

The Third Gender and *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*

Rhonda L. McDaniel



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Chapter Seven

Chaste Marriage

Cecilia: Doctrix Christianorum

Matters of the body hold no such prominence in Cecilia's *passio*, which focuses on the mind and portrays her as a teacher more than anything else. Virgin and martyr she may be, but the activity most noticeable in the Latin version of her legend and in her discourse is teaching and instructing others in the faith. In his "drastic abridgement" of her story, Ælfric maintains the centrality of doctrinal instruction found in the Latin, although he crafts his translation in a way that keeps the story line moving and he avoids stupefying his audience with the extended theological lectures that Cecilia and her companions deliver in the Latin exemplar.¹ In fact, Cecilia is such an inveterate teacher that even after the executioner botches her beheading (three times!), she continues to teach for three days with her neck partially severed before she dies.²

The greater part of Cecilia's *passio*, both in Latin and in Old English, consists of didactic disputes that cover all of the essential matters of Christian belief from creation to the Trinity, the life of Christ, eternal life and damnation, and the limits of temporal power. Despite the frequent appearance of angels, these debates compose the dramatic movement of the legend, for they clearly appeal to the intellect more than to the imagination, and they are designed to move the audience as well as the characters from a mental position of unbelief to one of belief. The central action focuses upon the dialogues that lead to four different episodes of conversion, plus two trial debates about the value of serving Christ and his saints versus worshiping idols made of stone. Ælfric mercifully excises most of the material from these conversations and debates, although he retains the major points and so preserves the drama of conversion.

The first information that the reader receives about Cecilia is that, "Huius uocem audiens Cecilia uirgo clarissima, absconditum semper

euangelium Christi gerebat in pectore et non diebus non noctibus colloquiis diuinis et oratione cesebat" [Hearing his (Christ's) voice, Cecilia, illustrious virgin, always carried the Gospel of Christ concealed in her heart, and neither during the days nor the nights ceased from divine discourses and prayer.] Ælfric provides slightly more information, saying "Ƣeos haliga fæmne hæfde on hire breoste swa micele lufe to þam ecan life þæt heo dæges and nihtes embe Drihtnes godspel and embe Godes lare mid geleafan smeade and on singalum gebedum hi sylfe gebysgode" [The holy woman kept within her heart such great love for the eternal life that she by day and by night meditated with belief upon the Gospel of the Lord and upon the doctrines of God, and she occupied herself in daily prayers.]³ The Latin version actually has Cecilia responding to the voice of Christ, who has called out to humankind to seek its rest in him. Accordingly, Cecilia's story builds upon her response to him, a response that desires to know more about him and seeks relationship with Christ through this knowledge, through intellectual activity, and through prayer. Cecilia memorizes the Gospel and other Christian teachings, and these form the basis of her continual meditations and prayers. Ælfric emphasizes that she meditates "mid geleafan" [with belief], setting her intentions not in mindless rote repetition but investing her contemplation with love and active desire to know and establish herself in God and God in herself. Jerome describes the process as the saint becoming a new ark of the covenant, so that "super hoc propitiatorio quasi super cherubim sedere uult dominus" [it pleases the Lord to sit in your mind as He once sat on the mercy-seat and the cherubims (lit. the Lord desires to sit upon that mercy-seat as upon the cherubim)].⁴ Desiring and desired, Cecilia continually bears her Lord in mind and focuses her love upon him alone. Ælfric does not translate the lengthy material leading up to the call of Christ in the Latin version, and so ends up omitting the responsive basis of Cecilia's study and prayers. He tries to make up for the loss, however, by adding that Cecilia prayed and studied because she possessed such a great love of eternal life, showing the proper will that motivates her but also making her longing a desire for the transcendent state associated with the heavenly life.⁵ In this manner Cecilia illustrates what Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe describes as "Ælfric's apprehension of the critical connection of the will to the operation of both memory and understanding [that] underpins the moral function of learning."⁶

Like the other female saints, when faced with the prospect of marriage, Cecilia chooses to preserve her virginity and prays to avoid "ælce

gewemmednysse oððe weres gemanan" [any defilement or company of a man].⁷ Such a statement deserves a moment of consideration, for it is not found in the Latin and so indicates that Ælfric held a balanced view that each sex could be corrupted by intercourse with the other, so that women were corrupted by men and men corrupted by women. Ultimately, the corruption of lust lay not in the body itself, whether male or female, but in the intemperate desire and lust of the fallen nature in both men and women, as Augustine writes in *De civitate Dei*: "nec luxuria uitium est pulchrorum suauiumque corporum, sed animae peruerse amantis corporeas uoluntates neglecta temperantia, qua rebus spiritualiter pulchrioribus et incorruptibiliter suauioribus coaptamur" [Nor is lust a defect in bodies which are beautiful and pleasing: it is a sin in the soul of the one who loves corporeal pleasures perversely, that is, by abandoning that temperance which joins us in spiritual and unblemishable union with realities far more beautiful and pleasing].⁸ The body might be the means of appeal for the temptation of lust, but the corruption that chooses sin lies in the mind and specifically in the will. According to Ælfric, it involves a decision to pursue evil rather than good:

Seo sawul is gesceadwis gast . æfre cucu and mæg underfon ge godne
 wyllan . and yfelne . æfter agenum cyre . Se welwillende scyppend
 læt hi habben agenes cyres geweald . þa wearð heo be agenum wyllan
 gewæmmed þurh þæs deofles lare . Heo waerð æft alysad þuruh
 godes gife . gif heo gode gehyrsumað.

[The soul is a rational spirit, immortal and able to undertake both good purposes and evil ones according to its own choice. The beneficent Creator made it to have command of its own choice. Then it became defiled by its own will by means of the devil's teaching. Afterwards it becomes redeemed by means of the grace of God, if it obeys God.]⁹

Ælfric describes the soul as rational and the seat of choice enacted according to the will, making the soul fully responsible for the good or evil enacted by each individual, whether in thought or in deed. Cecilia, despite her choice to remain a virgin, finds herself pushed into an arranged marriage with a young man named Valerian. Cecilia like Æthelthryth exercises her own inward agency, however, even though she cannot control her outward circumstances. Fully determined not to let sinful desires have any avenue of appeal through her body, Cecilia dons a hair shirt and fasts while she appeals to God "þæt heo on clænnysse Criste moste þeowian"

[that she be allowed to serve Christ in virginity].¹⁰ In this instance, the Latin version puts the matter more poignantly: “Parentum enim tantavis et hortatus sponsi circa illam erat exestuans ut non posset amorem sui cordis ostendere: et quod solum Christum diligeret indicibus evidenter aperire” [Indeed, the force of her parents and the encouragement of her suitor were seething around her so that she could not display the love of her own heart, and reveal by clear indications that she loved Christ alone].¹¹ Theoretically, since Cecilia had no desire for sex, her new husband might force her to consummate that marriage but she would still be virgin in her mind. She hopes for better, however. Cecilia has no room for anyone but Christ in her heart and mind and so even at her wedding she sings a prayer silently to God that he will still preserve her purity. Ælfric’s rather distant treatment of Cecilia’s love and desire for Christ presents a bit of a mystery. He seems to have had no qualms about translating the fully bodied and sexual statements Agnes made regarding her desire for her heavenly lover, yet in this instance Ælfric appears unwilling to portray Cecilia’s more modestly stated love for Christ.

There is no such reticence, though, in Ælfric’s version of Cecilia’s appeal to her new husband to forego the consummation of the marriage in favor of a life of chastity:

Latin life:

Angelum Dei habeo amatorem qui nimio zelo custodit corpus meum. Hic si uel leuiter senserit: quod tu me polluto amore contingas, statim circa te suum furorem exagitabit, et amittes florem tue gratissime iuuentutis. Si autem cognouerit quod me sincero et immaculato amore diligas et uirginitatem meam integram illibatamque custodias, ita te quoque diliget sicut et me et ostendet tibi gratiam suam.

[I have the angel of God for a lover, who guards my body with great zeal. If he even slightly perceives that you want to touch me with your defiled love, immediately he will stir his furious anger against you and you will lose the flower of your most pleasing youth. If, however, he knows that you love me with a sincere and spotless love, and that you will protect my virginity entire and unimpaired, he will also love you just as he does me, and he will show you his favor.]

Ælfric:

Eala þu min leofa man, ic þe mid lufe secge, ic hæbbe Godes encgel þe gehylt me on life and gif þu wylt me gewemman . he went sona to ðe and mid graman þe slihð þæt þu sona ne leofast. Gif þu þonne me lufast and butan laðe gehylst on clænum mægðhade, Crist þonne lufað þe and his gife geswutelad þe sylfum swa swa me.

[Oh, you my beloved man! I say to you with love that I have the angel of God who defends me in life, and if you desire to defile me he would come quickly to you and slay you with wrath so that soon you would not live. If you love me, then, and in addition hate to injure the reputation for pure virginity, then Christ will love you and reveal his grace to you yourself, just as to me.]¹²

Cecilia appeals to her new husband through both love and fear. She warns him about the angel that guards her, but also uses the idea of God's love for her and Valerian's potential for having the same loving relationship as a means of arousing his desire for the most proper love of all, the love for God. Ælfric uses forms of *lufian* "love" three times in seven lines, and the term of endearment *leof* "beloved" once: Cecilia addresses Valerian as her beloved and says that because of her love for him she gives him warning about the angel of God, who protects her. All the same, she explicitly threatens Valerian should he try to consummate their nuptials. She then appeals to Valerian's love for her as a motivation for him both to refrain from pursuing intercourse with her and to pursue chastity instead, and finally promises that Christ will love him if he will devote himself to purity. The lines of relationship bind the two of them together, but also bind them both to God through Christ even as Christ and his angel are bound in love to them. The proof of their love for each other and for God will be their chaste life together, recalling Jerome's teaching (repeated in Bede) that to refrain from sexual relations with one's spouse is to do that spouse honor and allow for time to be devoted by both to prayer.¹³

Despite his fear and suspicion, Valerian proves willing to let Cecilia convince him of the reality of her claim to angelic protection. She has succeeded in arousing in her young husband a desire to know someone greater than herself, and she takes the opportunity to direct his attention beyond merely seeing the angel to believing in God (Ælfric is even more specific, urging belief in Christ) because without belief Valerian will not have the ability to perceive nonmaterial reality.¹⁴ Valerian follows Cecilia's

instruction and God rewards his obedience and proper desire by granting him a visitation from an angel who instructs him in true belief. The angel then pointedly asks: “Gelyfst þu þises oððe licað þe elles hwæt” [Do you believe this, or does anything else seem pleasing to you]?¹⁵ Confronted so tangibly with the transcendent, the young man immediately professes his faith and receives baptism and further instruction from the Pope.

When Valerian returns home, he receives the first test of his newly restored mind, a test that will prove whether or not his desires have been rightly ordered by true belief. The angel of God tells Valerian that because of his love for chastity he may ask for whatever he wants and God will grant his desire. Valerian demonstrates that he has fully entered into right relationships with God and with those around him by asking only for his brother’s salvation, demonstrating the “clean love” that Augustine says seeks the good of others rather than of oneself.¹⁶ The angel responds to Valerian’s request:

Latin life:

Audiens hec angelus letissimo uultu dixit ad eum, “Quoniam hoc petisti quod melius quam te Christum implere delectat, sicut te per famulam suam Ceciliam lucratus est Dominus, ita per te quoque tuum lucrabitur fratrem, et cum eodem ad martyrii palmam attinges.”

[Hearing this, the angel, with an exceedingly joyful countenance, said to him: “Because you have asked for what is better, which Christ delights to fulfill in you, just as the Lord has won you through his servant Cecilia, so will he also win your brother through you, and with him you will attain the palm of martyrdom.”]

Ælfric:

Þa cwæð se engel eft mid blisse him to, “For þan þe þu þæs bæde, þe bet Gode licað þin broðor Tiburtius bið gestryned þurh þe to þam ecan life, swa swa þu gelyfdest on God þurh Cecilian lare; and git sceolan, begen þu and þin broðor, beon gemartyrode samod.”

[Then again with joy the angel said to him, “Because you have asked for this, the better thing, God is pleased that your brother, Tiburtius, be begotten through you into the eternal life, just as you believed in God through Cecilia’s teaching, and you two (both you and your brother) shall be martyred together.”]¹⁷

Ælfric introduces gender into his translation of this passage in the angel's comment that Tibertius will be begotten into the transcendent society of heaven through Valerian. The comment casts Valerian as a father in the faith, who begets Tibertius into a new life, but it also puts Cecilia by implication into the role of father as well, since her teaching begat Valerian in the faith. True to the angel's words, Valerian and Cecilia win Tiburtius over from idolatry to belief in God, though Cecilia does the bulk of the persuading. During the course of the dialogue with Tiburtius, Cecilia instructs the audience as well as her brother-in-law in the doctrine of the Trinity:

Latin life:

Tunc beata Cecilia erigens se stetit et cum magna constantia dixit, "Celi terreque, maris et hominum ac uolucrum serpentium pecudumque Creator ex se ipso antequam ista omnia faceret genuit Filium et protulit ex uirtute sua Spiritum Sanctum: Filium ut crearet omnia, Spiritum ut uiuificaret uniuersa. Omnia autem que fecit Pater, Filius ex Patre genitus condidit. Vniuersa autem que condita sunt ex Patre procedens Spiritus Sanctus animauit."

[Then the blessed Cecilia, raising herself, stood and with great firmness she said, "The Creator of the heavens, the earth, and the sea, and of humans, birds, serpents, and beasts, before he made all these things out of himself, he begot the Son and brought forth the Holy Spirit from his own excellence: the Son in order that he might create all, the Spirit so that he might give life to all. The Son, begotten of the Father, made all that has been made; but the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father, enlivened all that has been made."]

Ælfric:

Cecilia þa aris and mid anrædnysse cwæð, "ealle gesceafta Scyppend ænne Sunu gestrynde and forðteah þurh hine sylfne þone Frofergast. Þurh þone Sunu he gesceop ealle gesceafta þe syndon and hi ealle gelyffæste þurh þone lifigendan Gast."

[Then Cecilia arose and with firmness said, "The Creator of all creatures begot one Son, and brought forth by himself the Consoling Spirit. Through the Son he made all of the creatures that exist, and he enlivened all (creatures) by means of the living Spirit."]¹⁸

The passage from the Latin life repeats itself at the end; Ælfric omits the second statement about creation through the Son and vivification through the Spirit, thus also avoiding the potentially confusing language of procession.¹⁹ By doing so he brings the doctrines taught in the *passio* into line with what he has already said about the procession of the Spirit in *LS* 1: “Swa eac þæs ælmihtigan godes sunu is æfre of þæm fæder acenned . soð leoht . and soð wisdom . and se halga gast is æfre of him bam, na acenned . ac forðsteppende” [So likewise the Son of Almighty God is ever begotten of the Father, true light and true wisdom, and the Holy Ghost is from them both, not begotten, but proceeding].²⁰ Ælfric spares both his audience and Tiburtius the point of theological debate, however, for Tiburtius finds just the thought of a God who is at the same time one and three confusing enough, and he asks Cecilia to explain how such a thing might be. She responds by explaining that God might be three in one “uno homine dicimus esse sapientiam unam, quam sapientiam dicimus habere ingenium, memoriam et intellectum” [just as we say that in one human there is one wisdom, which wisdom we say to possess mental power, memory, and understanding]. Ælfric takes an already streamlined ternary explanation of the Trinity and trims it even further: “swa swa on anum men synd soðlice þreo þing—andgit and wylla and gewittig gemynd, þe anum men gehyrsumiaþ æfre togædere” [just as three things are truly in each human, understanding, will, and conscious memory, which ever serve each human together].²¹ However, Ælfric alters the unusual ternary provided in the Latin text and brings it into line with the Augustinian terminology that he used in *LS* 1: *gemynd*, *andgit*, and *wylla*, and so again harmonizes Cecilia’s teaching with the theology of the soul that he had propounded earlier.²²

The brothers quickly face martyrdom together and as they go to their deaths one of the executioners comments that he, too, would despise the temporal attractions of the world if he could be sure of eternal life. Tiburtius replies, “Ure Drihten Crist deð þæt þu gesihst, þonne we ofslagene beoð, hu ure sawla farað mid wuldre to him gif þu wylt nu behatan þæt þu mid eallum mode þin man behreowsige” [If you wish now to pledge that you repent of your sins with all your mind, our Lord Christ will make it so that you see how our souls go forth with glory to him when we are slain]. The site of repentance is the mind in the Latin text, as well, “quod ex animo ad penitentiam erroris tui uenias” [wherefore you will come through your mind to repentance] after the brothers leave the “corporis tunicam” [tunic of the body] in death.²³ The executioner, Maximus,

delays carrying out the death sentence on the brothers long enough for Cecilia to come with priests to instruct him until he believes and receives baptism. The process laid out here emphasizes the mental progression from desire to knowledge to belief. When the brothers are beheaded the next day, Maximus claims that he saw shining angels “et egredientes animas eorum de corporibus quasi ornatas uirgines de thalamo suo” [and the souls ascending from their bodies like bejeweled virgins of the bridal chamber].²⁴ Ælfric declines to translate this comparison even though he renders everything else about the souls and their angelic escort around it. Possibly he wants to avoid feminizing the male saints in the eyes of his nonmonastic audience or perhaps he harbors some concern about his audience taking the metaphorical gendering of the incorporeal soul too literally so that people might think that the soul is female or that they would become women at death. Whatever Ælfric’s reason may have been, his non-Latinate audience would never have missed the comparison or known the difference. All they know is that angels escort the souls of the saints to heaven.

Although both of the brothers teach the Christian gospel in Cecilia’s *passio*, Cecilia herself is the principal teacher of the faithful, ready with trained memory to teach in any and every situation from the bed-chamber to the torture chamber and, as seen above, she teaches the most important and central doctrines of the Christian faith. Ælfric maintains the Latin version’s portrayal of the saint as not only a persuasive and knowledgeable teacher, but also as a woman of character and dignity who was so beautiful that the heathen crowd wept at the thought that she would be punished for being a Christian.²⁵ Cecilia speaks to the crowd, however, and points out to them the limits of their earthbound, material perspective:

Ne bið se forloren þe lið for Gode ofslagen. He bið swa awend to wuldre of deaðe, swilce man lam sylle and sylf nime gold, swilce he sylle wac hus and wuldorful underfo, sylle gewitendlic and ungewitendlic underfo, sylle wacne stan and wurðfulne gym underfo.

[He is not destroyed that lies slain for God. He shall be changed in such wise from death to glory, just as a man might give earth and himself receive gold; just as he might give a poor house and receive a glorious one; give the perishable and receive the imperishable; give a powerless stone and receive a glorious gem.]²⁶

Cecilia appeals to the crowd by suggesting that there is something better than the bodily life that they all know, teaching them that even the beauties of the temporal world cannot compare to the wonders of the eternal realm that one who dies for God's sake will receive. In the Latin *passio*, Cecilia addresses the crowd at some length (Ælfric simply says that "Heo tihte þa swa lange" [In this way she taught them for a long time]) and finally converts "quadringentos promiscui sexus" [four hundred men and women].²⁷ In her legend, Cecilia does not just preach to and convert women, but men as well, and she does so without being disguised as a man like Eugenia nor ever being compared to a man either in the Latin story or (except once by implication) in Ælfric's translation. She is never stripped of her clothing in either rendition; though one assumes that she was undressed before being put into the boiling bath, neither the Latin author nor Ælfric ever actually tell their readers so. This scene of torture comes at the very end of both versions, following upon a long debate between Cecilia and the wicked prefect, Almachius, in which she infuriates him by pointing out that his gods are mute stones that would turn to lime in a hot fire. Almachius, *iratus vaehebementer* (violently angry), then orders that the saint herself be put over a hot fire and parboiled as a return for her insult to his idols. When she sits in the water without even breaking a sweat, the prefect commands that she be beheaded. As mentioned above, the executioner botches the job, unable to decapitate her even after three blows with his sword. Though partially decapitated, Cecilia instructs those around her in the faith for three more days before she dies, a true and prolific teacher to the very end.

Cecilia's *passio* stands out as clearly the most didactic and directly doctrinal of the legends of any of Ælfric's female saints. He uses it as a vehicle for clear instruction of his own audience in doctrines central to the faith and central to the organizing principal of knowing God and one's own soul, stated in *LS* 1, and he does not seem to mind doing so through the voice of a woman. It might be argued that Cecilia is only allowed to teach after she renounces her own sexuality by committing herself to virginity, but one might just as easily reply that the same holds true for Valerian and Tiburtius. Neither of them teaches until he has committed himself to chastity out of love for Christ. Such even-handed treatment of both the male and female protagonists of the legend suggests that Ælfric knew and subscribed to the monastic concept of the third gender of those devoted to chastity, but did not think the idea of a third gender should be

explicitly put before those who were not committed to such a life and who lacked the education in Latin that would help them to understand it.

Chrysanthus and Daria: *Virgines Unanimus*

In contrast to the *passio* of Cecilia, the legend of Chrysanthus and Daria, like that of Julian and Basilissa, centers around a young man's desire to remain a virgin rather than a young woman's.²⁸ Unlike the other male saints discussed here, both Chrysanthus and Julian are very young men who have barely reached marriageable age, have had no military or governing experience, and do not yet possess their own independent households. The context of each youth's testing, however, differs in that Chrysanthus grows up in a pagan family while Julian's family are Christians. Chrysanthus's father provides his son with the best education available in Rome and "Crisantus þa leornode mid leohtum andgite and mid gleawum mode grammatican cræft and þa hæðenan bec oþ þæt þa halgan godspel him becomon to hande" [Chrysanthus then learned the grammatical craft and heathen books with lively understanding and a prudent mind until the Gospel came into his hand].²⁹ Once again, the legend establishes that the saint receives an educational foundation that emphasizes training of the memory. With his mastery of the pagan authorities, Chrysanthus compares the philosophers to the Gospels and determines to seek more instruction in Christian doctrine. Both the Latin author and Ælfric point out that, upon finding a Christian teacher, Chrysanthus "leornode his geleafan mid þam halgan lareowe swa þæt he þone Cristendom cuðe be fullan and began to bodigenne bealdlice þone Hælend" [learned his faith with that holy teacher so that he completely knew Christianity and began boldly to proclaim the Savior].³⁰ The Latin text emphasizes the speed with which Chrysanthus comes to full comprehension of Christian doctrine—a few months—indicating again the training of his mind and memory that could absorb all of the teachings of Scripture and the church in a short amount of time, make the teachings his own through habitual reflection and meditation, and have them ready to hand in public discourse. Ælfric ignores the element of time, however, with the result that his audience focuses upon the fullness or completeness of Chrysanthus's knowledge. For Ælfric as a teacher, Chrysanthus must have represented the ideal student: bright and eager to know everything about his faith, exemplifying everything that Ælfric hoped to accomplish in his nonmonastic audience

through his program of translations. Chrysanthus, however, faced obstacles different from those of Ælfric's audience.

The ways in which Chrysanthus's father tries to turn him away from Christianity reveal a subtlety that reflects the earlier fathers' psychologies of temptation. At first, Polemius, the father, throws Chrysanthus into a lightless prison and feeds him sparingly until a relative counsels him, saying, "Gif þu wille þinne sunu geweman fram criste, þonne most þu him olæcan and estmettas beodan and do þæt he wifige. Þonne wile he forgitan—siððan he wer bið—þæt he wæs Cristen" [If you desire to persuade your son away from Christ, then you must charm him and offer him delectable foods and make him take a wife. Then he will forget—once he is a man—that he was a Christian].³¹ The clever relative genders Christianity in his statement, suggesting that it is contrary to manhood. Further, the kinsman realizes what so many other hagiographers seem either to gloss over or else fail to exploit entirely: the power of pleasure to persuade. The Latin Doctors recognized this power and commented upon it in their explications of the Fall in Genesis, and, though the temptation to worldly wealth and the pleasures of marital sex were often offered to the saints discussed earlier, the saints never seem to struggle against their appeal like Chrysanthus does. Polemius removes Chrysanthus from the dark prison, dresses him in fine clothing, and puts him in lavishly decorated rooms with five virgins from among the household servants who have been threatened with torture and death if they do not succeed in turning Chrysanthus away from his faith. While the Latin says the girls are ordered to separate ("separaueritis") Chrysanthus from his Christian intention, Ælfric in translating this passage has Polemius command the girls that they "awendon ... his geþanc" [turn his thoughts] and "bigdon his mod" [bend his mind] away from Christ with their sexual play.³² Ælfric foregrounds the centrality of the mind inasmuch as the attack is not on the young man's bodily chastity alone, but on his faith at its root in his mind, especially his memory. The point is to make him forget, to overwhelm his mind with sensual stimulation and pleasure so that he can no longer focus upon Christ or even think about him because of all the distraction. All of the settings needed for contemplation that Ambrose outlines in *De bono mortis* (solitude, silence, no visual stimulation, etc.) are denied to Chrysanthus and for him the temptations are real despite his determination to scorn all of the appeals to the senses that surround him.³³ The Latin version describes how Chrysanthus scorns the food and "perhorrebat" [shuddered with horror] at the maidens as if they were snakes,³⁴ but also how he prays

steadfastly and “*amplexus earum et oscula quasi sagittarum ictus scuto suæ fidei excipiens*” [intercepts their embraces and kisses like shots of arrows with the shield of his faith].³⁵ In his prayer he says:

Latin *passio*:

Exurge, Domine, in adiutorium mihi. ... Quis enim istam pugnam a diabolo excitatam uincere præualet nisi tua pro eo fuerit dextera dimicata? Errat qui se putat castitatem perfectam suis uiribus optinere; nisi enim tuo imbre flammæ fuerint hæc corporales extinctæ, non potest animus peruenire quo pergitur.

[Rise up, Lord, to help me. ... Who truly has strength to overcome in this fight incited by the devil unless you fight for him with your right hand? He errs who thinks to preserve perfect chastity by his own strength; truly, unless you put out the flames of this body in your rain trough, the mind is not able to arrive at what is pursued.]

Ælfric:

He læg on gebedum and forbeah heora cossas and bæd þone Hælend þæt he geheolde his clænnysse swa swa he heold Iosepes on Ægeipta lande.

[He lay in prayers and restrained their kisses, and he prayed to the Savior that he would preserve his purity just as he preserved Joseph's in the land of Egypt.]³⁶

Chrysanthus feels the temptation more in the Latin text than in Ælfric's. Ælfric only mentions that the saint prays and tries to avoid the kisses of the maidens. He does not include the young man's reflections on his inability to preserve his own chastity, his reliance upon God, and the way in which the arousal of the body can impede the mind's intentions. In the Old English version Chrysanthus only prays “þæt þu do þæs næddran þæt hi ealle slapon on minre gesihðe nu þæt hi awræccan ne magon mid heora wodlican plegan ænige galnysse on me for ðan þe ic truwig on þe” [that you make these serpents all fall asleep now in my sight so that they may not awaken any lust in me, because I trust in you].³⁷ Chrysanthus never actually experiences temptation in Ælfric's version. Instead, the young man prays for the maidens to fall asleep before his body can betray him by responding to the attentions of the young women and distracting him from his focus upon Christ. There may be several reasons why Ælfric

omitted Chrysanthus's thoughts and prayers concerning the temptation he was trying rather desperately to suppress in the Latin text: Ælfric may have thought it portrayed weakness in the saint; he may have wanted to avoid too much emphasis on Chrysanthus's agonizing over temptation, or he may simply have considered it less important or the long disquisition too self-indulgent on the Latin author's part and so rightly to be ignored. What remains in Ælfric's translation is a saint who prays to avert temptation rather than one who experiences it. In this, Ælfric shows consistency between his treatment of men and of women, for Chrysanthus, like the female saints and the other male saints, never shows an iota of regard for the temptation surrounding him and never admits that delicacies or stimulating company can hold any attraction for him at all.

When it becomes clear to Polemius that the maidens have failed, he mourns for his son, for the son he knew and loved has been lost to him, replaced by this Christian stranger. Someone suggests, however, that a smart, well-educated woman be found who will not be susceptible to Chrysanthus's Christian magic that the simple-minded servant women could not resist. And so, wise Daria, bejeweled and glittering with gold, enters the legend.

Chrysanthus treats Daria differently from the servant maidens from the start. Though she has clearly been sent to persuade him away from his faith, he speaks to her courteously and "mid clænum mode" [with a pure mind], observing that if she would love the Savior and have Christ as bridegroom, "þu wurde swa wlitig wipinnan on mode swa swa þu wiðutan eart"³⁸ [you would become as lovely within in your mind as you are without].³⁸ Ælfric omits the fact that Daria is a Vestal virgin, and he also omits the Latin version's description of how Daria's initial discourse almost undoes Chrysanthus, again proving reluctant to show the saint in danger of wavering in his devotion.³⁹ He directs the readers' attention through Chrysanthus comments to Daria's potential to become as beautiful in her mind as she is in body, a beauty that can be attained only through love of the Savior as a bridegroom and restoration of the proper care for her soul and body in virginity. This passage introduces a long debate in the Latin *passio*, most of which Ælfric distills into one brief speech in which Chrysanthus points out the many crimes and moral failings of Saturn, Jupiter, and Hercules. The debate carries on for over one hundred lines before Daria converts in the Latin text, but Ælfric quickly moves the action forward by reporting Daria's conversion after radically contracting the discussion to ten lines. Once Daria comes to belief, however, "Hi wurdon

þa anræde and wunodon ætgædere gehiwodom synscipe and gehealdenre clænnysse oþ þæt Daria underfeng fulluht on Gode and Godes bec leornode æt þam gelæredum cnihte and hire mod gestrangode on mægðhade wunigende" [They then became of one mind and dwelled together in the appearance of marriage and preserved their virginity until Daria received baptism into God and learned God's books from that learned young man, and strengthened her mind by continuing in virginity.]⁴⁰ Since the couple do not pursue the business of starting a family, Daria can direct her mental energy to learning her new faith and Chrysanthus can concentrate upon teaching her. Like Eugenia, they dwell in the appearance of something they are not, in order to be free to pursue their shared, single-minded, love for Christ and pursue the same *virum perfectum* together through learning and discussing and meditating upon the scriptures. Their life together illustrates how separate gender roles disappear as they transform themselves through memory and meditation within the transcendent society they inhabit. Defined by their relationship with Christ rather than with each other, they enact their shared metagender within their chaste marriage. So winsome is their life together that many young men and young women choose to follow the life of chastity through their teaching, which leads to a serious uproar in Rome and imprisonment for the two saints.

Most of the rest of the *passio* details first Chrysanthus's torments and debates, which lead to the conversion and martyrdom of a great many people, then Daria's removal to a brothel and the escaped lion who protected and served her there. Daria, assisted by the lion, also brings a great many people to conversion (though most of them are accomplished at claw-point) and has her share of debates in the Latin text. Ælfric characteristically cuts the disputations and tones down the description of the tortures. None of the tortures harms Chrysanthus, and none of the would-be rapists succeed in their intentions; indeed, those who manage even to touch Daria pay for it with painfully shriveled muscles and tendons. Finally, the Roman emperor orders Chrysanthus and Daria to be buried alive in a sandpit outside the city.

At the end of the *passio* Ælfric adds a few lines that seem to be adapted from the very beginning of the Latin life: "We wurþiað Godes halgan, ac wite ge swa þeah þæt þam halgum nis nan neod ure herunge on þam life, ac us sylfum fremað þæt þæt we secgað be him, ærest to gebysnunge þæt we þe beteran beon and eft to þingrædene þonne us þearf bið" [We honor the holy ones of God, but you know nevertheless that the holy ones do not need our praise in this life, but we benefit ourselves

through what we say about them, first as an example by which we may be improved and second for intercession when distress comes to us].⁴¹ Ælfric makes an important point: the saints do not need people to honor them with festivals. The festivals exist rather for the sake of the people, so that they might learn and have their memories refreshed and shaped by the examples of the saints, so that, by reliving the experiences of the saints in their imaginations, the people hearing the *passiones* might shape themselves in virtue like the saints they admire. With the saints in mind, every person had a ready avenue to those who might intercede for him or her in times of trouble.

* * *

In the *passiones* of Cecilia and of Chrysanthus and Daria, Ælfric seems to speak to younger women and men (or perhaps to their parents). Both Cecilia and Chrysanthus find themselves in situations where they are at odds both with their families and with their societies. Neither one has the ability to defy the family's insistence that they marry, but each with the aid of God creates for him or herself a space in which to live the chosen life of virginity by living it together in purity with a legal husband or wife. Ælfric does not define a normative gender behavior for young men or young women in these lives—as a matter of fact, he seems subtly to encourage defiance of such norms among younger members of his audience by holding out the example of metagender.⁴² Both Cecilia and Chrysanthus provide the example of metagender in their legends by rejecting the gendered expectations of their societies and families while appearing to follow them. United to their spouses by one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one devotion to chastity, the two do not become one flesh, but shape one *imago Dei* in their minds and souls, producing spiritual offspring in a most prolific and disruptive manner

NOTES

¹ Reames, "The Cecilia Legend," 38. Ælfric always signals his abbreviation of the long discourses with phrases such as: "Seo fæmne þa lærde swa lange þone cniht," and "Hi spræcon þa swa lange," or "Hi þa swa lange motodon." Ælfric, "Passio Sanctae Cecilie Virginis," in *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Upchurch, 2.34, 92, and 156 (*LS*, 34.49, 126, and 214). For a description of the Latin sources for Ælfric's translation of the *passio* of Cecilia, see *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Upchurch, 30. The published Latin edition of the legend of Cecilia that is closest to Ælfric's version has

been Mombritiuis, "Passio Sanctae Ceciliae Virginis et Martyris," 332–41, but the edition of Upchurch in *Ælfric's Lives*, 172–16, should now be consulted along with Mombritiuis. All quotations of Ælfric's *passiones* of Cecilia and Chrysanthus and Daria and from the Latin versions are from the editions in Upchurch, *Ælfric's Lives of the Virgin Spouses*. Since Upchurch uses the same designations for the Old English and Latin versions, from here on I will distinguish between them in this chapter by using Roman numerals to refer to the Latin text (Upchurch, II.1–4 for the Latin text of Cecilia, lines one through four) and Arabic numerals for the Old English text (Upchurch, 2.1–4 for the Old English version of Cecilia, lines one through four). I have cross-referenced the Old English passages with Skeat's edition and the Latin passages with Mombritiuis. All translations from Old English and Latin are my own.

² Upchurch, II.657–62; cf. Mombritiuis, "Passio Ceciliae," 341.9–13; Upchurch, 2.254–58; cf. *LS*, 34.353–58. For other readings of the *passio* of Cecilia, see Gullely, *Displacement*, 104–11 and "Seo fæmne," 39–51; and Waterhouse, "Rose," 126–36.

³ Upchurch, II.45–47; cf. Mombritiuis, "Passio Ceciliae," 332.50–52; Upchurch, 2.3–6; *LS*, 34.5–9.

⁴ Jerome, "Epistula 22, Ad Eustochium," §24; Jerome, "Letter 22, To Eustochium," trans. Freemantle, §24.

⁵ The longing for the heavenly or eternal life is taught in Gregory, *Dialogues*, 16.

⁶ O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience*, 120–21.

⁷ Upchurch, 2.10–11; cf. *LS*, 34.16.

⁸ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 12.8; Augustine, *City of God*, 12.8.

⁹ *LS*, 1.171–75.

¹⁰ Upchurch, 2.12–13; cf. *LS*, 34.19.

¹¹ Upchurch, II.50–52; cf. Mombritiuis, "Passio Ceciliae," 333.1–3.

¹² Upchurch, II.65–70; cf. Mombritiuis, "Passio Ceciliae," 333.13–17; Upchurch, 2.21–26; cf. *LS*, 34.32–36.

¹³ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* (*PL* 23.220B–C); Bede, "Epistolae VII Catholice," in *Beda's Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica*, ed. Hurst, 244. See also my article, McDaniel, "Unidentified Passage from Jerome," 375.

¹⁴ Upchurch, II.74–76; cf. Mombritiuis, "Passio Ceciliae," 333.21–22; Upchurch, 2.30–31; cf. *LS*, 34.43–45.

¹⁵ Upchurch, 2.45; cf. *LS*, 34.65. Hall & Meritt provide "seems likely" as a definition of *lician* and that phrase is more suitable than the primary meaning of "please" in this context, especially given Valerian's response: "hwæt bið æfre soðlicre" [What could ever be more true?] Cf. Upchurch, II.113; Mombritiuis, "Passio Ceciliae," 333.51–52.

¹⁶ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 11.15.

¹⁷ Upchurch, II.135–38; cf. Mombritiuis, "Passio Ceciliae," 334.10–14; Upchurch, 2.66–68; cf. *LS*, 34.94–98. According to Lewis and Short, *lucror*, -ari

held a primary denotation of “gain, acquire, win, get, make” but also had a specifically ecclesiastical use that meant “win, persuade, convert.” In this context, the word can carry both meanings.

¹⁸ Upchurch, II.113–18; cf. Mombricitus, “Passio Ceciliae,” 335.14–19; Upchurch, 2.114–17; cf. *LS*, 34.156–60.

¹⁹ See Colish, *Medieval Foundation*, 72. The issue had long been in dispute by the time Ælfric wrote his translations, and so he may have thought it better to avoid any terminology of procession—and the sentence in the Latin was repetitive anyway, providing even more reason to simply omit the whole thing.

²⁰ *LS*, 1.73–77.

²¹ Upchurch, II.22–23; cf. Mombricitus, “Passio Ceciliae,” 335.22–23; Upchurch, 2.123–25; cf. *LS*, 34.168–70. The phraseology of the Latin ternary used here is unusual.

²² *LS*, 1.114.

²³ Upchurch, 2.173–76; cf. *LS*, 34.239–42. Upchurch, II.488–89, 486; cf. Mombricitus, “Passio Ceciliae,” 338.53–54.

²⁴ Upchurch, II.511–12; cf. Mombricitus, “Passio Ceciliae,” 339.15–16.

²⁵ Upchurch, II.533–35; cf. Mombricitus, “Passio Ceciliae,” 339.32–33. Upchurch, 2.210–12; cf. *LS*, 34.290–92.

²⁶ Upchurch, 2.213–17; cf. *LS*, 34.294–99. Upchurch, II.536–43; cf. Mombricitus, “Passio Ceciliae,” 339.35–41.

²⁷ Upchurch, II.562–63; cf. Mombricitus, “Passio Ceciliae,” 339.56–57.

²⁸ For detailed information on Ælfric’s Latin source, see Upchurch, *Ælfric’s Lives*, 31–32. The published Latin edition of the legend of Chrysanthus and Daria that is closest to Ælfric’s version has been Mombricitus, “Passio Sanctorum Martyrum Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 1.271–78, but the edition of Upchurch in *Ælfric’s Lives*, 218–48, should now be consulted along with Mombricitus. For other readings of the *passio* of Chrysanthus and Daria, see Gulley, *Displacement*, 83–97 and Upchurch, “Legend of Chrysanthus and Daria,” 250–69;

²⁹ Upchurch, 3.9–11; cf. *LS*, 35.13–16a. Cf. Upchurch, III.33–38 and Mombricitus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 271.47–51.

³⁰ Upchurch, 3.19–21; cf. *LS*, 35.28–30. Cf. Upchurch, III.65–68 and Mombricitus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 272.20–23.

³¹ Upchurch, 3.28–31; cf. *LS*, 35.40–43. Cf. Upchurch, III.80–83 and Mombricitus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 272.32–34.

³² Upchurch, 3.37, 38; cf. *LS*, 35.52–53, 55. Cf. Upchurch, III.92 and Mombricitus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 272.42.

³³ Ambrose, *De bono mortis*, 3.11.

³⁴ Upchurch, III.95; cf. Mombricitus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 272.44–45.

³⁵ Upchurch, III.96–97; cf. Mombricitus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 272.45–46.

³⁶ Upchurch, III.97–102; cf. Mombritus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 272.46–50. Upchurch 3.41–43; cf. *LS*, 35.59–61.

³⁷ Upchurch, 3.44–46; cf. *LS*, 35.63–66. Cf. Upchurch, III.127–29; cf. Mombritus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 273.14–16.

³⁸ Upchurch, 3.65, 68–69; cf. *LS*, 35.92, 97–98. Cf. Upchurch, III.164; cf. Mombritus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 273.44.

³⁹ Upchurch, III.144, 152–55; cf. Mombritus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 273.27, 33–37. For Ælfric’s reluctance to show any wavering in saints, see Maginnis, “Warrior Saints,” 29.

⁴⁰ Upchurch, 3.86–89; cf. *LS*, 35.122–26. Cf. Upchurch, III.285–98; cf. Mombritus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 275.26–31. Ælfric uses the same language of one person becoming *anræd* with another in faith to describe the spiritual union of Alban and the converted executioner in *LS*, 19.103–4.

⁴¹ Upchurch, 3.236–39; cf. *LS*, 35.341–45. Cf. Upchurch, III.1–5 and Mombritus, “Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,” 271.19–22.

⁴² See Upchurch, “Legend of Chrysanthus and Daria,” 258–59 and “For Pastoral Care,” 59–60. Cf. *CH* II 19.166–69.