclusion. A young girl in the monastery of the abbess Radegund asks permission to be enclosed

²⁴ Ibid., 1072. See Grimlaicus’ cautions about performing cures and other signs, in chaps. 67–68.

²⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, 7.1; PL 71:415.

²⁶ Ibid., 418. See Grimlaicus’ chap. 22. Although not in Gregory’s works, the account of Leonianus is instructive. For more than forty years, in the environs of Vienna and Augsburg, he was seen by no one, yet he took on responsibility not only for a community of monks but also a large monastery of nuns. “*Vita patrum Iurensium Romani, Lupicini, Eugendi*,” in *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi merovingici*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *MGH Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum*, (Hannover: Hahn, 1896; repr. 1977), vol. 3, 156.

in a cell. Radegund questions her and determines that the girl in fact freely chooses to be enclosed. All the nuns gather, singing psalms and carrying lit candles. Radegund, holding the girl's hand, leads her to the cell. The girl kisses each of her sisters and bids them farewell. She is then enclosed, the door of the cell then being blocked. The new solitary then gives herself to prayer and reading.²⁷

Sources and Style

This volume is a translation of Grimlaicus rule, not a study of its sources. We can note, however, some features of the way Grimlaicus used patristic and monastic authorities. In the prologue to his rule, Grimlaicus says that his work has consisted of collecting and collating.²⁸ His own words amount to next to nothing.²⁹ So that no one may confuse author and collator, Grimlaicus has noted the sources from which he excerpted the many examples and sayings he borrowed, sometimes mentioning the author in his text, sometimes putting the name in the margin. Unfortunately, copyists were not careful to obey Grimlaicus' injunction not to omit the names of his sources; the marginal notes were not passed down, and some names dropped out of the text.

Grimlaicus is not being falsely humble in calling himself a collector. In most chapters of his rule, he is careful to base his discussion of virtues and vices, regulations and conditions, upon accepted patristic and monastic authorities. The number and range of patristic and monastic sources that Grimlaicus used is impressive. He refers to a dozen patristic and monastic writers by name.³⁰ With regard to both number and length of citation, the Rule of Saint Benedict and the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert* (the *Vitae patrum*,

²⁷ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, 6.29; PL 71:396. See chap. 15 of Grimlaicus' rule.

²⁸ *decerpi . . . componere . . . compilatorem.*

²⁹ *mea dicta licet sint exigua*

³⁰ See Index of Patristic and Monastic Authors.

chiefly book 5), are far and away the most heavily used sources.³¹ Julianus Pomerius, under the name Prosper of Aquitaine, and Jerome, especially his letters, form a kind of second tier. Other authors prominent in the list are Basil (by way of the *Codex regularum* and the *Concordia regularum*), Cassian, Gregory the Great (especially his homilies on the Gospels), and Isidore of Seville.

When he cites ancient sources, Grimlaicus nearly always has a wording different from that found in modern editions. He probably retrieved a good number of his quotations, not from copies of the original works but from collections of sayings, anthologies of passages gleaned by monks from their reading and arranged under thematic headings. Grimlaicus uses the collection of sayings composed by Defensor of Ligugé known as *Liber scintillarum*, that is, *The Book of Sparks*, some thirteen times.³² Indeed, sayings that occur together in Defensor sometimes occur together in Grimlaicus. As often as not, however, Grimlaicus' wording corresponds more closely to the original than to that found in Defensor's compilation. It looks as though Grimlaicus retrieved some of his citations of patristic and monastic authors from the collection made by Defensor (or one very much like it), but it also seems as though he sometimes went from the collection to the sources themselves.

In its extant form, the *Liber scintillarum* contains citations used by Grimlaicus from Jerome, Augustine, Caesarius (attributed to Augustine), Gregory the Great, Isidore, and the *Vitae patrum*. Similarly, Sedulius Scotus' *Collectaneum miscellaneum* has two citations from Jerome, only one of which is today verifiable as being Jerome's. When a quotation from a patristic source also occurs in these later collections, it is attributed in the Index of Patristic and Monastic Sources both to the original author and to the collector. In those

³¹ Several of the apophthegms or stories from the *Vitae patrum* occur in multiple versions; citations given in the index point to that version to which Grimlaicus' version most closely corresponds.

³² The *Liber scintillarum* was probably composed by Defensor, a monk of the abbey of Saint Martin at Ligugé, around 700. This compilation became extremely popular and is represented by 361 extant manuscripts. See the introduction to *Defensoris Locogiacensis monachi liber scintillarum*, ed. D. Henricus Rochais, OSB, CC, vol. 117 (Brepols, Turnhout, 1957).

few cases in which the collector attributes a saying to a patristic author but that saying cannot be located in the author's extant works, then it is listed only under the collector. Further research is needed to clarify precisely how Grimlaicus relied on collections made by Defensor and others and in what form he had direct or mediated access to ancient and early medieval sources.³³

Here is a short example of the way Grimlaicus handles a source text. Generally, he adds phrases that apply the saying to the life of the enclosed contemplative or that explain the sometimes terse phrases of the original. He omits words that seem redundant or details that are beside the point he is making. In chapter 14 of the rule, he relates one of the apophthegms of the Desert Fathers. The text in *italic* is the saying as found in PL 73:858; the line beneath it is Grimlaicus' version.

Dixit iterum: Qui sedet in solitudine et quiescit
 Qui enim in solitudine, hoc est in retrusione,
 a tribus bellis eripitur, id est auditus, locutionis, et visus,
 a tribus bellis eripitur, id est auditus, locutionis, et visus,
 et contra unum tantummodo habebit pugnam
 et contra unum tantummodo habebit pugnam
 id est, cordis.
 id est, cogitationem cordis.³⁴

One of Grimlaicus' sources merits special mention: the Rule of Benedict. Grimlaicus is so completely conversant with the spirit and letter of Benedict's Rule that he seldom names it, even though he makes explicit use of it in half the chapters of his own rule.³⁵ As

³³ Curiously, Grimlaicus uses Defensor's collection only from chap. 37 on.

³⁴ Yet another version of this apophthegm is preserved in PG 65:78, 11: *Huiusmodi etiam oratio eius exstitit: Qui sedet in solitudine et quiescit a tribus bellis eripitur: auditus, locutionis, et visus; unum solum pugnare habet, nempe fornicationis.*

³⁵ Grimlaicus states in only three places that he is quoting from RB (in chaps. 53, 55, and 61). He refers to the figure of Benedict five further times (chaps. 43, 45, 48, 49, and 57). It is remarkable that these references all occur in the last third of the rule.

can be seen from the notes accompanying the translation, the framework of Benedict's Rule for monastic communities becomes the framework of Grimlaicus' rule for enclosed solitaries. Whether through quotation, adaptation, or allusion, the Rule of Benedict is discernible throughout all of Grimlaicus' text.

As he does when citing patristic authors, Grimlaicus almost always alters the wording of Benedict's Rule to suit his purpose. Let this example from RB 1.4-5 and chapter 1 of the rule of Grimlaicus serve for many. The text in *italic* is from the former; the line beneath it is Grimlaicus' adaptation:

*sed monasterii probatione diuturna, qui didicerunt
qui iam didicerant per multa experimenta*

*contra diabolum multorum solacio iam docti pugnare
contra diabolum pugnare,*

*et bene exstructi [sicut aurum fornacis]
ipsi quoque bene instructi atque sicut aurum in fornace probati,*

*fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam eremi
fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam eremi*

*securi iam sine consolatione alterius
securi iam sine consolatione alterius*

*sola manu vel brachio contra vitia carnis vel cogitationum
sola manu vel brachio contra vitia carnis vel cogitationum*

*Deo auxiliante, pugnare sufficiunt.
Deo auxiliante, dimicaturi pergebant.*

The reference to gold being tried in the furnace (see Prov 27:21) anticipates the description of the sarabaites in the first chapter of Benedict's Rule (RB 1.6). Since the Rule of Benedict is such a special case among the sources for Grimlaicus' rule, citations from it are given in a separate index.

A compiler should compile, not alter, his sources. Yet Grimlaicus goes beyond respect for originals to sound a commonplace of ancient and medieval Christian authors: Gospel truth cannot be

subservient to the rules of rhetoric and grammar.³⁶ Parallels abound.³⁷

An especially trenchant phrasing of this theme comes from the pen of Gregory of Tours, some three centuries before Grimlaicus. Gregory says that, because he has no training in rhetoric and grammar, people will accuse him of having the effrontery of wanting to be considered an author. His writings have no grace or wit. They are devoid of organization and even confuse the gender of nouns and the case demanded by prepositions. Gregory's detractors ask him: Can the sluggish ox wrestle? Can the lazy donkey fly? Can the black crow turn into a white dove? Can murky pitch become white milk? Gregory answers them with not a little irony that he is working for them. He has described events briefly and in a coarse and muddy style; they can then go on to expatiate upon those things in their brilliant, well-educated verse.³⁸

While there is surely some posturing in such protestations about style and grammar, Grimlaicus, Otfrid, and Gregory all want to assure their readers that they intend to speak in a language that fits their subject matter. They want to be "non-ciceronian," direct and simple, as befits a Christian.³⁹ The prolix and clever language of pagan authors has no place in a retelling of the Gospel story, or in

³⁶ See Augustine's coming to terms with the language of the Bible in *Confessions*, 3:5ff. and book 7:21–22, and in *Enarratio in Ps 138. 20*: "It is better that grammarians reproach us than that the people not understand." And Jerome in his commentary on Ezechiel: "It is not our job to avoid blunders in discourse but to discuss the obscurity of Holy Scripture with whatever words we can." In *Hiezechielem* 12.40.5.

³⁷ About thirty years before Grimlaicus wrote his rule, the monk Otfrid von Weissenburg, composing a German paraphrase of the Gospels, explains in a Latin dedicatory preface that German usage compels him to violate the rules of Latin grammar. In any case, it is good works, not rhetorical skill that God wants from us ("*Ad Liutbertum*" in *Otfrids Evangelienbuch*, ed. Oskar Erdmann & Edward Schröder, 5th ed. with Ludwig Wolff, *Altdeutsche Textbibliothek* 49 [Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1965], 4–7).

³⁸ Gregory of Tours, *Liber de gloria confessorum*, Praefatio; PL 71:829.

³⁹ See Benedikt Vollmann, "*Gregor IV (Gregor von Tours)*" in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. Theodor Klauser et al. (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1981), 926–27.

narratives about Frankish saints, or in a rule for enclosed contemplatives. The Gospel and the Fathers are plain and easy to understand. To look there for fancy prose and flawless grammar is to miss the entrance to the kingdom, too low for the high and mighty yet open to the merest children.

Central Features of Grimlaicus' Teaching

Grimlaicus is careful to say what sort of solitaries he is legislating for: not anchorites, that is, hermits who dwell all by themselves, but cenobitic solitaries, that is, those who dwell in the midst of a *cenobium* but who live in quarters sealed off from most physical contact with others. The cell's situation within the monastic enclosure and the solitary's remaining under the authority of rule and abbot eliminate many of the excesses practiced by solitaries who lived without the guidance and discipline provided by a monastic community. The daily round of Divine Office, Mass, *lectio divina*, meals, work, spiritual conferences, and so on, supports a life both spiritually and physically healthy.

It is not the purpose of this introduction to describe in detail the life and surroundings of cenobitic solitaries or to trace the history of this style of monastic living before and after Grimlaicus. That has been done by others.⁴⁰ It is simply noted here that the sort of life for which Grimlaicus legislated was by no means rare. From the middle of the sixth century, many European monasteries had solitaries living in cells, whether within the monastic enclosure or attached to the church. The most frequently attested case is that of males enclosed in monasteries of monks. Nevertheless, female solitaries sometimes lived attached to monasteries both of monks and of nuns, and, very rarely, male solitaries lived attached to monasteries of women.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For a description of the life of enclosed solitaries in southern Germany during the early Middle Ages, see Otmar Doerr, *Das Institut der Inklusen in Süddeutschland, Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benedictinerordens* 18 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1934), especially 32–56.

⁴¹ Gougaud, 77–82. See also Doerr, 32, and the introduction by Brockie, who says that cells of recluses were still to be seen in many ancient monasteries, 292.

There is no need to summarize Grimlaicus' teaching. His own words are the best guide for understanding his ideal of the life of a cenobitic *retrusus*. It may be helpful, however, to highlight those elements that demonstrate Grimlaicus' good sense and Benedictine fondness for moderation. Some elements have already been touched on in the consideration of the solitaries who people the works of Gregory of Tours. One who aspires to the life of reclusion is to undergo a lengthy period of testing. Due attention is to be paid to hygiene and health, both of one's person and one's surroundings. Beyond such particulars, however, Grimlaicus centers the life of the solitary squarely within the life of the larger community and of the church, a life that entails very concrete and very serious responsibilities. If an enclosed solitary is called to assume governance and has the requisite talent, then, Grimlaicus unhesitatingly says, that person must accept the burden of leadership. The reasons for his judgment are entirely ecclesial: gifts are for the benefit of all, not just of oneself; the Son came forth from the Father for the good of us all; the test of love is service; the humility that refuses to assume the responsibilities of leadership is false.⁴²

Solitaries in cells of retrusion serve the whole body of the church, not only by prayer, but also by giving sound counsel and, in the case of priests, hearing confessions. They dispense a wide variety of teaching to a wide range of the faithful. No one is formally committed to their care, hence solitaries teach and exhort solely through love for those who come to them.⁴³

Beyond any authority they may be asked to assume, beyond any particular advice they may give, solitaries are to build up the church by giving good example to everyone and, most immediately and importantly, by encouraging and supporting those few people with whom they have contact: the one or two other solitaries who are there with them, and their disciple(s).⁴⁴

If we were to ask which part of the rule seems to be Grimlaicus' particular teaching, which section offers the clearest insight into

⁴² Chap. 22.

⁴³ Chap. 20.

⁴⁴ Chaps. 21, 52–53, and 62.

his unique view of the enclosed life and even into his personality, the answer would be chapters 8–28. In these chapters Grimlaicus relies far less on citations from acknowledged authorities than elsewhere in his rule.⁴⁵

Although Grimlaicus speaks in his own words in these chapters, he says nothing that cannot be found in the monastic and contemplative tradition. In particular, the knowledge of human nature, moderation, and concern for the wider community testify to the wholesome influence of the Rule of Benedict. On every page of Grimlaicus' rule, and especially in these chapters, we sense that, like his master, Saint Benedict, Grimlaicus has compassion for human frailty but knows to what heights that person can ascend who aims at the substance of virtue rather than at its trappings and who prefers nothing to the love of Christ.

Chapters 27 and 28, two of the longest chapters in the rule, are unique. Here Grimlaicus is not compiling or legislating but exhorting, even lamenting. In his day, virtue has vanished, and everything is going to wrack and ruin. People who should be scaling the heights of virtue and contemplation are worried about their own comfort. He knows what he is talking about; he himself has been tepid in devotion and overly concerned about creature comforts. He hopes that his rule may encourage those who are living or intend to live the enclosed life (and here we may include those who want to learn from it or be inspired by it) to aim at nothing short of total self-donation.⁴⁶ Life in union with Christ in the Spirit in this life and everlasting life with God and the angels and saints in the next are the only goals worth pursuing. Grimlaicus urges all

⁴⁵ Chapters 8–13, 17, and 23–24 are almost completely without identifiable citations.

⁴⁶ Of the thirteen extant manuscripts of Grimlaicus' rule, six are included in codices along with patristic and early medieval material for *lectio divina*. It seems to have had appeal, not solely to solitaries, but to monks generally. See Marie-Christine Chartier, "Reclus - En Occident," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité acétique et mystique*, ed. M. Viller et al., vol. 13, cols. 227–28 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988). Grégoire (1043) indicates that several manuscripts were copied in cenobitic contexts, e.g., Saint-Remy at Rheims and the Cistercian abbey at Clairvaux.

his readers to get on with this holy work, to let nothing frighten them, and never to despair of God's mercy.

References to the Scriptures, RB, and Other Sources

In the translation, exact and nearly exact quotations from the Vulgate are given between quotation marks, with the citation following immediately in brackets. Such references are compiled in the Index of Scriptural References. In cases where Grimlaicus paraphrases a Scripture passage or conflates it with a similar one, the text will not be put between quotation marks, and the reference in brackets will be preceded by "See." The English rendering from the Vulgate is that of the translator.

When the beginning and end of a nonscriptural citation can be established, the whole is given between quotation marks. The reader should keep in mind, however, that, when Grimlaicus refers to nonscriptural sources, he nearly always alters them to a greater or lesser extent. All such references are listed in the Index of Patristic and Monastic Authors.

The Rule of Benedict permeates the rule of Grimlaicus. He seldom quotes the text of RB exactly, having worked Benedict's words into his own. Therefore, to set off citations of RB with quotation marks would not only overburden the page with punctuation but also mislead the reader. Rather, in all cases reference is made in footnotes to the pertinent section of RB. The Index of Citations from the Rule of Saint Benedict compiles all of these footnoted references.

Note on Terminology

The rule of Grimlaicus is a Carolingian document. It looks to the Rule of Benedict and to patristic and early monastic authorities for its teaching and vocabulary. Distinctions and subtleties of the Cistercians and the scholastics lie in the future. Several terms, however, demand particular attention: *conversatio*, *animus*, and *anima*.

Two senses of *conversatio* can be distinguished: (1) turning or conversion to monastic life and (2) the monastic way of life itself as demanding constant conversion. Modern translations of the Rule

of Benedict (McCann, *RB 1980*, and Kardong) render *conversatio* by a wide range of terms, depending on the context: monastic life, conversion, way of life, lifestyle, observance, holy life, date of conversion, being a monk, date of entry, monastic observance.⁴⁷ In Grimlaicus' rule, *conversatio* most often has the general meaning "way of life," "mode of acting." It sometimes has, however, a more specialized meaning, that of an ascetic way of life or monastic observance. The term is noted each time it occurs.⁴⁸

Animus has an extremely wide spectrum of meanings in patristic and early monastic writings. The term's center of gravity, so to speak, is in thinking and willing; it often corresponds to the English terms understanding, will, mind, intention, and resolve. Yet *animus* is often used to speak of what we call the heart, feelings, temper, or, more generally, spirit. The word can be used to speak of the self, one's person, one's true self. Set phrases with *animus* are frequent: *ex animo*, "from the heart"; *duplex animo*, "of two minds"; *bono animo*, "cheerfully"; *malo animo*, "with bad will." Grimlaicus' text reflects this general situation. It would be misleading to render every occurrence of *animus* by the same English word. Context must determine the proper equivalent: what terms is *animus* coordinated with or opposed to; of what verb is it the subject or object; does it refer to the whole person or to a specific faculty of the person? Because *animus* is patient of such a wide range of meanings, every occurrence of the word in this translation will be noted.

Anima occurs most often in early monastic works in quotations from the Psalms in Latin, where it means one's life, one's self. In addition, *anima* is the word Christian authors use to speak about the soul as separated from the body after death. It also occurs with the sense of heart, affections. This translation renders *anima* as "soul."

⁴⁷ *The Rule of Saint Benedict in Latin and English*, ed. and trans. Justin McCann (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1952); *RB 1980: The Rule of Saint Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*, ed. Timothy Fry et al. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981); Terrence Kardong, *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996).

⁴⁸ The results of scholarship concerning the term *conversatio* are summarized in *RB 1980*, 459–63.

Some of the rule's chapters or parts thereof speak specifically about a single *inclusus* (for example, 15). Others address the situation of solitaries who are priests (for example, 18). Still others refer exclusively to males (for example, 37). Apart from such instances, this translation makes use of plural nouns and plural, indefinite, and second-person pronouns in English when the Latin text employs the masculine singular. Grimlaicus himself gives warrant for such renderings, since he shifts easily and frequently between the singular and plural of nouns and uses various indefinite, masculine singular, and first-person-plural pronouns in close proximity.

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The Rule for Solitaries

In the Name of the Most High God Begins the Prologue of the Rule for Solitaries

To my most dear father in Christ, who has the same name as I do, to Grimlaicus, the venerable priest, everlasting salvation in the Savior.

Whenever I disclosed to you privately what displeased me about myself, you would very often suggest that I should put in writing a rule for solitaries, that is, cenobitic solitaries, and place upon myself a yoke of service.¹ For a long time I did all I could to refrain from doing this, since I was afraid that it might exceed my powers and, more importantly, that I might run and fall headlong into the sin of pride. I feared both that some people might think I was so presumptuous as to found something new and that the ancient proverb might be thrown at me: What's the use of throwing a fish in the sea or water in a river? But after many days I began to recall that it was not the custom of our holy forebears to provoke or to envy one another; rather each of them contributed what each one

¹ “Yoke” (*iugum*) and “service, servitude” (*servitus*) are often used to refer to the monastic way of life and the obligations it entails (see RB 58.16; 49.5; and 50.4).

could to set God's house in order. And so I chose to comply with your command rather than to do my own will. Consequently I soon set myself to work at the task assigned me. To this end I excerpted various sayings and examples of the orthodox fathers and have contented myself with fashioning this rule from them. In order to keep the chapters from being too lengthy, I have inscribed the names of those whose sayings I included in this work sometimes in the text and sometimes outside in the margins. I have been very careful to do this to keep people from naming the compiler as the author. For I know, as the Lord said, that "those who speak on their own are seeking their own glory" [John 7:18]. Even though my own words are very trifling, nonetheless I have been careful to mark them by my own usual name in among the flowers of the sayings of the saints. For this reason, I humbly beg whoever thinks this rule worth copying not to neglect to note the aforesaid names of the saints, just as they are here noted.² I have not worried about keeping in this little work barbarisms and turns of speech that reflect our language and the cases they use after prepositions, since I believe I would be most culpable if I were to constrain the words of Christ or of the holy fathers by the rules of Donatus.³

What I have done, then, is to excerpt this rule from the flowers of the saints, as though from river channels and from ocean depths, and divided them into little streams, that is, into sixty-nine chapters. First of all I have collected a few chapters about renouncing the world and about the active and contemplative lives. Next how the solitary way of life should be established,⁴ followed by some chapters about the life and conduct of solitaries. Among these I have inserted only three chapters about the precepts of our Redeemer,

² The identification of sources that Grimlaicus asks for has not come down to us.

³ Grimlaicus' disclaimer about his uncouth style mirrors that of Gregory the Great at the end of the dedicatory letter to his *Moralia in Hiob*, PL 75:516.

⁴ *solitarius conversatio constare*. The term *conversatio* is roughly equivalent to "monastic way of living." It is used ten times in the Rule of Benedict. See the introduction and also the discussion in *RB 1980*, 459, and the concordance entry on 506.

to the end that solitaries may meditate day and night on the law of the Lord [see Ps 1:2] and may turn the commandments of Christ over and over again before the eyes of both mind and body and so become more devout and fervent. Thereafter I come to the active life and have laid down what and how much food and drink, what clothing and bedding they are to have or use. I have also included the manner and time of fasting and abstaining. I have also added at suitable spots a few words about the virtues and vices, and, in order to put solitaries on their guard, I have taken care to indicate how they should act in working miracles. Finally I have set down a single chapter about persevering in this good work.

Throughout these chapters, therefore, wherever it was necessary to explain some clauses, I have tried to imitate the way a river acts. As a river is flowing along in its bed, if it happens upon sunken valleys off to the side, it immediately diverts its flow into them; when it has filled them up, it promptly flows back into its bed. In the same way, whenever I have found among the sacred words of the saints some obscure passage that promised to yield suitable instruction, I turned my current, as it were, into the nearby valley of explanation. Once I had sufficiently explored that valley of obscurity, I ran back again to the riverbed of my main theme. I proceeded in this way, not because it was my own idea or desire, but because the sayings of the holy fathers approved of it.

I call as witnesses both you, venerable father, who have prompted me to complete this little work, as well as all those who perhaps may read it, and I beg you: if you find anything objectionable among the matters that are set out here, then please blame it on my boorishness and be so kind as to pardon me. But those words you approve of as being according to the Catholic faith, ascribe them “to God who gives to everyone abundantly and does not reproach” [James 1:5]. But I who am trying to fulfill the precept of the one who orders it⁵ have presumed to take on things that are too much for me. But was it not absolutely imperative that I obey? This opportunity has provided me with a rule that I did not have

⁵ I.e., who told him to write down the rule.

before and now have. Besides, I have not bothered with the niceties of educated diction, since I cannot display in speaking what I was not able to learn from my teachers.

However, I finished what I wrote, relying not on my own talent but on the help of your prayers. To heal someone who asks them, physicians prepare a medicinal compound out of many different types of herbal preparations, and they are not so presumptuous as to claim that they created the herbs or the other kinds of plants. No, they admit that they are merely assistants who collect and prepare them. That is what I am: I am not the author of this work but just the assistant who collected it. From the compound made up of these different kinds of plants, sick people will be healed. In this way then, perhaps the labor to which I have devoted myself will be able, with God's help, to be of some profit to your charity. I assume that you would not have directed me so insistently to write down this rule unless you loved it and unless you yourself desired at some time to undertake the solitary life. Just as you have shown me the affection of loving devotion and exhorted me to write down this rule, so now I humbly plead with you to devote yourself to reading it carefully and often, so that your soul may, so to speak, become weary of exterior troubles, return to itself, and realize where it should hurry to. What is more tiring in this life than to be on fire with earthly desires? Or what is safer than to crave nothing of this world's vanity? Those who love this world are distressed by its troublesome cares and worries. But those who withdraw from the world and seek out the solitary life begin to have to some extent in this life the peaceful rest that they hope to have in the life to come.

Consequently I ask both you and all those who love God neither to spurn this rule nor to be terrified and flee from this instruction, because the path of salvation can be begun in no other way than by a narrow beginning. As the Lord says: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate" [Luke 13:24], and also: Cramped and narrow is the path that leads to life; broad and spacious the one that leads to death [see Matt 7:13-14]. In what I have drawn up I hope to have written nothing harsh or burdensome, nothing onerous. But if, following the dictates of sound reason, I have stipulated

anything that is somewhat strict, I have done this to correct vices and preserve virtues.⁶

Therefore, if you want to observe this rule with a good spirit and complete devotion, even while you are still in this present world, you can, with God's help, climb to the peak of virtue. And when this life has ended, you can reign with the holy and chosen ones of God in the heavenly kingdom and live happily forever with the Lord himself and his angels, and not only live but even reign with him. May almighty God quickly lead you⁷ to observe what has been set down here, and by your observing it, may God lead you to heavenly kingdoms. Amen.

Here begins the text of the Rule.

Chapter 1: The Kinds of Solitaries

We must first indicate why someone is called a “monk” or “solitary,” and then, with God's gracious help, proceed to explain other matters. The word monk [*monachus*] comes from Greek and means that a person is single [*singularis*]. *Monas* is Greek for the Latin singleness [*singularitas*]. Hence “solitary” gives the meaning of the word “monk.” That is why, whether one says “monk” or “solitary,” it is one and the same thing.

But let us see how many kinds of solitaries there are. There are two kinds of solitaries: one is anachorites, that is, hermits; the other is cenobites, that is, those who live in monasteries. Neither of these kinds should be instituted in the first fervor of conversion, but they should first be given a prolonged testing in the observance of the monastery,⁸ so that, once they have been tested, they may have the strength to rise, by the Lord's mercy, up to the summit of perfection.

⁶ The foregoing lines follow closely RB Prol. 46–48.

⁷ *animum vestrum*

⁸ See RB 1.3.

Further, “many people have wondered who was the very first monk who began to live in the desert. Some people go back very far and say that it began with the blessed Elijah and John [the Baptist]. Others maintain that blessed Anthony was the first to conceive this intention. But Macarius, the disciple of blessed Anthony, attests that,” in New Testament times, “a certain Paul of Thebes was the first person to adopt this mode of life.”⁹ And that is true. It should be known, however, that it was from the time of blessed Anthony that there began to be cenobitic solitaries, that is, recluses. But it is difficult to ascertain who was the first recluse, since recluses used to live not only in cenobia but also in the very desert itself. In fact, in ancient times, those who had first been recluses in monasteries and who had learned through many trials to fight against the devil and who had been well taught and tested like gold in the furnace, would go out from the battle line of their brothers to single combat; safe now without the support of another, with only their hand or arm, they would go out to struggle, with God’s help, against the vices of the flesh or the thoughts.¹⁰

The blessed bishop Arnulf¹¹ followed the example of these monks. According to the Lord’s precept, he sold all he had and distributed it to the poor. And he not only left behind all his earthly possessions, but he even gave up the episcopacy which the Lord had bestowed on him and which he had taken up after he had lost every temporal possession. Thereafter he sought out a cell in which to be a recluse.¹² There for many days he surrendered himself to the Lord to exert himself in the worship of God. Finally, after many years had run their course, he took on wings like a dove, that is, spiritual virtues, and flew away to the desert [see Ps 54:7]. There he hoped in our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would save him from

⁹ Jerome, *Vita sancti Pauli primi eremitaе*, Prologue; PL 23:17–18.

¹⁰ See RB 1.4–6.

¹¹ Bishop of Metz, died 640. A life of him attributed to Paul the Deacon is found in PL 95:731–40, and a version edited by Krusch in MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum: Fredegarii et aliorum chronica. Vita sanctorum*, 426ff.

¹² *cellula retrusionis*

timidity of spirit and from the tempest. The Lord came and not only saved him but transported him to the heavens to crown him.

I wanted to include here the example of such a great man, so that solitaries might learn from him to despise all perishable things and to long for heavenly things with all their strength.

Chapter 2: The Loftier Precepts Concerning Monks or Solitaries

The precepts that are given to monks and to those who renounce this world are loftier than those given to the faithful who are leading an ordinary life in the world. To monks and solitaries it is said: “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give to the poor and come, follow me” [Matt 19:21], and also: “Everyone who leaves home or brothers and sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields on account of my name will receive a hundredfold and will possess eternal life” [Matt 19:29]. These and similar precepts apply especially to monks living alone and to solitaries. And the more exceptional the precepts are, the more powerful and preeminent they are. But the words that follow are, as it were, lesser precepts spoken in general to everyone: The Lord says: “Those who do not take up their cross and come after me are not worthy of me” [Matt 10:38]. And also: “Everything that you want people to do to you, do that to them” [Matt 7:12]; “but I say to you: Do not resist an evil person” [Matt 5:39]. He also says: “Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you” [Matt 5:44], and so on.

Monks and solitaries are told to abandon all that is theirs; people in the world are told to use well what is theirs. The former, by living well, transcend the general precepts; the latter are bound to the general precepts. In order to reach perfection, it is not enough to abandon what one has, unless one also denies oneself. But what does “to deny oneself” mean, except to renounce one’s own acts of will?¹³ In this way, whoever was proud may become humble;

¹³ See RB Prol. 3.

whoever was prone to anger may become forbearing; whoever was dissolute may become chaste; whoever before was drunken may become sober; whoever was envious and spiteful may become kind and considerate. For if you renounce everything that you have yet do not renounce your own way of acting, you are certainly not Christ's disciple. If you renounce your possessions, you are renouncing what belongs to you, but if you renounce your wicked way of acting, you are renouncing yourself. That is why the Lord says: "Those who want to come after me, let them deny themselves and follow me" [Luke 9:23].

Chapter 3: The Four Orders of People That Will Be on the Day of Judgment

You should also know that, on the day of judgment, there will be four orders of people, two of good people and two of bad. The first order will be saved and not judged, that is, those who leave all that they have for the sake of Christ. These people will come to the judgment as judges with God. This is what Isaiah is speaking about: "The Lord will come to judgment with the elders of his people" [Isa 3:14]. These people will judge others and will not be judged by others.

The second order will be judged and will be saved, that is, good Christians who possess things of this world and who dispense them every day to the poor, who clothe the naked, visit the sick, and fulfill duties like these that Christ teaches us to do [see Matt 25:31-46]. These people will be judged and will be saved. To them the Lord will say at the judgment: "I was hungry and you fed me" [Matt 25:35], and a little further:¹⁴ "Come, blessed of my Father; take possession of the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world" [Matt 25:34].

The third order will likewise be judged and will be condemned, that is, bad Christians, who seem to have faith but who do not put it into action. These people will be destined for the left side at the

¹⁴ Actually these words come in the previous verse.