**Since my lecture on monasticism occurred a few weeks ago, allow me to provide you with an elaboration on the points that I made then (look at my powerpoints too). And do not neglect additional information to be gleaned from the readings.**

Began in the Egyptian desert in the third century but grew throughout the Empire after Constantine due to the increasing materialism and worldliness of the state church.

Was **dualistic**, believing that the soul can only be free to contemplate God and achieve union with God by becoming detached from the passions of the body (for food, sex, etc.). Was **ascetical** in that the body was denied the appeasement of its passions through fasting, celibacy, and poverty.

Cherished the solitude of the hermit (the anchorite) but the way there was thought to occur through the training of the communal experience (the cenobite).

Contemplation (monastic spirituality) was both apophatic (mystical or beyond rational conception and expression) and cataphatic (using symbols like words, sacred objects, and rituals).

The way towards mystical union was attained through solitude, prayer, meditation on scripture, and contemplation of God. This path caused the purgation of the desires, and the climb up the ladder of virtues like humility, obedience, and ultimately, perfect love. Unlike the established church, the monastics did not believe that one can only get to God through the church hierarchy (Luther kept this element of his monastic past). They believed that one can get to mystical union with God through prayer (etc.) and the ladder of virtues.

(**Note**, Luther came to feel that monastics lacked a foundation in the union with God that is already there by grace alone, through faith. This foundation grants us the assurance of forgiveness, comforting us as we strive like the monastics did for **deeper** union with God).

There was a debate during the fifth century and beyond about whether the monastics were too extreme, but some felt that, even if they were, we still need the power of their prayers and the influence of their life example.

**In addition: When studying my notes and the reading about the Reformation** be sure to include stuff on Luther, especially his making justification by grace through faith the foundation of the monastic quest for mystical union with God and perfect love and the five solas. When including the solas, bear in mind that his “Christ alone” idea (against the Catholic idea that both Christ and the church saves us) did not apply to monasticism as much as the imperial church). In addition to Luther, also include some insights from the Reformed and Anabaptist movements. Lastly, include the Catholic counter-reformation (Ignatius of Loyola). He’ll help you to bridge the monastic movement and Luther. After all, like Luther, his Spiritual Exercises was Christ centered and began with the unconditional love of God (Luther clarified and elaborated on this with his doctrine of justification by grace).