

The later tradition says there were a very few hermits in the desert near Egypt but you can't prove it. This of course we can say, that we know there were thousands of people by 400 AD who were living out in the desert and by that time there were people who were living in wild countries, that is, away from the city in just about every part of the roman empire. It started in Egypt in the desert where it was easy for someone to go out, find a spring, ~~take~~ taking just a little food and you could get along in just a little, and just live there. People who were disgusted with the world for one reason or another could just go off and live alone in that way and then the idea spread from there to other sections. Now today in the R.C. church you have perhaps 150 different orders, Benedictines, Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans, all orders which are under definite rules, guards and have relationships to a leader who gives directions to the group in following the principles which were laid down by their Fathers. None of these were founded during the 4th century. Some of them come from many centuries, most from the last three or four centuries, but there was a very sizable number of them by the time of the reformation. The most important of them comes from the 13th century. The very first order of any importance, the Benedictines, does not come until such a long time after the 4th century. So Monasticism as we find it in the RC church today is not a development of the 4th century but a development of much later times. But its roots come during this century and by the end of the century you have hundreds of people ~~who~~ or perhaps thousands, swarming every section, but in every section of the roman empire you have some who considered themselves as trying to get away from the wicked world and to live Christian lives apart from all the temptations of ordinary human beings. So Monasticism took a tremendous step forward during this century and becomes very important later on. I think it is wise to take a separate section later but before we ~~leave~~ this century, mention the events connected with it.

question

It was definitely a pattern of the century, that is when one withdraws himself from the world in general, he is in disagreement with the world, but in the case of individuals it might be different.